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UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

School of Art, Design and Architecture
Department of Design

AMBIGUOUS OR AMBISEXTROUS?

Exploring dress, gender and the fashioning of masculine femininity in the 'long nineteenth century'.

GEORGIA ROGERS-SMITH

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
MA by Research (Art and Design)

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where necessary and reference has been made to the work of others.

The University of Huddersfield
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22ND SEPTEMBER 2020
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Table of Contents

Contents	*Page No.*
List of Figures	2
Introduction	8
Chapter I: The Ladies of Llangollen	29
Chapter II: Anne Lister	58
Chapter III: Bessie Bonehill	97
Conclusion	132
Bibliography	135
Wider Reading	144
Appendix I: Bessie Bonehill accession file	145
Appendix II: Bessie Bonehill *Bow Bells* article	163
Declaration of Originality	164

List of Figures

Figure ***Page No.***

Fig 0.1: Fashionable women's dress 1801- 1857, Alena Maltseva, 2017, © Bloshka. 15
https://www.behance.net/gallery/47498383/Fashion-Timeline19-th-century

Fig 0.2: Fashionable women's dress 1862 - 1897, Alena Maltseva, 2017, © Bloshka. 16
https://www.behance.net/gallery/47498383/Fashion-Timeline19-th-century

Fig 0.3: Day Dress c.1826, Taishi Hirokawa, n.d. © The Kyoto Costume Institute. 18
https://www.kci.or.jp/en/archives/digital_archives/1820s_1840s/KCI_066

Fig 0.4: Day dress c.1830, unknown, n.d., ©Victoria & Albert Museum. 19
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O142423/day-dress-unknown/

Fig 0.5: Petit Courrier des Dames, Paris, unknown, c.1830, © Victoria & Albert Museum. 20
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O576752/fashion-plate-unknown/

Fig 0.6: Drawing of a man and a woman both in riding habits, Eugène Charles François Guérard, 21
1839, ©Victoria & Albert Museum.
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O693837/drawing-guerard-eugene-charles/

Fig 0.7: British spencer, unknown, c.1820, © Metropolitan Museum of Art. 22
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/108020

Fig 0.8: Spencer, unknown, c.early 19th century, © Metropolitan Museum of Art. 22
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/84310

Fig 0.9: Pelisse, unknown, c.1825, © Metropolitan Museum of Art. 23
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82144

Fig 0.10: Pelisse, unknown, c.1830, © Metropolitan Museum of Art. 23
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/98217

Fig 1.1: 'The Rt Honble Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby', James Lynch, 1832, 29
© unknown.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/desire-love-and-identity/ladies-llangollen

Fig 1.2: Riding Habit, unknown, c.1770-1775, © Victoria & Albert Museum. 38
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74100/riding-habit-unknown/.

Fig 1.3: Pages scanned from *The Ladies of Llangollen*, Mavor, 1971. 41
Primary image, scanned from Mavor's book.

Fig 1.4: 'The Ladies of Llangollen' (Sarah Ponsonby; Lady (Charlotte) Eleanor Butler), 43
Richard James Lane after Lady Mary Leighton, 1831, © National Portrait Gallery.
https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw41781/The-Ladies-of-Llangollen-Sarah-Ponsonby-Lady-Charlotte-Eleanor-Butler?LinkID=mp06346&role=sit&rNo=3

Fig 1.5: 'The Rt Honble Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby', James Lynch, 1832, © unknown. 45
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/desire-love-and-identity/ladies-llangollen

Fig 1.6: Lady (Charlotte) Eleanor Butler; Sarah Ponsonby, unknown, c. 1810-1823, 47
© National Portrait Gallery.
https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw09283/Lady-Charlotte-Eleanor-Butler-Sarah-Ponsonby?LinkID=mp06346&role=sit&rNo=0

Fig 1.7: The Ladies of Llangollen 1819, Lady Susan Sitwell, 1819, 48
© The National Library of Wales.
https://viewer.library.wales/4671506#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&manifest=https%3A%2F%2Fdamssshl.llgc.org.uk%2Fiiif%2F2.0%2F4671506%2Fmanifest.json&xywh=-2028%2C-298%2C8014%2C5948

Fig 1.8: *The Last Summer*, Lady Delamere, April 27th, 1828, © unknown. 50
https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/attractions/mansions-and-grounds/ladies-of-llangollen/descriptions-of-eleanor-butler-and-sarah-ponsonby/ladies-of-llangollen-portraits/

Fig 1.9: Riding coats, unknown, c.1775, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 51
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/81572

Fig 2.1: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for the *Gentleman Jack* series compared 58
with the c.1830 portrait by Joshua Horner, unknown, 2019, © Jay Brooks/HBO.
https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/a27225968/gentleman-jack-anne-lister-hbo-true-story/

Fig 2.2: Anne Lister, Mrs Turner, 1822, © Calderdale Museums. 76

https://huddersfield.click/offtherecord/index.php/Lister_family_of_Shibden_Hall

Fig 2.3: Anne Lister, Joshua Horner, c.1830, © Calderdale Museums. 77
https://museums.calderdale.gov.uk/whats-on/events/anne-listers-birthday-shibden-hall-postponed

Fig 2.4: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -"Sexuality, Gender and Dress", 82
Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Byc2D2DHX7P/

Fig 2.5: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -"Sexuality, Gender and Dress", 83
Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Byc2D2DHX7P/

Fig 2.6: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -"Pelisses, Redingotes and Military 83
Influences", Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Byc2D2DHX7P/

Fig 2.7: Spencer and skirt made by @cosproplondonuk @suranne_jones, Tom Pye, October 2017, 85
© Tom Pye.
https://www.instagram.com/p/BzD-KyRH-L0/

Fig 2.8: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for *Gentleman Jack,* unknown, 2019, © BBC. 86
https://www.redonline.co.uk/reviews/film-reviews/a27415451/suranne-jones-gentleman-jack-celebration-confident-women/

Fig 2.9: Woman's riding jacket of flannel trimmed with mohair and lined with sateen, unknown, 87
1885-1886, © Victoria & Albert Museum.
Primary image, scanned from book, *19th Century: Fashion in Detail.*

Fig 2.10: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister in *Gentleman Jack*, unknown, 2019, © BBC. 89
https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/locations-gentleman-jack-series

Fig 2.11: #annelister business suit, made by @the_bearded_tailor@cosproplondonuk for the 90
superb @suranne_jones #gentlemanjack, Tom Pye, November 2018, © Tom Pye.
https://www.instagram.com/p/BzJG5VkHvml/

Fig 2.12: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for *Gentleman Jack,*unknown, 2019, © BBC. 90

https://medium.com/@samanthabanal/lesbian-movement-and-why-anne-lister-power-walks-fa0161f9eeab

Fig 2.13: Photograph taken of Anne Lister's business dress @ the Gentleman Jack exhibition, Bankfield Museum, November 2019. Primary image. 92

Fig 2.14: Anne Lister and Ann Walker's costumes from *Gentleman Jack* @ the *Gentleman Jack* exhibition, Bankfield Museum, November 2019. Primary image. 94

Fig 3.1: Bessie Bonehill on a US Tobacco Company cigarette card, compared with Bessie Bonehill in costume, both unknown, both c.1890s, © New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-f5d6-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-f5c8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 97

Fig 3.2: Bonehill costumed as a newsboy, unknown, c.1890s, © New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-f5c2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 119

Fig 3.3: Bessie Bonehill pictured in gentleman's costume, unknown, c.1890s © unknown. https://www.facebook.com/282967823195/posts/born-on-this-daybessie-bonehill-1855-1902-bonehill-was-a-british-music-hall-sing/10157139907043196/ 120

Fig 3.4: Evening suit with dinner jacket, unknown, 1885, © Victoria & Albert Museum. https://www.mimimatthews.com/2016/10/03/a-century-of-sartorial-style-a-visual-guide-to-19th-century-menswear/ 120

Fig 3.5: BessieBonehill pictured on cigarette card, unknown, c.1880, © California State Library. https://ssl.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/rr171x36g 121

Fig 3.6: Bessie Bonehill's playbill for *Playmates,* unknown, c.1890s, © unknown. https://www.queermusicheritage.com/drag-SH-misc-male.html 123

Fig 3.7: Bessie Bonehill in English gentleman costume, unknown, unknown,, © New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-f5c8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 124

Fig 3.8: Playbill for Bonehill's *One New York* show, unknown, 1896, © New York Public Library. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:One_New_York_(NYPL_Hades-464261-1166035).jp 124

Fig 3.9: Bonehill pictured in costume for *Playmates,* unknown, 1894, © New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-f5c6-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 125

Fig 3.10: Caricature of Beau Brummell, Robert Dighton, 1805, © unknown. http://hespokestyle.com/beau-brummell-fashion/ 125

Fig 3.11: Clipping from undisclosed newspaper regarding Bessie Bonehills life, unknown, 1902, © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from Bessie Bonehill's accession file, see Appendix I 127

Fig 3.12: Clipping from undisclosed newspaper regarding Bessie Bonehill's life, unknown, 1902, © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from Bessie Bonehill's accession file, see Appendix I 127

Fig 3.13: Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I 128

Fig 3.14: Shorts worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I 128

Fig 3.15: Blouse worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I 128

Fig 3.16: Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I 128

Fig 3.17: Cap worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History. Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I 128

Fig 3.18: Knickers worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., 128

© The National Museum of American History.

Retrieved from the National Museum of American History, see Appendix I

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the presence of dress, gender and self-identity in the long nineteenth-century (1780-1910). It presents three case studies, including the Ladies of Llangollen, Anne Lister and Bessie Bonehill, to explore the role of dress and costume in constructing identities of masculine femininity. It further analyses contemporary perceptions of these masculinities, thus offering a new understanding of dress and gender in this period. This thesis is the first to bring these women together, and presents a dress-centred analysis, from a perspective which they have not been considered before. While the debate between dress and gender is prominent in modern fashion studies, it has been a huge debate of the past also, with a running dialogue between the themes. This research presents a new overview and offers a historical analysis into the important contemporary debate.

These three case studies were chosen, over a multitude of others, due to the vast array of available sources of them. While there is much knowledge of other women with masculine identities in this period, their legacy does not stand as strong. These women were not ordinary women; they predominantly came from status and wealth, and defied the prescribed roles for women of the middle and upper-classes. Their privilege did not protect them from scrutiny, which raises the question as to what happened to masculine women of lower social classes.

The initial case study to inspire this thesis was Anne Lister. With her unique geographical link to where the research was taking place, and the recent release of the television series *Gentleman Jack* when the research commenced, the story of Anne Lister was being discussed greatly in traditional media and online platforms.[1] It raised the question as to how accurate our modern understanding and portray of her character was, which inspired the direction of this thesis. While researching into other unconventional women who lived in the nineteenth-century, I became acquainted with the story of the Ladies of Llangollen. Their story naturally intertwined with this research, as Anne Lister paid them a visit at Plas Newydd in 1822, which she vividly documented in her journal. What was intriguing about the two cases was how they both strived for the same freedoms from societal constraints, but faced completely different levels of scrutiny, due to their respective circumstances. As research into modern portrayals of Anne Lister developed – specifically the costuming of *Gentleman Jack* – the direction of the thesis turned to costuming of male impersonators, which was a blossoming form of entertainment in the nineteenth-century. It posed the question; ‘how did a society that disagreed with masculine femininity in the cases of gender ambiguous women – such as Lister and the Ladies of Llangollen – come to admire and respect

[1] As this research was conducted at the University of Huddersfield, and Anne Lister resided at Shibden Hall in Halifax, there is less than 10 miles door-to-door between the two locations. To be able to conduct this research in such close proximity to where Lister lived her unconventional life was a unique privilege.

gender ambiguity in the form of masculine impersonation on stage and screen'? The research then looked at the differences between costume and dress; how the former is a tool to present a constructed character in parameters where an audience understood they were witnessing fantasy, whereas the latter is viewed as an extension of internal true self, worn in daily reality. While it would have been easy to choose a more acclaimed male impersonator, such as Vesta Tilley or Annie Hindle, Bessie Bonehill is understudied when compared with other stars of male impersonation in music hall culture. A key point of interest while researching Bonehill was the contrasting difference between her surviving costumes and the image of her portrayed on playbills, and what these differences meant for the observing audiences. In the process of researching these case studies together, I learnt that the women who lived these lives and dressed in a way that society deemed peculiar, in fact, were not all that odd. As you will come to learn throughout this thesis, in the cases of the Ladies of Llangollen and Anne Lister, deportment and place in society is what made them appear as anomalies in their surroundings, not their dress. Furthermore, conducting this research has directed my understanding male impersonation to believe that, had women such as the Ladies of Llangollen and Lister not existed, there would have been no base for male impersonation in music hall to build upon, and the method of entertainment would not have been so well received.

This research brings together a variety of strands, to weave a new story about the history of women, dress and gender: costume, performance, identity, styling and semiotics are all aspects of this research. Of course this thesis cannot claim any jurisdiction over sexual orientation, however, the topics are inextricably intertwined, and therefore sexual orientation will be referred to, but not for the means of constructing identity through dress.[2] The dress discussed in this thesis is being analysed purely for sartorial matters. For more on the relationship between gender and fashion relevant to this thesis, see the works of Judith Butler, Denise Amy Baxter and Peter McNeil.[3]

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[2]While homosexuality was a crime in this period, the concept of lesbian desire or homosexuality between women could not be fathomed, therefore women exhibiting aspects of male and female behaviour and dress were not grouped with the supposed third gender, nor could the women be using dress to construct a lesbian identity, as lesbianism did not exist. Beaujot, A. *Gender and Sexuality* in Baxter, D. A. (2017). *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Age of Empire*. Bloomsbury. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/book/a-cultural-history-of-dress-and-fashio-in-the-age-of-empire/gender-and-sexuality.
McNeil, P. (2018). *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World*. Yale University Press. p.152.

[3] See: Baxter, Denise Amy. *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Age of Empire*. Bloomsbury. 2017. London. Retrieved from https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/book/a-cultural-history-of-dress-and-fashion-in-the-age-of-empire/gender-and-sexuality. Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge. 2004. London.
Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge. 1990. London. Entwhistle, J. *The Fashioned Body*. Polity Press. 2000. Cambridge. McNeil, Peter. *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World.* Yale University Press. 2018. New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

REVIEW OF KEY LITERATURE

Literature concerning the themes of thesis exists from a variety of different fields. This research focuses on masculine femininity as there is much already written about men in female, or effeminate, attire, particularly in this period.[4]

For the study of women in the nineteenth-century, Amanda Vickery's 1993 study of gender demarcation of the nineteenth-century has been a foundational text for the study of women in this period. Vickery argues that the separate spheres ideology has been over-prescribed to, and in reality women had significantly more freedom. It also cannot universally be applied to women of different social classes or regions.[5]

Gender theorists have considered the role that material circumstances and social class play in the formation of gender and sexuality. In specific reference to Anne Lister, Anne Clark recalls how freedom of financial constraints and the ability to educate allowed her to explore her eccentricities; Christopher Roulston's work also echoes this sentiment, and further argues that masculine performances beyond appearance play a significant role in the construction of a gender appearance. He considers gentlemanly deportment and involvement in masculine activities as other contributing factors.[6] Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas' exploration of "queer style" throughout history differentiates cross-dressing for means of gender identity, or alternatively for the means of theatrical entertainment, through gender illusion.[7] Their work calls upon key figures within gender scholarship, such as Esther Newton, Susan Sontang and Judith

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[4] With the effeminate fashions of the fops, macaronis and dandies, it was not uncommon to see more feminine men in this period. Furthermore, macaronis and their flamboyant fashions became linked with homosexuality, however they were not considered to attempted to deceive genders and appear as women. A higher volume of effeminate men meant higher visibility, and therefore more for scholars to divulge, however Cummings has highlighted that "masculine appearance was perceived to be much less worth of study and analysis".Cummings, V. (2004). p. 29. For more on the macaronis and general gender and identity between the 17th and 19th century, see Peter McNeil's *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World.*

[5] Vickery, A. (1993). Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History. *The Historical Journal, 36*(2), 383-414. Retrieved from https://www-jstor-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stable/2639654?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents pg 389. The separate spheres ideology relates principally to the emergency of middle class women in the 19th century, suggesting that women live in a private sphere of domesticity, while men live in a public sphere of power and education.

[6] Clark, A. (1996). Anne Lister's Construction of Lesbian Identity. *Journal of the History of Sexuality, 7*(1), 23-50. NaN. Roulston, C. (2013). The Revolting Anne Lister: The UK's first Modern Lesbian. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 17*(3-4). https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1080/10894160.2013.731866

[7] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013). *Queer Style.* Retrieved from DOI: 10.5040/9781350050723.ch-005.

Halberstam, and recognises that the culture of female cross-dressing is understudied when compared with its male counterpart. Gertrud Lehnert's work on gender explores that dressing in gendered clothing does not form a gendered identity; it is ultimately the culture which the dress is in which determines it as feminine or masculine; therefore gender consists of dress and behaviour.[8]

For the study of costumes and theatre practise, Veronica Isaac has argued the importance of differentiating the roles of dress and costume; recalling that costumes aim to represent, rather than replicate, reality.[9] Sandra Lee Evenson further supports this, while also recognising that costuming goes beyond clothing. It considers all aspects of building a character, such as hair and makeup, voice techniques and movement, noting that "one of the first goals of a costume is to conceal or deemphasize the actor's own personality so that a new identity can be created".[10] Specifically for the study of male impersonation and American variety theatre, Gillian M Rodger provides insightful evidence of the shifting performance aesthetic within America in the 1870s and 1880s, and demonstrates the influence male impersonators came to have over male fashions.[11] Steve Waksman explores how male impersonators unsettled gender representation on the popular stage, but further how female theatricality shifted in appearance and style in the last years of the nineteenth-century, transitioning into the early twentieth.[12]

For the study of fashionable dress in the nineteenth-century, Cally Blackman and Alison Matthews David provide insightful analysis into the evolution of the fashionable riding habit; one of the earliest female garments that also displayed masculine influences of tailoring.[13] In turn, their work also debates the threat

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[8]Lehnert, G. *Gender* in Skov, L. (2010). *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*. Bloomsbury. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/encyclopedia/berg-encyclopedia-of-world-dress-and-fashion-west-europe/gender#highlightAnchor

[9] Isaac, V. *Costumes* in Greenwald, H. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195335538.013.025

[10] Evenson, S L., (2010) *Dress as Costume in the Theatre and Performing Arts* in Eicher, J B., & Tortora, P G., Berg *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion.* Retrieved from DOI: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch10018

[11] Rodger, G. (2018). *The Wondrous Life of America's First Male Impersonator*. Retrieved from https://www.whatitmeanstobeamerican.org/identities/the-wondrous-life-of-americas-first-male-impersonator/

[12] Hawkins, S. (2017). *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music and Gender*. Taylor & Francis Group. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/HUD/detail.action?docID=4825142

[13] Blackman, C. (2001). Walking Amazons: The Development of the Riding Habit in England during the Eighteenth Century. *Costume*, 35(1), 47-58. Retrieved from https://www-euppublishing-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1179/cos.2001.35.1.47.

Amazonian women, who wore these masculine styles, caused to gendered society.[14] The history of the Amazonian woman and her challenges to the patriarchy are argued in works by Dror Wahrman.[15] Peter McNeil further comments on the increase of masculinity within womens dress, but attributes it to the evolution of dress, as opposed to cross-dressing or homosexuality.[16] Diana Donald contributes in highlighting that it was believed, just like the infatuation with fashion was believed to be, women were frivolous, fickle, vain, and unable to maintain one character, unlike men.[17] In addition, John Harvey's 1995 works explores the gendering of colour in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, specifically the wearing of black, and the nuanced meanings that come with wearing it, as it was reserved as a masculine colour, or for mourning dress.[18] Lou Taylor can further offer insight into the wearing mourning dress.[19] The work of Jennifer Craik explores the fascination of uniforms and uniformity within dress, in addition to how canonical elements of uniforms have become recurring in fashions from the past and in present.[20] These elements are often incorporated in fashionable riding habits.

For the study of dress history, Lou Taylor's 2002 work guides this thesis to follow proper practice when working with the diverse breadth of sources available, and makes the research mindful of possible issues.[21] Valerie Cummings' calls on economic and psychological theories of dress history, such as those presented by Veblen, Flugel and Laver, but disbands them as outdated and misogynistic justifications for

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[14]Matthews David, A. (2002). Elegant Amazons: Victorian Riding Habits and the Fashionable Horsewoman. *Victorian Literature and Culture, 30*(1), 141-156. NaN.

[15]Wahrman, D. (2009). *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*. Yale University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npwg5

[16] McNeil, P. (2018). *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World*. Yale University Press.

[17] Donald, D. (2002). *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period*. Haywood Gallery. p. 11.

[18] Harvey, J. (1995). *Men In Black*. Reaktion Books.

[19] Taylor, L. *Mourning Dress* in Steele, V. (2010). *The Berg Companion to Fashion*. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/encyclopedia/the-berg-companion-to-fashion/mourning-dress.

[20] Craik, J. (2005). *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression*. Bloomsbury. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/book/uniforms-exposed-from-conformity-to-transgression/uniforms-body-techniques-and-culture

[21] Taylor, L. (2002). *The Study of Dress History*.

dress practice in the nineteenth-century.[22] Elizabeth Wilson has emphasised the notion of gendered dress, highlighting that "until the seventeenth or even the eighteenth-century, sexual differences in dress were not strongly marked" and that "in many ways, men and women continued to dress alike", such as riding and sports.[23]

It is crucial to outline the distinctions between *dress* and *costume* and their use within this thesis. Scholars of fashion, dress and costume have long debated the definitions that separate these terms.[24] Veronica Isaac further addresses the concern for distinction between the terms; "one of the main concerns for the scholar of costumes is to identify the precise ways in which fashion - that is, personal dress and it's trends - is distinct from stage costumes, designed to symbolise and represent a particular style, concept or era".[25] *Dress* will be used when referring to clothing worn by people off stage and screen, and *costume* reserved for the garments worn by actors and performers, on stage or screen.

This thesis brings these disparate fields together in the study of three cases, to offer new understandings of dress and gender and self-identity, through the wearer's use of unconventional clothing and masculine costumes.

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[22] Cumming, V. (2011). *Understanding Fashion History*

[23] Wilson, E. (2009). *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (2nd ed.). I B Tauris & Co. p. 117.

[24] Valerie Cummings notes that there may be confusion around their use and understanding due to the interchangeability of the words.Cummings further discusses how there are several definitions that highlight the terms as interlinking – "Dress is clothing, especially the visible part of it, costume. Clothing is described as 'wearing apparel' and costume as 'style, fashion of dress or attire (including ways of wearing hair)'. Fashion is defined as 'prevailing custom, especially in dress', a route that has brought us full circle back to dress". Cummings, V. (2004). *Understanding Fashion History*. Batsford.p. 16-17.

[25] Isaac, V. *Costumes* in Greenwald, H. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195335538.013.025
Costume in modern society generally refers to clothing worn by performers on a stage or screen, but it has previously been used to refer to historic dress worn day to day. Isaac highlights that many dress historians now seem to prefer the term *dress* or *fashion* rather than *costume*, a shift affirmed by the launch in 1997 of the journal *Fashion Theory* and the 2007 re-branding of the Museum of Costume in Bath as the Fashion Museum.The Museum of Costume was first opened in 1963. However, there is still not a universal distinction between the terms *costume* and *fashion* and *dress*; the fashion department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is still titled 'The Costume Institute'. Isaac continues to state that the "association of *costume* with an outdated and undisciplined approach to the study of dress history threatens to further undermine efforts to encourage scholarship specifically on costumes". Therefore, some establishments or institutes may be reluctant to transition from the term *costume* to *fashion* or *dress*.

FASHIONABLE DRESS

To form an understanding of why these women's dress was perceived as unconventional, we must understand fashionable dress of the time. The nineteenth-century was a revolving door of fashions; it was the era in which the fashion system came into power; as a result of industrialisation, advances in technology, developing economies and the beginning of globalisation.[26] As such, fashion began to change on an almost seasonal basis. The constant changes of women's dress within the nineteenth-century can be seen in figs 0.1 and 0.2.

[26] Innovations in printing technology and increased education meant the introduction of fashion promotion on a greater scale. Fashion magazines were introduced and allowed for the dissemination of fashion images to reach international audiences.



Fig 0.1: Fashionable women's dress 1801- 1857, Alena Maltseva, 2017, © Bloshka.



Fig 0.2: Fashionable women's dress 1862 - 1897, Alena Maltseva, 2017, © Bloshka.

The works of the Cunnington's are invaluable in providing the descriptive history of dress in this period, although they cannot be trusted as truly representative of the time.[27] The 1820s are a particularly key period in this research, as it was a defining decade for two-of-three of the case studies being presented. Hilary Davidson argues that "the early nineteenth-century in Britain can be slippery to characterise [...]

[27] While C.W Cunnington's work is still respectable and reliable for it's hemline detail, today is nonetheless regarded as obsolete, in light of more modern research. For his detailed descriptions of fashionable dress in the nineteenth century, see Cunnington, C. W. (2013). *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century : a Comprehensive Guide with 1,117 Illustrations* (2nd ed.). Dover Publications.

Regency people are Georgians, but are they also proto-Victorians? Might they be Romantics or Classicists?"[28] The need to categorise people into certain periods is not wholly necessary here, but an understanding of the fluctuating silhouettes and trends is: as Dumas-Toulouse argues "if masculine attire quickly loses its brilliance, feminine fashion seeks more and more opulence".[29] From the empire waistline of the 1810s, to the voluminous bell skirts which emerged as a result of the crinoline in the 1860s; the natural silhouette of artist dress led by the Aesthetes in the 1880s, which contrasted the extreme corsetry and bustles also prominent in the decade, to the large gigot sleeves of the 1890s, the evolution of women's dress was constant.

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[28] Davidson, H. (2019). *Tight Breeches and Loose Gowns: Going Deep on the Fashion of Jane Austen*. Literary Hub. https://lithub.com/tight-breeches-and-loose-gowns-going-deep-on-the-fashion-of-jane-austen/

[29]Dumas-Toulouse, C. (n.d.). *Fashion in the 19th Century*. Google Arts and Culture. https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/fashion-in-the-19th-century-musee-des-arts-decoratifs/8ALCYYGnLZXMJg?hl=en. Masculine attire did not entirely lose its brilliance, but found brilliance in a new, more refined mode, made popular by the dandies. The time in which men's dress supposedly got more sober was called 'The Great Masculine Renunciation' by John Flügel. For more on this see: Flugel, J. (1930) Psychology of Clothes. For more on men's dress in this period see McNeil, P. (2018). *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World*. Yale University Press.



Fig. 0.3: Day Dress c.1826, Taishi Hirokawa, n.d. © The Kyoto Costume Institute.



Fig 0.4: Day dress c.1830, unknown, n.d., ©Victoria & Albert Museum.

The 1820s were a transitional period, from the Empire style to a Romantic style, where the gradually descended from under the bust to its natural placement, and sleeves and skirts grew in width and volume, with gigot sleeves becoming truly fashionable by 1827 – "When the decade drew to a close, the waistline was tightly cinched, skirts had expanded into a wide bell, and the gigot sleeve had reached such epic proportions that "the upper arm appeared to be quite double the size of the waist"".[30]

As can be seen in Fig 0.3, dress in the early-mid 1820s often featured decorative hemlines, although this subsided towards the end of the decade, where floral prints became very popular, and continued into the 1830s (Fig 0.4). The fashionable neckline for day dresses varied, as did bodices, although many featured a stomacher style, to draw the silhouette in from the wide sleeves, before the skirt volumed outwards again. Accessories, particularly headwear, also grew in size and volume throughout the decade – "Brims

[30] Cunnington, C.W. *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century: a Comprehensive Guide* cited by Franklin, H. (2020). *1820-1829*. Fashion History Timeline - Fashion Institute of Technology. https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1820-1829/

widened into large halos around the face, crowns grew ever taller, and trims were loaded onto the enormous structures. Wide ribbons fluttered, flowers and greenery were used above and under the brim, and feathers bobbed from the crown".[31]



Fig 0.5: Petit Courrier des Dames, Paris, unknown, c.1830, © Victoria & Albert Museum.

[31] Cunnington, C.W. cited by Franklin, H. (2020). *1820-1829*. Fashion History Timeline - Fashion Institute of Technology. https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1820-1829/



Fig 0.6: Drawing of a man and a woman both in riding habits, Eugène Charles François Guérard, 1839, © Victoria & Albert Museum.

While knowledge of general dress in this period is important, there are a number of specific styles and garments that are prominent in this research; the riding habit is one of them. It originated from France in the seventeenth-century, and was developed for the purpose of riding dress. It became a fashionable staple in the wardrobes of women in the mid-eighteenth, and again the later nineteenth-century, fluctuating in fashionable currency between these times. The tailored bodice, worn with a habit shirt, drew references from mens dress, and led people to view it as masculine attire – particularly as it was worn by Amazonian

women.[32] However it was also a style that embodied refinement, timelessness and propriety. Fig 0.6 displays the similarities between the female riding habit and the male dress from which it derived.





Fig 0.7 (L): British spencer, unknown, c.1820, © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig 0.8 (R): Spencer, unknown, c. early 19th century, © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Spencers also became fashionable women's dress, after deriving from men's fashions. A spencer is a short bodice, cropped at the waist or just below the bust, with no skirt or tails. It traditionally has long sleeves and a high neck. It was originally a men's style in the 1700s, believed to have been named after George, the 2nd Earl Spencer, who wore jackets of this design. It was later adopted by women who would wear it over their evening dresses, and was an early example of tailoring entering the female wardrobe after taking influence from masculine styles.[33]

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[32] For more see Blackman, C. (2001). Walking Amazons: The Development of the Riding Habit in England during the Eighteenth Century. *Costume*, 35(1), 47-58. Retrieved from https://www-euppublishing-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1179/cos.2001.35.1.47.

[33] For more see V&A. (n.d.). *Spencer*. V&A. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O125423/spencer-unknown/





Fig 0.9 (L): Pelisse, unknown, c.1825, © Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Fig 0.10 (R): Pelisse, unknown, c.1830, © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Alternatively, a pelisse is a three-quarter-to-full-length fitted coat, modelled on an empire dress silhouette. It has a high waist, typically close under the bust. It "appeared at the end of the eighteenth-century and remained fashionable until the mid-nineteenth century."[34] Their silhouettes mimicked the shape of the dresses they were worn over, therefore when the mode shifted towards large bell-shaped skirts, the pelisse went out of fashion.[35]

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[34] Libes, K. (2020). *Pelisse*. Fashion History Timeline - Fashion Institute of Technology. https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/pelisse/

[35] For more on pelisses see The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (n.d.). *Pelisse*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82141.

SOURCES AND METHODS

This thesis takes the opportunity to use the widest and most diverse variety of source types available. From visual sources for the Ladies of Llangollen, to literary sources including Anne Lister's journals, to material culture, such as Bessie Bonehill's costumes.

Visual sources were important across the thesis. In each chapter, visual evidence was sought to construct the clearest possible image of what these women actually wore. These visual sources include photographs, portraits, playbills. This was measured against the mythology of these women, as found in newspapers, reviews and other literary comment. Material culture brings these stories from the past back to life, by allowing access backstage into Bessie Bonehill's theatrical wardrobe.

CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

While the body of this thesis is a historical study of the relationship between dress and gender, the fundamentals of gender theory cannot go unacknowledged. Without gender theory, the lens this thesis analyses the case studies through would not exist. Jo Paoletti discusses that "the concept of "gender"—in the sense of the acquired cultural traits associated with one's biological sex—is quite new, having been introduced to scientific literature in 1955 by sexologist John Money." [36] Therefore, in the era in which our case studies lived and flouted societal norms, the notion of gender did not exist. It is a modern concept which we view the deviations from prescribed standard through. As proposed by Alison Bankcroft, in her work regarding the gender of the Chevalier d'Éon the eighteenth century,

> This imposition of very specific theory on to a much broader sweep of history and culture is a kind of sexological colonialism that seeks to fit the entirety of human experience into the singular frame, that of contemporaneity. It is problematic for many reasons but in this instance because it ignores the possibility that eighteenth century understanding of what today we call gender and sex is different to current knowledge of the term and denies the simple fact that the past is, by definition, different to the present.[37]

While this argument is discussing the eighteenth century, the same understanding can be applied to nineteenth century society.

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[36] Paoletti, J. (2015) F*ashion, Dress and Gender.* London: Bloomsbury. DOI: 10.5040/9781474280655-BG002

[37] Bancroft, A. (2018). When the Chevalier d'Éon met Alexander McQueen: History, gender and subjectivity in the costumes in Eonnagata. *Studies in Costume and Performance, 3*(1), 11-22. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1386/scp.3.1.11_1, p.14.

Judith Butler's work on gender theory remains a cornerstone for understanding gender from a humanities perspective. Butler proposed that "while people may intend to express their sexual and gender identity, they actually create identities by incorporating, undermining, parodying, affirming, or subverting cultural ideas of sex and gender".[38] Butler has been fundamental in establishing the understanding that gender is not a expression of birth-given, biological sex, but is an accumulation of cultural influences that create a gendered appearance which may deviate from biological sex.

A key notion developed by Butler's work is the act of 'performativity' in gender construction. This acknowledges gender and dressing to convey gender as what Butler calls "a stylised repetition of acts".[39] Lehnert supports Butler's work in stating "there are no "real" identities prior to their performance, and the continual process of performing identities is inescapable, although not necessarily done intentionally."[40] Paoletti summarises that performativity is not about how dress is used to establish and express societal roles, but in fact " the process by which our interactions with societal norms produce our gender as we experience it."[41] Alyssa Adomaitis and Diana Saiki elaborate on Butler's theory, further highlighting that "gender is a social act with the primary male/female genders having greater interactions than others, making each well defined".[42] This echoes a similar sentiment to cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin, who argued that "some genders are more valued which causes the others to be oppressed".[43] While the notion of gender was not established in the nineteenth-century, there were clear indicators of what society deemed appropriate for a man and a woman to be, and deviations from this resulted in society viewing these individuals as abnormal.

Brill recognises that gender is an ongoing process, however "sexual difference is just one factor constituting the subject as a cultural being, along with race, class, sexuality, ability and various others.",

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[38] Lehnert, G. *Gender* in Skov, L. (2010) *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* London:Bloomsbury. DOI: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch8075

[39] Lehnert, G. *Gender* in Skov, L. (2010)

[40] Lehnert, G. *Gender* in Skov, L. (2010)

[41] Paoletti, J. (2015)

[42] Adomaitis, A., & Saiki, D. *Redefining Gender: An Inclusion for All*. in Tortora, P.G. (2010) Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion. London:Bloomsbury. 10.5040/9781847888525.EDch031720

[43] Adomaitis, A., & Saiki, D. in Tortora, P.G. (2010)

therefore gender does not determine identity.[44] This argument is particularly relevant when analysing the case studies of the Ladies of Llangollen and Anne Lister. Society was aware that they were women, but they deviated from female expectations in the way they dressed, and the relationships they were involved in. Their class would have typically been a key forming factor of their cultural identity – as women of middle class gentry – however they rejected the gender class structure in the ways in which they lived.

Despite hailing from a scientific realm, Anne Fausto-Sterling offers a less binary intervention into the understanding of gender; rather than arguing distinctions between nature and nurture, she argues that the two work in cohesion to produce gendered behaviours. While the detailed argument of Fausto-Sterling's gender development theory is centered on biology – analysisng the gendering of intersex people – the outcome determines that 'male' and 'female' is not an a adequate way of categorising gender; "I assert that human sexual development is not always dichotomous and that gender differences fall on a continuum, not into two separate buckets".[45]

This thesis draws upon Butler's gender theory, by identifying factors beyond physical appearance and sartorial dress for the gender formation of the women in question. Butler's theories on performativity – and the construction of gender being a "stylised repetition of acts", created by "incorporating, undermining, parodying, affirming, or subverting cultural ideas of sex and gender" – provide a roadmap to navigate these case studies through.[46] As you will come to learn, through means of travel, education, relationships and defying their prescribed place in society, these women formed a sense of identity that led them to be viewed as ambiguous. Although it is common belief that their dress was the catalyst for these conceptions, this thesis concludes that there is far more to their gender construction than petticoats and pelisses.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Chapter one will conduct a case study into the Ladies of Llangollen, who became notorious for their appearance and cohabitation. This case study relies on imagery mostly created after their deaths, supported by evidence from literary sources. Analysis of these sources reveal Butler and Ponsonby's values of practicality and propriety when it comes to dress practice, with influence from their heritage and

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[44] Brill, D. (2008) Goth Culture: Gender Sexuality and Style. London: Bloomsbury. DOI:10.2752/9781847887184/GOTHCULT0005

[45]Fausto-Sterling, A. (n.d.). *Gender & Sexuality*. Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling. http://www.annefaustosterling.com/fields-of-inquiry/gender/

[46] Lehnert, G. *Gender* in Skov, L. (2010)

geography. It debunks established beliefs that they only wore black and, while their dress read as a statement to oppose fashionable modes, this chapter uses the sources to demonstrate their passivity in Llangollen's society.

Chapter two focuses on Anne Lister, whos story came to light in the 1980s when her coded journals were deciphered, and the explicit content lead her to be recognised as Britain's first modern lesbian. However, it was not until 2019 when her story became truly disseminated, as a result of the period drama, *Gentleman Jack*. This chapter dissects Lister's meticulous journal to understand not only her dress, but the dress of her peers. Two surviving portraits of Lister provide visual support for her written prose. It then turns to modern representations of her, analysing the costumes of *Gentleman Jack*. It then disputes how the costume designers for *Gentleman Jack* used the sources to construct her image for a modern audience, while maintaining the integral core of her character and her unique self-fashioning in the costumes. This chapter proves that despite the contemporary portrayals available to the masses, a true understanding of Lister's dress, and the way she used it to construct her identity, did not exist prior to this thesis.

Chapter three brings this thesis from dress to costume, by considering the life of the English music hall and vaudeville performer, Bessie Bonehill. It considers the boundaries of gender, costume and performance, and how the theatre allowed the exploration of gender illusion, in a period believed to be strict on traditional gender roles. It explores costume's role in creating the differentiation between the constructed character and the uncostumed self. The case study relies on the analysis of playbills and photographs of Bonehill for visual insight, and a range of written reviews which explore Bonehill's on-stage character and her off-stage values. A small selection of surviving costumes were accessended into the Smithsonian Institute archives in the 1980s, and access to photographs of these was granted after correspondence with a curator from the National Museum of American History. These prove an invaluable source as they allow the scholar to see a distinction between the image of Bonehill presented to the masses, and the genuine costuming of her characters.

The closing chapter brings this research to its final analysis, drawing conclusions from the respective case studies to offer new insights into their authentic dress, how their dress was used to form masculine identities. By comparing contemporary artistic representations of the case studies with a plethora of sources, this chapter offers new understanding of the authentic dress of these individuals, and presents new informed knowledge that concludes that in fact, what these women wore really was not all that unusual after all.



Fig 1.1: *'The Rt Honorable Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby'*, James Lynch, 1832, © unknown.

In September 1823, the acclaimed theatre manager, Charles Matthews, wrote to his dear friend, describing two fascinating guests who had recently attended one of his shows:

> Though I had never seen them, I instantaneously knew them. As they are seated, there is not one point to distinguish them from men: the dressing and powdering of the hair; their well-starched neck cloths: the upper part of their habits, which they always wear, even at a dinner party, made precisely like men's coats; and regular black beaver men's hats. They looked exactly like two respectable superannuated old clergymen". [47]

Clearly, these extraordinary visitors made a significant impression on Matthews, and he wrote about them several times over the following months. They were the Ladies of Llangollen, Eleanor Butler (1739-1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755-1831); notorious figures in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society, infamous for their unconventional fashions and eccentric way of life. The Ladies of Llangollen

[47] Hicklin, J. (2010). *The "Ladies of Llangollen" as Sketched by Many Hands; with Notices of Other Objects of Interest in "That Sweetest of Vales"* . London: Fili-Quarian Classics. Retrieved from: https://tinyurl.com/y4flooqm p. 23.

were a source of entertainment for local gossips. As Mavor describes, when the news of their way of life spread, "people were confessing themselves captivated by their romantic mode of life and three years later their fame had travelled so widely that the Queen was asking for plans of the cottage and garden".[48]

This chapter examines Butler and Ponsonby's dress and dress practice and considers why it was unusual within their society. Using a range of visual sources, as well as written accounts, this chapter will argue that, rather than the Ladies of Llangollen explicitly dressing to upset the structure of society, they actually dressed to be practical above all else, in their growing age and reclusive lifestyle, away from active society.

Despite their contemporary notoriety, there is little surviving physical evidence of the lives they led – after their deaths, their possessions were sold off. A close friend of the Ladies remembered that "all their personal ornaments, presents of friends etc. offered to public sale, to be pulled about by the curious and vulgar and then dispersed in every direction".[49] Some accounts recall that their friendship was "celebrated for over half a century in their journals, day-books and letters", however these do not survive in full.[50] Luckily, what does survive are accounts of them in newspapers, obituaries, social comment, drawings and portraiture, among other ephemera. Their notoriety caused them to be visited by a list of notable people, including Charles Matthews, Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth and Anne Lister, which provides an interesting crossover within this thesis. However, not all accounts can be trusted as accurate; on July 24th 1789, *The General Evening Post* published an unflattering and inaccurate article concerning Butler and Ponsonby, titled 'Extraordinary Female Affections', which will be discussed further throughout this chapter. The portraits of Butler and Ponsonby offer the scholar an opportunity to analyse their unconventional approach to dress and identity, thus creating an informed understanding of what they actually wore.

Eleanor Butler was born in 1739 in Cambrai, France, and Sarah Ponsonby was born in 1755 in Dublin, Ireland. Both descended from the Irish gentry; Butler's family were "members of the old catholic gentry, and her father was the sole lineal representative of James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormond", however, the

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[48] Mavor, E. (1971) *The Ladies of Llangollen*. London: Michael Joseph Ltd. London. p. 9.

[49] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 193.

[50] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 11. Both Ponsonby and Butler were supposedly keen keepers of journals.Some extracts of their correspondence and journals survive in the National Library of Wales archive, however, little is found here in regards to their dress.

family existed in genteel poverty.[51] Ponsonby, meanwhile, was "the only and orphaned daughter of Chambré Brabazon Ponsonby, a landowner, [...] and the second of his three wives, Louisa Ponsonby, the daughter of a clerk of the Irish privy council".[52] In 1868, Butler, twenty-nine years old and unhappy in life, and young Ponsonby, thirteen-years old and receiving unwanted sexual advances from an uncle, made the decision to flee overseas and set up home in England together. After several failed attempts, which later became the topic of speculation and contributed to the notoriety of their union – to be discussed later in this chapter – in 1778 they successfully left Ireland and set up life in Wales together; Butler aged thirty-nine and Ponsonby twenty-three years old.[53] The pair found home in Plas Newydd, Llangollen.

Society was shocked to witness their abandonment of the prosperity, status and relative comfort they had in Ireland. They were controversial and divisive characters; some deemed them "the most celebrated virgins in Europe", while others cursed them as "damned sapphists".[54] Their masculine appearance and cohabitation lead society to assume that Butler and Ponsonby were in a homosexual relationship, although this was never confirmed. As Mavor argues,

> …depending as they did upon time and leisure, they were aristocratic, they were idealistic, blissfully free, allowing for a dimension of sympathy between women that would not now be possible outside an avowedly lesbian connection. Indeed, much that we would now associate solely with a sexual attachment was contained in romantic friendship: tenderness, loyalty, sensibility, shared beds, shared tastes, coquetry, even passion.[55]

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[51] Clarke, F. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155

[52] Giffney, N. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155

[53] The pair maintained a relationship with one another throughout the period of failed attempts, although there is little information on this period.

[54] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 9.
Giffney, N. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155. Prince Puckler-Mukau applauded the Ladies as 'certainly the most celebrated virgins in Europe'. Whereas, Hester Thrale, the friend of Doctor Johnson, savaged them as 'damned Sapphists'.

[55] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 11. In the BBC Two documentary *Revealing Anne Lister,* Dr Margaret Reynolds highlights "from about the middle of the 18th century, there was a cult of sensibility, of feeling, and for women in particular it led into something that was called, even at the time, a romantic friendship [...], they would exchange gifts including what we would think of as lovers elements now; locks of hair, rings, precious bits of underwear. There would undoubtedly be the possibility of sharing beds, so how far did it have a sexual element? Well, it may well do. I think there would be a lot of kissing, I think there'd be a lot of touching, i think things might have even gone further than that, but nobody would, in that doing that, would necessarily think that they were contravening any rules" - Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). *Revealing Anne Lister* [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

This supports the theories of scholars, such as Vickery's assessment of the 'separate spheres' ideology.[56] Mavor further contributes that women often "found little cultural reciprocity from the more conservative gentleman and as a consequence of this discrepancy turned to their own sex", additionally supporting the notion that women relied on each other for support which males failed to provide.[57] These romantic friendships were generally deemed more homosocial than homosexual, as Vickery further argues that,

> the idea is that it is all preparatory to marriage [...] it's seen as something they're going to grow out of, something that is helping them prepare sentimentally for married love and I think it's not at all threatening to men under those circumstances. In fact it's a common male fantasy is it not, they're practicing on each other but really they only need a man and then it's all going to be alright, and they're going to grow out of it and leave it behind, but I'm sure that there's a strong sense of that in the early nineteenth-century.[58]

However, this sentiment cannot be applied to Butler and Ponsonby's relationship; it was not used as a preparatory stage for heterosexual marriage, nor was it something they grew out of. As Giffney has noted,

> In 1768, at the age of thirteen, Sarah met the person, sixteen years older than herself, who was to become her life partner and fellow diarist, [...] in 1778 that she intended 'to live and die with Miss Butler.[59]

This decision to abandon societal norms and lead a life free of restrictions from male counterparts is reflected in their dress.[60] After leaving Ireland and establishing life together in Llangollen, able to dress as they pleased with no husbands or family to disapprove of their decisions, their masculine dress was a

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[56] Vickery, A. (1993). Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History. *The Historical Journal, 36*(2), 383-414. Retrieved from https://www-jstor-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stable/2639654?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

[57] Mavor, E. (1971) pp. 88-89. The sentiments of Mavor and Vickery support the concept of Boston marriages, which became more common in the late 19th century, which may highlight that relationships similar to what was shared between Butler and Ponsonby was not so unusual after all.

[58] Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). *Revealing Anne Lister* [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC .

[59] Giffney, N. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155. Although the statement does not confirm any sapphic element to their relationship, it could be considered odd for such a girl to make this controversial decision at such a young age; turning down affluent male suitors to pursue a lifestyle which her family did not approve of, unless there was some kind of gain; whether that be financial, mental, sexual, or emotional.

[60] It is unknown as to whether Butler and Ponsonby dressed in similar ways prior to leaving Ireland, although it is unlikely due to Ponsonby's young age and the fact both women were still reliant on their families wealth to fund their lifestyles.

potent symbol of their man-free friendship, free of the constraints of uncomfortable female fashions or patriarchal bounds.

Their dress caused them to become something of a curiosity within British society at the time: their unfashionable hairstyles and seemably bizarre choice in clothing became a talking point far and wide. Butler and Ponsonby are known to have worn riding habits as their daily dress, therefore the tailored silhouettes, which did not comply with the vogues of British women's dress, contributed as to why society regarded them as masculine in dress and life.

The riding habit took influence from men's fashion, which was evidenced in the structured jacket and often military-inspired embellishments. Despite the beliefs that Butler and Ponsonby's dress was overtly masculine, Blackman has argued that,

> …during the second half of the seventeenth-century the riding habit started a process of evolution that saw it change from being a solely utilitarian garment until, by the mid-eighteenth-century, it had become an essential part of the wardrobe of fashionable middle and upper class women - a position which it retained for many decades [...] it was particularly worn for travelling and increasingly as informal day wear; for walking, visiting and at home.[61]

Several accounts further suggest that Butler and Ponsonby's dress was not particularly controversial. Reverend Thomas Mozley commented that until 1835, "it was a very ordinary thing to meet ladies, who, to save the trouble and ghost of following the fashion, never wore anything but a close-fitting habit".[62] Despite descending from upper-class families, Butler and Ponsonby were not necessarily concerned with being fashionable; a typical concern for a lady of status. As supported by Blackman and Reverend Mozley, the riding habit gained respect as a fashionable item, and was not restricted to horse-riding alone anymore; it became a style of neatness, refinement, respectability and timelessness. As Blackman highlights, its increase in being worn as informal daywear led it to become suitable for the rustic lifestyle Butler and Ponsonby had established for themselves in Llangollen.

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[61] Blackman, C. (2001). Walking Amazons: The Development of the Riding Habit in England during the Eighteenth Century. *Costume*, 35(1), 47-58. Retrieved from https://www-euppublishing-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1179/cos.2001.35.1.47, p. 48.
Blackman also argues that, "The fabrics, colours and trimmings used copied those of the male suit as well as its cut and construction, and it continued to be made by male tailors long after most other garments for women were being made by the newly established female mantua makers - a tradition that continues to the present day. While the habit jacket aped men's coats in almost every detail, both it and the skirt always followed the currently fashionable female silhouette, being worn over habit-stays, or jumps, and hooped petticoats or pads in order to achieve this".

[62] Mavor, E. (1971) pp. 195-196.

While fashionable dress may not have been a priority for Butler or Ponsonby, they did indulge in other habits fitting their class and status. As William Gilpin, cited by Mavor, has noted, "no wonder that their shoe bills were quite as substantial as their hefty yearly bill for cheese, and that Eleanor would record that their riding habits, 'particularly mine', were 'absolutely worn to rags'".[63] Therefore, it shows differing priorities for the Ladies, deviating from the class from which they descended, as any typical self-respecting upper-class lady of the time would not have worn anything that could be regarded as 'rags'. Although a hefty cheese bill was a justified expense in their eyes, their dress was a lesser concern, and spending money on it, or adhering to the trends, was not a priority. The semiotics of these dress decisions can be interpreted to represent a practical, or an implied, meaning. For example, the sole reason – pardon the pun – their shoe bill was significant is because they were avid walkers; which was not uncommon for women of the time, and therefore wore their shoes down as a result. The cost of repairing and replacing shoes was a practical one, rather than aesthetic, to maintain their hobby of walking, whereas their dress was not considered necessary.

Despite their 'hefty cheese bill', their lack of financial resources may have, in turn, contributed to their dress choices. Giffney noted that Butler and Ponsonby "became famous as the cultured and refined, yet financially insecure, Ladies of Llangollen".[64] Although hailing from gentried families, Butler's family lived in genteel poverty, and when they departed for Wales, they left with the prospects of being "self-supporting, of delighting in simple food and restrained pleasures".[65] However they failed to be self-supporting; "their peace and security depended upon the benevolence of two people", Eleanor's brother, John Butler, and close friend, Mrs Tighe, and therefore lacked the guarantee of a comfortable life.[66] As they had rejected the decision to marry, the two women were still financially dependent on their families; an unideal situation as their families did not wholly agree with their chosen way of life. In 1783, when Butler's father passed away, Eleanor was not mentioned in the will, and therefore inherited nothing. As a result of this, the women were frugal, and although not affluent, there were areas of their lives in which they prioritised spending the disposable money they *did* have, over their dress:

> Having made a deliberate decision to retire from the world, they spent the greater part of their days corresponding with friends, reading, building up a large library and making

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[63] William Gilpin, W. *Observations of Several Parts of the Counties Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex also on Several Parts of North Wales* (1809), p.180, cited in Mavor, E. (1971) p. 59.

[64] Giffney, N. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155

[65] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 70.

[66] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 67.

> alterations to Plas Newydd, which took on a fashionable Gothic look. Their garden, landscaped under their direction, became a popular attraction for visitors.[67]

Subsequent to their cheese bill, the statement acknowledges their income being prioritised to give their home a fashionable look, as opposed to themselves a fashionable dress.[68] Hailing from upper-class families, there were habits of upper-class lifestyle that they kept, such as employing servants, which they would have been raised with. These things would have affected their quality of life, whereas dress would have had little-to-no effect when reflecting on the way in which they lived, and would have had no real effect on their reclusive lifestyle, fashionable or not.

A more implied interpretation for Butler and Ponsonby's lack of concern for their dress can be inferred when analysing the timeline of their lives. When they settled in Llangollen in 1780, Butler was around forty-one years old, Ponsonby around twenty-five years old. While there was a significant age difference between the women, and Ponsonby was still comparatively young, they had established the life they wanted to lead, affirmed by the point previously highlighted that Ponsonby planned to live and die with Butler. They no longer felt the need to impress society, or use their dress to do so. Their unconventional dress was not an intentional statement to appear anti-fashion, but more so that they did not allow dress to hinder them living their lives. It is not necessarily a statement to overthrow patriarchal restrictions, but more so to disregard the restrictions of fashionable dress itself. Their dress is an expression of total security and total confidence in themselves, as opposed to conforming to the system – whether that be the social or dress system. Here we see a demonstration of Butler's theory, as the Ladies subvert the cultural expectations of how they should behave. The Ladies chose comfort and happiness over physically, and metaphorically, rigid social design for women.

Regional variances will have had influence on their appearance also. While riding habits were not the vogue of the time, it did not forbid other women from wearing them. General Yorke, who personally knew and admired Butler and Ponsonby when he was a young boy, and went on to live at Plas Newydd himself, "stoutly declared that such habits had been worn by many Welsh ladies of the time".[69] Therefore, while visitors of Butler and Ponsonby's from elsewhere may have found their choice of dress foreign, it

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[67] Clarke, F. (2019). *Pride month DIB entry: the 'Ladies of Llangollen'*. Retrieved from https://www.ria.ie/ga/node/98155

[68] It is possible they preferred to spend money on giving their home a fashionable look, rather than themselves, due to the increased number of people visiting the grounds of Plas Newydd. Although tourists visited the grounds of Plas Newydd after learning of Butler and Ponsonby, it is not often that people would see the ladies themselves. Uninterested in giving themselves a fashionable look, giving their home a fashionable look kept up a degree of propriety to the visitors.

[69] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 196.

will not have been so unusual to Welsh women. In addition, while the Ladies were Irish gentry, they *were* living in Wales, and they *were not* British. It is possible that Butler and Ponsonby did not feel the same pressures to conform to British fashions in the same way that British women did. Mavor also notes that,

> If not eccentric, the two friends were certainly old fashioned in using hair powder after the turn of the century; they had, moreover, never left off having their hair cropped in the 'Titus' style which, like the hair with their habits and their beaver hats which, though fairly common in France during the *Directoire*, had never been so fashionable in England, where they were deemed oddly masculine particularly to urban eyes...[70]

This quote highlights that not only were the Ladies' hairstyles behind the times, but their dress was not cohesive with any up-to-the-minute British fashions; more so with those of post-revolutionary France – the *Directoire* being the period between 1795-1799. This raises questions as to whether the Ladies were conscious that their dress choices resonated more with the French, or whether they were just being more economical and disregarding the ephemeral fashions, as Reverend Mozley suggested. A valid justification for Mavor's notion may align with the fact that in the period of the French Revolution (1789-1799), Butler and Ponsonby were in some of their prime years, and therefore their dress from this period resonates with their youth. Furthermore, Butler was born in France, and has shown evidence of being a supporter of the Bourbon house – the reason for which she was gifted the Croix de St Louis – therefore highlighting that she was a Francophile.[71] In addition, their Irish heritage may inadvertently align them to be more anti-England, and when combined with their French and Irish heritage, unconsciously reject the English modes through expressing their loyalties elsewhere.

Mavor continues to highlight,

> Eleanor wore the Croix on every important occasion; round her neck, as a cordon round her waist, and in triplicate in her buttonhole, together with a large harp brooch signifying allegiance to loyalist Ireland. In addition she sported a life size silver fleur-de-lis pinned to her breast. But this was not all. During the 90's both Ladies had begun having their hair cropped in the fashionable 'Titus' style, and this, together with the adoption of a

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[70] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 196. The Titus style haircut is recognised as the earliest hairstyle that was accepted for women to wear their hair short and cropped, however it was not overly popular in the United Kingdom. It was most popular in post-revolution France, growing from the sinister origins of executioners cutting their victim's hair short to ensure it did not interfere with the guillotine, however it became popular with several ladies in fashionable Paris, although it still had a vast number of critics for being masculine and unladylike.

[71] Butler in particular showed that she was a royalist, not a republican. By supporting the Bourbon family, she was supporting the restoration of the French monarchy as the Bourbons were the first family to return to the throne post-revolution and post-Napoleonic period. Mavor notes that the croix was "a pre-revolutionary award made only to officers and gentlemen for outstandingly meritorious conduct on the field of battle. The order had been discontinued during the Revolution, however, and it is possible that the exiled King had considered it now a suitable souvenir to send to so ardent and distinguished a supporter of the Bourbons; one so ardent indeed that some time later she was, a matter of principle, to refuse the tempting offer of a lock of Napoleon's hair." Mavor, E. (1971) p.177. Although it is possible that Butler and Ponsonby were anti-England in their beliefs due to their Irish heritage, Butler being born in France and being a supporter of the Bourbons means that they were unlikely to be pro-Napoleon, but perhaps still favoured French fashions for reasons previously highlighted.

> mode more fashionable in France than in England, namely the wearing of beaver hats with their habits, gave them, to unpractised eyes, an oddly masculine appearance. [72]

Butler's wearing of the harp (which is historically an Irish symbol) , her wearing of the Croix (which showed allegiance to her French heritage and loyalism to the Bourbon family), and wearing the fleur-de-lis, another French symbol, displayed loyalties to nations other than Britain.[73] While her inactivity in British fashions may not have been an active rejection of the modes, by wearing elements of Irish and French dress – such as the beaver hats, which were popular in French *Directoire* fashion, but never really in England – it does appear that way.

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[72] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 177.

[73] The harps "development appears to have been in three stages, strikingly parallel to those of Irish political history. They cover roughly the fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century - the rich Norman-Irish period; the mid-sixteenth to the late seventeenth century - the time of violence and English incursion under Elizabeth I and Cromwell; and the late seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century - the time of complete dissolution for the old Irish society and the establishment of Anglo-Irish society". Rimmer, J. (1964). The Morphology of the Irish Harp. *The Galpin Society Journal, 17*, 39-49. https://doi.org/10.2307/841312. Today the harp is still present in Irish culture; on the Irish Euro, the coat of arms, and within the logo of arguably Ireland's most famous export, Guinness.

The fleur-de-lis has long been associated with the French crown; "the French kings long used the fleur-de-lis as an emblem of their sovereignty is indisputable", and as France is historically a Catholic country, the fleur-de-lis became "at one and the same time, religious, political, dynastic, artistic, emblematic, and symbolic," especially in French heraldry. Britannica. (2017). *Fleur-de-lis*. Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/fleur-de-lis.

Pastoureau, M. & Garvie, F. (1997). *Heraldry: Its Origins and Meaning*. London: Thames & Hudson. p. 98.



Fig 1.2: *Colonial Riding Habit*, unknown, 1770-1775, © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Fig 1.2 is an example of a fashionable riding habit from when Ponsonby would have been between fifteen and twenty-years-old, and Butler between thirty-one and thirty-six-years-old. These would have been considered some of the Ladies' prime years, and this habit was fashionable within Britain at the time. However, it does not resemble the riding habits that Butler and Ponsonby wore, in regards to colour, detail, shape and style, which contradicts the idea that their dress choices were representative of the fashions of their youth. The only resemblance appears in the skirt, which was similar in length and fullness. Grazing the ankle and, while not falling entirely straight down, the skirt is not overly full; perhaps with one or two petticoats beneath it. An issue here, and to be discussed further in this chapter, is that we do not have any reliable images that show Butler and Ponsonby's dress in full. The images we have created are from written accounts and pirated images, and while they offer an image, there is no guarantee it truly resembles the skirts Butler and Ponsonby actually wore. In addition, the Ladies of Llangollen are nearly always depicted holding the skirts of their riding habits, as they are pictured walking, therefore distorting the visible length of the skirt. The habit jacket does not bear resemblance to

Butler and Ponsonby's dress in regards to the peplum and the adornments on the jacket. The peplum of this fashionable riding habit is significantly larger than any that Butler and Ponsonby have been depicted in; likely because Butler and Ponsonby's dress concerned practicality and not worn for actual riding. Addressing the adornments on the bodice, fig 1.2 has ornate braiding and buttons, whereas Butler and Ponsonby's were plain and fuss-free. These decorative buttons and braids became fashionable, along with the colour red, in the eighteenth-century as they resembled British military uniforms. Wearing this masculine style, which now further resembled the military dress, showed a sense of patriotism and solidarity. This could also be a further justification for why this habit does not resemble Butler and Ponsonby's; as they expressed loyalty to Ireland and France, and in turn perceivably denied references of British militaria.

Butler and Ponsonby's dress practise may have further been influenced by their rustic surrounds in Llangollen:

> To the country eye [...] the wearing of the habit was not all that extraordinary; people in Ireland did not consider it necessary to change whilst in the country, the habit being far better suited to the exigencies of rustic life. It would thus seem likely that it was not only for reasons of economy, but in pursuance of Irish custom that the two ladies continued to wear this form of dress after they had settled in Wales.[74]

It seems clear, therefore, that while they may have misplaced in a bustling urban city, for their rural way of life, their choice to wear riding habits was practical above all else. It was an indication that they did not completely abandon their Irish values and way of life, and a visual expression of their foreignness.

On the contrary, there were instances in which Butler and Ponsonby recognised that riding habits were not appropriate dress, demonstrating some consciousness of fashion and dress within the company they kept:

> A note from the Duke of Gloucester does suggest that the Ladies themselves felt doubtful of their habits, however suitable for Plas Newydd and even for visiting the surrounding gentry, were not quite the garb in which to receive royalty. For, in a letter of charm and tact, the young man was to write expressing mortification 'in consequence of their not chusing [sic] to dine with me in the Dress they usually wear, as I hoped they considered me as a friend and therefore would not have thought in necessary to make an alteration in their dress on my account.[75]

It is evident that the Ladies chose not to wear their habits when meeting with the Duke of Gloucester, although – frustratingly – he does not disclose what they did wear instead. This indicates that while the

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[74] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 195.

[75] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 195.

Ladies seemed not to care about following fashion, they *were* conscious of etiquette and propriety in dress.

Their concern with propriety may be further reflected in their outrage at an article published in *The General Evening Post.* On July 24th 1789, the newspaper published 'Extraordinary Female Affections', which examined the dynamics of Butler and Ponsonby's relationship, and their dress:

> Miss Butler is tall and masculine, she always wears a riding habit, hangs her hat with the air of a sportsman in the hall, and appears in all respects as a young man, if we accept the petticoats which she still retains. Miss Ponsonby, on the contrary, is polite and effeminate, fair and beautiful […] They live in neatness, elegance and taste.[76]

Mavor suggests that "this piece though garbled yet contained much that was broadly true", but in regards to their appearance, social footing and the details of their departure from Ireland, it was inaccurate and misleading: "so far from being tall and masculine and 'in all respects as a young man', Miss Butler, shortish, inclined to be fat and all of fifty-one".[77] This article was the catalyst to lead people to believe that Butler and Ponsonby were lesbians, which would have tainted peoples' respect for the pair, and tarnished the image of propriety which they were so concerned about. However, it was not an image of propriety they could always keep together; Mavor notes, with particular reference to Butler in 1827, "people noticed that the front of her habit was now spotted with dropped food and that the treasured Croix was coated with spilled butter and sprinkled with falling hair powder".[78] This may be a result of dwindling ability that comes with old age, unable to physically take as much care of her personal appearance, as 1827 was the year Butler became very ill.

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[76] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 82-83.

[77] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 82-83.

[78] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 184.

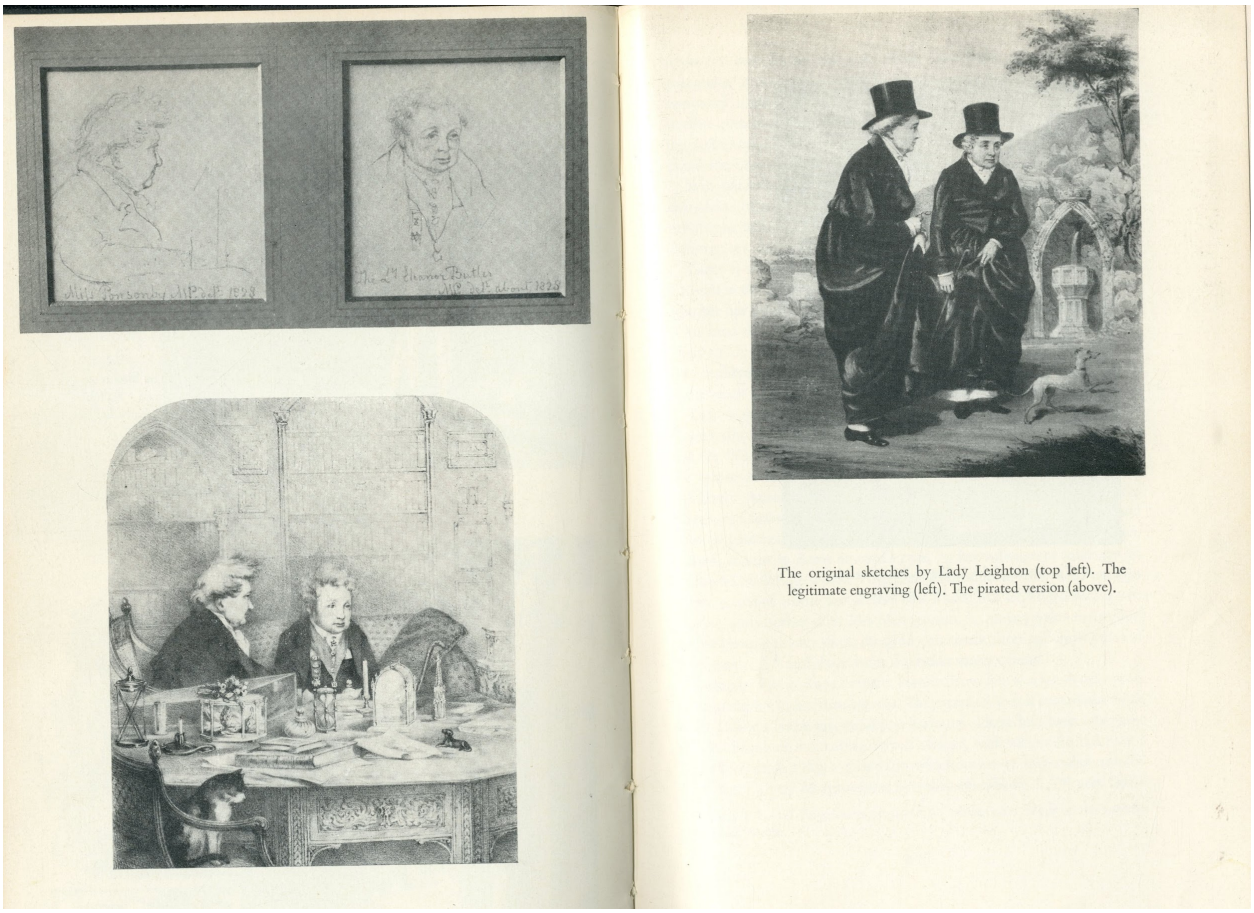

Fig 1.3: Pages scanned from *The Ladies of Llangollen*, Mavor, 1971, © Elizabeth Mavor.

It was believed that Butler refused to sit for her portrait, resulting in a lack of portraiture of the Ladies of Llangollen to support this research. However, Mavor describes that:

> It was in the library in the year of her serious illness that there was taken what was reputedly the first and last sketch of them together. Mrs Parker's daughter Mary, who was a gifted amateur artist, made secret drawings from the show of the library curtains, while Miss Ponsonby and her mother engaged Lady Eleanor in conversation, that decided lady having always detested the mere idea of having her portrait taken, or so we are told.[79]

Fig 1.3 features pages scanned from Mavor's *Ladies of Llangollen*, which displays a copy of the secret sketches which were created in the last years of Butler's life in the top left corner, the final legitimate engraving completed by Lady Leighton (Mrs Parker's daughter, Mary) after their passing beneath the originals, and on the right-hand side of the pages, the pirated version of the image that was marketed to

[79] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 184.

the masses.[80] In all the imagery, Butler is pictured on the right and Ponsonby is pictured on the left, in a side profile view.[81] There is no known reason for Butler's disapproval of being drawn, so the reasoning is left open for interpretation. Did they not want to be documented together? Unlikely, due to their existing notoriety throughout Britain, having received many visitors, and been the subject of journalistic attention. As it was Butler who resented the idea of a portrait, and she was the one who was scathingly critisised in *The General Evening Post,* as opposed to the compliments bestowed upon Ponsonby, despite their old age and lack of concern for dress, Butler naturally will have felt reticent about her appearance after such public criticism, and therefore perhaps did not want her appearance to be preserved through portraiture. This is something we will never truly know.

[80] It is not clarified in Mavor as to which year the initial sketch was produced. As Mavor highlights, it was in the year of her serious illness. In Mavor's text she highlights that Butler became extremely ill in 1827, and the sketches were completed by Lady Leighton, who from the text we can infer is Lady Parker's daughter, Mary. Other sources available online claim the sketches to have been made by Lady Parker in 1829, which is the year Butler died. The National Museum of Wales highlights that Lady Parker visited in 1829, and the drawing was not completed fully until after both Ladies had passed away. Sarah Ponsonby passed away in 1931, so we can deduce that this is when the image in fig 1.4 was produced.

[81] This is likely as it was easier for the artist to have a full view of Butler's face without being caught sketching, as she was almost fully blind at this point. It is unknown as to whether Ponsonby was aware of Lady Leighton sketching them, or whether she asked her to do it.



Fig 1.4: *'The Ladies of Llangollen' (Sarah Ponsonby; Lady (Charlotte) Eleanor Butler)*, Richard James Lane after Lady Mary Leighton, 1831, © National Portrait Gallery.

After both Butler and Ponsonby had passed away, the secret sketches were worked up into full body images set in their library, and copies were sold to raise money for charity.[82] As the portrait was completed after their deaths, with a number of years between the initial sketching and the completion of the final image, it can be deduced that the final portrait cannot be wholly representative of true

[82] National Museum Wales. (2017). *A Story on a Plate: The Ladies of Llangollen*. Retrieved from https://museum.wales/blog/2017-08-25/A-Story-on-a-Plate-The-Ladies-of-Llangollen/ .

resemblance, as it was drawn mostly from memory.[83] The grandeur of both Butler and Ponsonby's funerals highlight their infamy and the public's admiration for them.[84] As this image was being sold to raise money, it is possible the artist emphasised certain elements of their dress or surroundings to construct this image of what the public believes to have been Butler and Ponsonby's life, on the basis of what had been portrayed of them through literary comment, as opposed to a truly accurate depiction.

Both Butler and Ponsonby are sitting in either their famous riding habits, or dark coloured great coats. Unfortunately, only a fraction of their dress can be seen due to the angles they were drawn from and as they are pictured sitting behind a desk. Around Butler's neck, we can see what we can deduce from Mavor's writings to be the Croix St Louis, and a selection of other brooches and adornments, although the rest are unclear. [85]

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[83] National Museum Wales. (2017). *A Story on a Plate: The Ladies of Llangollen*. Retrieved from https://museum.wales/blog/2017-08-25/A-Story-on-a-Plate-The-Ladies-of-Llangollen/ . It is believed the artist, Lady Leighton, returned to Plas Newydd after Ponsonby's death in 1831, but prior to the sale of the property in 1831, to complete the image and set the ladies in an image of the study they were originally sketched in, although there is no affirmative evidence of this.

[84] Mavor notes that "the funeral (of Butler) was almost royal. The bier, supported by 12 bearers, was followed by a procession which included four clergymen, two physicians and two surgeons." Mavor, E. (1971) p. 187.

[85] As this image was produced from a casual interaction between the Ladies of Llangollen, Lady Parker and her daughter, and Butler was unaware of the fact that she was being sketched, it adds authenticity to the reporting the Butler would wear the Croix de St Louis for all occasions; Butler would not have dressed any different for this visit than any other with close friends.



Fig 1.5: *'The Rt Honble Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby'*, James Lynch, 1832, © unknown.

Lady Leighton's drawing was then pirated by James Henry Lynch, who produced fig 1.5. This is the most well-known image of Butler and Ponsonby, which was "mass produced and featured on a large range of tourist souvenirs, postcards and the covers of many books". [86] Having pirated the original sketches, Lynch's image replicates the Ladies in the same angles, but this time situates them outdoors, and it allows

[86] National Museum Wales. (2017). *A Story on a Plate: The Ladies of Llangollen*. Retrieved from https://museum.wales/blog/2017-08-25/A-Story-on-a-Plate-The-Ladies-of-Llangollen/

us to observe more of their dress.[87] The Ladies are pictured in black riding habits, with high-necked shirts, beaver hats, and Butler is holding a cane. As this is the most circulated image of the Ladies of Llangollen, this image may be the reason why it is believed that the women wore black, whereas the subsequent sources that are going to be discussed lead towards the truth that they actually wore blue riding habits. While lighter and more vibrant colours had previously been fashionable, by 1785 the mode had shifted to darker colours, with one lady noting that: "my habit is what they call Pitch coulour - a sort of blackish green not beautiful but the most stilish now worn. Dark blues are very general - indeed all dark coulours are fashionable".[88] Although blue was fashionable, it was also very general; noting that Butler and Ponsonby were not striving to be fashionable, but more so wearing a general colour. If anything, the colour will have been most suitable for their rustic lifestyle. Although it could have been possible that the Ladies of Llangollen changed their riding habits from blue to black within the period they were not pictured, nor had any visitors document their dress, it is highly unlikely given their lack of concern for changing their dress in all accounts discussed. As noted, this image was used as tourism memorabilia for the area of Llangollen, which may have stimulated the artists decision to depict them in black. Leighton's original sketch was a vague pencil outline, and the final set image in fig 1.4 omits any colour, but uses enough tone to display Butler and Ponsonby were wearing dark colours. As blue was a common, and rather fashionable, colour for women's riding habits at the time, Butler and Ponsonby wearing blue may not have seemed so unusual. Lynch made the executive decision to portray the Ladies of Llangollen in black habits to further masculinise Butler and Ponsonby – as black was still a colour predominantly reserved for men's fashions – and emphasis their oddities in order to sell more artwork of them, by contributing to the narrative of these perceivably masculine, old lesbians in the area.

[87] We can deduce the location to be the grounds of Plas Newydd as Butler and Ponsonby were notorious home birds.

[88] Blackman, C. (2001) p. 52.



Fig 1.6: *Lady (Charlotte) Eleanor Butler; Sarah Ponsonby*, unknown, c. 1810-1823, © National Portrait Gallery.

Although fig 1.6 omits any detail of their dress, it emphasises the obscure silhouette that the Ladies of Llangollen were recognised for. The rather heavy-set silhouette seems to be emphasised with additional volume to the rear of the habit, their skirts cut to expose their short ankles and feet, the only white appearing to be their shirt or stock, and the absence of a hat exposes their cropped Titus-styled hair.[89] The artist clearly wanted the silhouette to be emphasised, to highlight the overall obscurity of their appearance. It highlights that even without all the fine details, they were odd in appearance; if you saw

[89] As the bustle was not yet invented, the other possible aid to add volume to the rear of their habits may have been a bum roll, although this is also unlikely for Butler and Ponsonby.
Fashion Institute of Technology. (2018). *Bum Roll*. Fashion History Timeline.https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/bum-roll/

these figures walking in the distance, it was evident they were not two regular women of the upper echelons of society. It displays how their dress was perceived by the masses, as this is the most that people would often get to see them, unless they got an opportunity to meet them in person up-close, which few had the privilege of doing as they were selective with their visitors. It can be deduced that society saw nothing pretty about them; two masculine, obscured figures, with no attempts to beautify or feminise themselves, to make an effort to adhere to popular fashions. In Sir Walter Scott's recall of the Ladies of Llangollen in his memoirs, he notes that their "petticoats were so tucked up", which could explain the extra volume within their skirt.[90]



Fig 1.7: *The Ladies of Llangollen 1819*, Lady Susan Sitwell, 1819, © The National Library of Wales.

[90] Hicklin, J. (2010) p. 26-27.

While the sketches by Lady Leighton are believed to be the first and only true drawing of the Ladies of Llangollen, fig 1.7 displays a drawing created in 1819. It is unknown as to whether the Ladies were aware of this image being created, likely not due to Butler's resistance to being drawn, however there is evidence of the artist visiting Plas Newydd in 1819, which supports the credibility of this artwork.[91] It can be inferred that Butler is pictured on the left, as the shorter of the two, and often pictured holding a cane. Butler and Ponsonby are pictured minus their famous beaver hats, but the rest of their dress appears consistent with the imagery created of them a decade later.[92] The image is rather unflattering and not complementary to the women, lacking detail and refinement. They are pictured in deep-blue riding habits, with white stocks or ruffled shirts. In the later dated imagery of Butler and Ponsonby, their shirts appear to have stiff, starched necks.[93] Except for this small difference, their dress appears to change very little when compared with the images of their later life.[94]

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[91] Two letters in the NLW, one dated 19 November 1819, from Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, to Mrs Sitwell [of Ferney Hall], staying at Gwersyllt Park, Wrexham [the home of the Williams family] show that Butler and Ponsonby met Mrs Sitwell at least once (according to the undated second letter) and were planning to meet again. Anonymous. (n.d.). *Ladies of Llangollen - Portraits*. Early Tourists in Wales. https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/attractions/mansions-and-grounds/ladies-of-llangollen/descriptions-of-eleanor-butler-and-sarah-ponsonby/ladies-of-llangollen-portraits/

[92] It is possible that this drawing was produced in the grounds of Plas Newydd, and that is why Ladies are pictured without any kind of headwear. It would have been very unusual for them to have been seen in public without their beaver hats, or at least bonnets.

[93] Langley Moore notes that "the vogue for ruffles, which began in the 17th century and lasted a long way into the 18th, was brought in by men, and women copied it from them. What has it in common with this, the high starch neck cloth which came in at the end of the 18th century, when ruffles had finally gone out? [...] What they've got in common, as you doubtless observed is that they're strikingly unsuitable for any kind of work which requires physical activity". Langley Moore, D.,(Presenter). (1957). Sense and Nonsense Fashion. (Episode 2) [Television series episode] in *Men, Women and Clothes.* BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/what-we-wore/zfhx92p,. Although Butler and Ponsonby did not do any active work, they were regular walkers and often tended to the garden at Plas Newydd, for which these ruffles and neckcloths will not have been practical dress. However it does tie in to their image of proprietary for when they are walking and visited by guests.

[94] A fair comment cannot be made to comment on if it had significantly changed from their earlier life, as there is no imagery to depict this.

One of the most detailed images of the Ladies of Llangollen is pictured in fig 1.8.



Fig 1.8: *The Last Summer*, Lady Delamere, April 27th, 1828, © unknown.

It is the most detailed and colourful image of Butler and Ponsonby, unlike others, displaying them in full length and full colour.[95] Unlike most, Delamere did not use Lady Leighton's sketches as a starting point for their faces. Here, Butler's skirt appears to be significantly shorter than Ponsonby's, exposing her petticoats underneath, whereas Ponsonby is holding hers up. It raises the question as to whether this could be a visualisation of how Butler referred to her habit as 'rags'. Damaged by all their walking and the years of not changing fashions, perhaps the bottom of the skirt was so damaged that it tore away, or the Ladies had cut it away to appear slightly more presentable. Here, we can see the most clear visual representation of their dress, which draw similarities to the riding jackets pictured in fig 1.9.

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[95] The image features in black and white in Mavor's *Ladies of Llangollen*, from which we learn the portrait is called '*The Last Summer*', which affirms the date, as 1828 was the Ladies' last summer together before Butler passed in 1829. We do not know if Delamere ever visited Plas Newydd to create this painting while the Ladies were alive and present, or if it was produced from memory – there is no evidence to support. Butler on the right, significantly shorter in stature, supported a cane for her old age and ailing health, adorned with the Croix de St Louis and countless other jewellery from which written accounts from contemporaries attribute her to wearing. Ponsonby is pictured on the left, supporting Butler and far less adorned than her elderly counterpart.



Fig 1.9: Riding coats, unknown, c.1775, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig 1.9 displays a pair of riding coats, c. 1775. The blue riding jacket in particular appears to resemble Butler and Ponsonby's style; plain and absent of any ornate motifs or decorative buttons, unlike the brown riding jacket. These jackets have larger waist peplums than those worn by Butler and Ponsonby; a justification for this being that when worn for actual horse-riding, the peplums of these jackets would sit nicely over the back of the horse, still creating a skirt effect. As there is little-to-no evidence of Butler and Ponsonby riding, particularly in their later life, they did not require this function.

The numerous literary accounts from Butler and Ponsonby's contemporaries further support their obscure appearance, and confirm that they wore blue riding habits, despite the popular belief that they wore black.

In 1820, the Ladies attended the show of theatre manager, Charles Matthews. In the days following, Matthews wrote to his dear friend, describing the visit from Butler and Ponsonby, with a particular focus on their appearance:

> The dear inseparable inimitable, Lady Butler and Miss Ponsonby, were in the boxes here on Friday. They came twelve miles from Llangollen, and returned, as they never sleep from home. Oh, such curiosities! I was nearly convulsed. I could scarcely get on for the first ten minutes after my eye caught them. Though I had never seen them, I instantaneously knew them. As they are seated, there is not one point to distinguish them from men: the dressing and powdering of the hair; their well-starched neckcloths: the upper part of their habits, which they always wear, even at a dinner party, made precisely like men's coats; and regular black beaver men's hats. They looked exactly like two respectable superannuated old clergymen; one the picture of Boruwlaski. I was highly flattered, as they never were in the theatre before. [96]

He concluded the letter stating he had received an invitation from "the dear old gentlemen" to call on them at Plas Newydd, to thank him for his entertainment. In a subsequent letter, following another interaction with the Ladies, he wrote:

> Well, I have seen them, heard them, touched them. The pets, "the Ladies," as they are called, dined here yesterday - Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, the curiosities of Llangollen mentioned by Miss Seward in her letters, about the year 1760. I mentioned to you in a former letter the effect they produced upon me in public, but never shall I forget the first burst yesterday upon entering the drawing-room: to find the dear antediluvian darlings, attired for dinner in the same manified dress, with the Croix de St Louis, and other orders, and myriads of large brooches, with stones large enough for snuff boxes, stuck in their starched neckcloths! I have not room to describe their most fascinating persons. I have an invitation from them, which I fear I cannot accept. They returned home last night, fourteen miles, after twelve o'clock. They have not slept one night from home for above forty years. I longed to put Lady Eleanor under a bell-glass, and bring her to Highgate for you to look at.[97]

While this correspondence does not address their riding habits, it acknowledges their "manified dress". This is addressing the semiotics of Butler and Ponsonby, not focusing on just their dress to construct this masculine image, but an accumulation of contributing factors which form their odd exterior; the 'manified dress', the 'dressing and powdering of the hair', and other idiosyncrasies such as their 'myriads of large brooches, with stones large enough for snuff boxes'. While he deems the riding habits masculine, it is the styling and the way in which Butler and Ponsonby wear them with the other elements, and the scenarios in which they wear them, that make the Ladies of Llangollen so notoriously peculiar.

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[96] Hicklin, J. (2010) p. 23. "One the picture of Boruwlaski' can be assumed to mean Józef Boruwlaski, the Polish dwarf, of 3 feet and 3 inches tall, and musician who "was exhibited around the salons and courts of Europe" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. National Portrait Gallery. (n.d.). *Joseph Boruwlaski* . National Portrait Gallery. https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp00489/joseph-boruwlaski?search=sas&sText=Boruwlaski When can deduce that he is referring to Eleanor Butler with this comparison, as she is often the one commented on for her short height.

[97] Hicklin, J. (2010) p. 24.

In 1822, Anne Lister – the subject of the next chapter of this thesis – made the journey from Halifax to Llangollen, to visit the Ladies. Anne recalls the encounter in her journal:

> Shewn into the room next the library, the breakfast room, waited a minute or 2, & then came Miss Ponsonby. A large woman so as to waddle in walking but, tho', not taller than myself. In a blue, shortish-waisted cloth habit, the jacket unbuttoned shewing a plain plaited frilled habit shirt - a thick white cravat, rather loosely put on - hair powdered, parted, I think, down the middle in front, cut a moderate length all round & hanging straight tolerably thick. The remains of a very fine face, Coarsish white cotton stockings. Ladies slipper shoes cut low down, the foot hanging a little over. Altogether a very odd figure. Yet she had no sooner entered into conversation than I forgot all this & my attention was wholly taken by her manners & conversation.[98]

Lister's meticulous journaling breathed life into the static artwork that displays Butler and Ponsonby's visible appearance, allowing us to understand further aspects of their mannerisms and movements. Lister's journal entry allows us to create a mental image of the Ladies' dress, in the period between artworks, and aids to fill the gaps in time. Her account further confirms a lack of changes to Butler and Ponsonby's dress, as it appears consistent with Matthews' account, and the 1819 artwork by Sitwell. As you will come to learn in the next chapter, Lister was often highly critical of the dress of her peers, down to fine details such as buttons and sleeve linings, offering reassurance that this is a fairly detailed and accurate depiction of Ponsonby. Lister was also known for exaggerating and dramatising situations, but her description of Ponsonby is mostly descriptive and not critical. She writes from a place of admiration as she is "wholly taken by her manners and conversation".[99] While she omits any insinuation that Ponsonby is masculine, she does confirm that she is 'altogether a very odd figure'.

In 1825, Sir Walter Scott documented his visit to Plas Newydd in his memoirs:

> At Llangollen your papa was waylaid by the celebrated 'Ladies' - viz. Lady Eleanor Butler and the Honourable Miss Ponsonby, who having been one or both crossed in love, forswore all dreams of matrimony in the heyday of youth, beauty and fashion, and selected this charming spot for the repose of their now time-honoured virginity. It was many a day, however, before they could get implicity credit for being the innocent friends they were, among the people of the neighbourhood; for their elopement from Ireland had been performed under suspicious circumstances; and as Lady Eleanor arrived here in her natural aspect of a pretty girl, while Miss Ponsonby had condescended to accompany her in the garb of a smart footman in buckskin breeches, years and years elapsed ere full justice was done to the character of their romance. We proceeded up the hill and found everything about them and their habitation odd and extravagant beyond report. Imagine two women, one apparently seventy, the other sixty-five, dressed in heavy blue riding habits, enormous shoes, and men's

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[98] Whitbread, H. (2010). *The Secret Diaries Of Miss Anne Lister: Vol. 1: I Know My Own Heart* (2nd ed.). England: Virago Modern Classics. p. 220.

[99] As Lister herself was often the recipient of scathing comments regarding her masculine appearance and dress, she does not focus on Ponsonby's masculinity, perhaps as she sympathises with the Ladies of Llangollen on being outcast oddities in their respective societies.

> hats, with their petticoats so tucked up, that at the first glance of them, fussing and tottering about their porch in the agony of expectation, we took them for a couple of hazy or crazy old sailors. On nearer inspection, they both wear a world of brooches, rings, &c., and Lady Eleanor positively orders - several stars and crossed, and a red ribbon, exactly like a K.C.B. To crown all, they have crop heads, shaggy, rough, busht, and as white as snow, the one with age alone, the other assisted by a sprinkling of powder. The elder lady is almost blind, and every way much decayed; the other, the ci-devant groom, in good preservation."[100]

Scott further confirms the portrayal of Butler and Ponsonby's dress and appearance in other artworks and accounts; with their rough powdered hair, heavy masculine dress and excessive adornments. Scott makes the comment, "we took them for a couple of hazy or crazy old sailors", which implies their even more convincing masculine appearance to be mistaken as men. Despite their masculine appearance, there is no real evidence that they intentionally attempted to deceive people of their gender identity, except for one occasion.

As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, several failed attempts to flee Ireland contributed to the notoriety of their union. It is speculated that to successfully leave Ireland, Ponsonby had to cross-dress as a footman to disguise her true identity.[101] This tale was first told by a Mr Lockhart, but has since been retold with several edits and additions, that it is unclear as to what the true story is. For example, around 1856, Reverend J Prichard D.D. published his account of the Ladies departure in '*Atmospheric Gas Printing Works*', in which "he not only gave his own rather charming pot-pourri of memoirs, but daringly added top boots to Sarah Ponsonby's buckskin breeches".[102] There are several accounts which dispute Butler and Ponsonby's departure from Ireland, what they wore, how many times they attempted to leave, and so on. Mavor explains how people saw the excitement surrounding the Ladies of Llangollen, even after their deaths, and thus identified opportunities to benefit financially from the tourism Butler and Ponsonby generated, by publishing their own interpretation of their lives. Mavor describes Hicken's 1847 memoirs of the Ladies of Llangollen as "little more than a rearrangement of all previous accounts, the

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[100]Hicklin, J. (2010) pp. 26-27.

[101] Supposedly, Butler changed dress last minute before their departure, which ended in a pile of her clothes being discovered in public by her family after she had departed.

[102]Mavor, E. (1971) pp. 199-201. Reverend Prichard also "blossomed out into a M'Gonegal-like poem in praise of his heroines" in his account of Butler and Ponsonby, which included the following: "'Once two young girls of rank and beauty rare, Of features more than ordinary fair, Who in the heyday of their youthful charms Refused the proffer of all suitors' arms, Lived in a cottage here rich carved in oak, Though now long passed from life by death's grim stroke. [...] These ladies to each other were kind and true, Around Llangollen's vale, like them were few. E'en now i see them seated in yon chair, In well-starched neckcloths, and with powdered hair, Their upper habits just like mens they wore, With tall black beaver hats outside their door; To crown it all my muse would whisper low, With hair cropped short, rough, busy, white as snow. They at death's summons, God's commands obeyed, And were in fair Llangollen's churchyard laid, As they through life together did abide, E'en now in death they both lie side by side".

only innovations being that the Ladies had eloped 'impelled by a desire to lead a secluded life of celibacy'".[103] General Yorke's account, released in 1888, continued with a similar tale in which,

> Butler, living under the strict guardianship of her aunt, flees to Dublin to meet Sarah Ponsonby, leaving her clothes on the banks of the river Barrow to mislead the family. In other words Eleanor's sister at Borris had by now turned into an aunt, and that tell-tale ruffle dropped near the barn of Waterford, had become a suit of clothes. In other respects General Yorke's version did not differ greatly from those that had preceded it, although it was refreshingly free from scandalous innuendo.[104]

Demonstrated in the numerous differing accounts, there is not one particular source that we can reliably trust in regards to this part of their story. There was such speculation and excitement surrounding Butler and Ponsonby, the way they dressed and the way they lived that the story was often sensationalised to generate excitement around the two women. They were almost like mythical creatures; rarely seen outside their home, but when they were, they defied all norms in regards to dress, relationships and the prescribed values of how people should live in traditional society. As Mavor published in her 1971 book, she notes:

> In Llangollen itself the cult of the Ladies is dying. Variously christened 'the Miss Ponsonby's', 'Miss Butler and Lady Ponsonby', 'the Misses Ormonde'; they are vaguely famous for being suffragettes, spies, nymphomaniacs, men dressed as women, women dressed as men. Yet for those few who are close in imagination to them, their memory is still loved: "I would not", one man told me gravely, "even like to go up to Plas Newydd without putting on my best suit". [105]

It appears that the excitement surrounding Butler and Ponsonby has diminished in Llangollen today. Perhaps they are just remembered as a distant old tale, or perhaps because of the progresses in modern society, people are not so interested or outraged by the thought of two potential lesbians living a life of seclusion together. But as Mavor highlights, those who *do* still remember and acknowledge their existence, affectionately do so with great respect.

While Butler and Ponsonby were revolutionary in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century, and demonstrated bravery by disregarding the heavily enforced gender and class ideals of the time, I believe the poignant case made by Roulston is fundamental to the lives they got to live; "they represented an end

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[103] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 199.

[104] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 201. It is possible that General Yorke's account of the Ladies of Llangollen was 'free of scandalous inuendo' as he had personally known the duo as a young boy, and as previously mentioned in this chapter, was a fond admirer of Butler and Ponsonby.

[105] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 209.

as opposed to a beginning".[106] When comparing what they had already established together, with what Anne Lister was striving to establish for herself, in regards to relationships and status, they were at a point already so far gone when they became figures of public interest, and this is reflected in their dress. Had they been younger women, still with prospects of marriage, when society learned of their lives together, the pressure to adhere to social constructs may have been greater. Living as two older ladies in an established partnership, retired from active social participation, they were causing no harm or offence to anyone with the little secluded life they lived together. On the contrary, they provided fruitful gossip and a great tourist attraction for the area for being the unapologetic oddities that they were.

Mavor summarises, "they were old hands at coping with financial embarrassment, adept, after nearly forty years' practice, at living as though no such nuisance existed".[107] Although not entirely financially independent, Butler and Ponsonby gained a great sense of autonomy when they left Ireland and pursued their rural lives together. Retiring from active society allowed them the opportunity to live freely, ridding their lives from the restraints of social customs; be it dress expectations or gender roles. Their frugality and practicality was embodied in their hassle-free approach to dress; whilst lacking the financial means to splurge on fashions, they also lacked the interest to do so. Their rural lives, full of walking and gardening, would only be physically restricted if they adhered to the prevalent trends in British women's fashion. Having rid their lives of any patriarchal bounds by choosing to set up life in Wales together, it would seem ridiculous to then have that freedom restricted by the bounds of feminine dress. Despite physically leaving Ireland, they did not abandon their heritage and loyalty to the country, or Butler's French heritage, which may further emphasize their resistance to British fashions. However, I believe a key note should be made that it was not necessarily what Butler and Ponsonby wore that made them so odd, but how they wore it, and the people who observed their dress. As McNeil argues,

> images of fashionable women in riding dress [...] suggest a type of androgyny taking place in fashionable appearances, in which men and women began to resemble each other - hair, jacket, waistcoat and stock. Here was the forerunner of the amazon, whom the nineteenth century found so erotic and appealing.[108]

This chapter has argued for a reassessment of the Ladies of Llangollen and what they wore. It has demonstrated that, in opposition to seeking infamy through dress, the Ladies of Llangollen were actually dressing in a way which was informed by a non-English, non-British culture, but their Irish and French heritages. This successful reappraisal of the evidence has demonstrated their value of practicality and

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[106] Roulston, C. (2013). The Revolting Anne Lister: The UK's first Modern Lesbian. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 17*(3-4), 276. https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1080/10894160.2013.731866

[107] Mavor, E. (1971) p. 176.

[108]McNeil, P. (2018) p. 182.

propriety above fashionable dress, which complimented their retirement from active society. It has used the sources to form an understanding that it was not the wearing of riding habits which made their appearance so unusual. The way in which they wore it, accompanied with their foreign-and-outdated hairstyles, beaver hats and excessive brooches, contributed to their overall masculine image. As tourist attractions, people visited Plas Newydd from far and wide, and were not accustomed to the wearing of a riding habit as informal day clothes, highlighting the regional differences within dress.



Fig 2.1: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for the *Gentleman Jack* series, compared with the c.1830 portrait by Joshua Horner, unknown, 2019, © Jay Brooks/HBO.

In 2019, the BBC and HBO brought *Gentleman Jack*, and the story of Anne Lister, to our screens. The series was commended for its dramatic value, but also for bringing an LGBTQ+ storyline to a prime-time BBC slot. Several raving reviews followed, including:

> The particulars of Lister — the fact that she wore only black every day being the easiest to notice, but her willingness to scoff at society, also every day, being the most notable — are not wasted on Wainwright, who strikes gold by casting Suranne Jones, who embodies Lister and runs with her (sometimes almost literally, as Lister seemed to waste little time in any day and walked with constant purpose and speed).[109]

[109]Goodman, T. (2019). *'Gentleman Jack': TV Review*. The Hollywood Reporter. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/gentleman-jack-review-1202036

This chapter focuses on Anne Lister (1791, Halifax, England - 1840, Kutaisi, Georgia).[110] It explores her dress, her attitudes towards her dress and the dress of her peers, and how her clothes made her stand out as an extraordinary character in ordinary Yorkshire society. In addition to Anne's detailed journal, visual sources, including portraits, are used to offer new evidence of Anne's attitude to dress. This chapter also makes use of the costumes from the *Gentleman Jack* production, research for which was based on the same sources, and informed by other unconventionally dressed women, before and after Lister's life. This is the popular representation of Anne Lister, and thus it cannot be disregarded in any analysis. Thus, this chapter offers new insight into the accuracy of representations, and sheds new light on the reality of Lister's sartorial practice. In this way, this chapter demonstrates that the real Anne Lister was a far more complex character than her artistic representations may have led us to believe.

A glance at the limited visual evidence of Lister confirms that she had a unique appearance, but this has not always been acknowledged. In 2010 BBC Two produced *Revealing Anne Lister*, a documentary which explored Lister's life from birth to tragic death, and all the trials and tribulations she experienced in-between. Surprisingly, not once in this hour-long documentary – despite contributions from renowned scholars including Jill Liddington, Amanda Vickery and Margaret Reynolds – is Anne Lister's dress, or even her general appearance, mentioned.[111] Before people learned of Lister's journals or sexual inclinations, the first thing she could be judged on was her physical appearance, so to eradicate that from the documentary is peculiar, especially as her appearance was something she was ostracized for.

Chris Roulston argues that Anne Lister is often regarded as an

> obscure figure of scholarly interest, a modern day icon of lesbian sexuality and an emblem of revolt [...] embodies the ambivalence of queer modernity in

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[110] Lister died while on a grand tour of Europe with her common-law wife, Ann Walker, who she had married in 1834. As same sex marriage was not legalised until 2013, this union obviously was not a legally binding one. "Anne Lister's 'wedding' to Ann Walker took place at Holy Trinity church in York on Easter Sunday 1834. The event was purely symbolic - attending church with another woman and taking communion was ceremony enough for Anne." Woods, R. (2019). *The Life and Loves of Anne Lister*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/the_life_and_loves_of_anne_lister. Anne Lister holds quite a unique geographical link to this research. Writing this thesis at the university of Huddersfield, Anne Lister lived not even ten miles away from the university, at Shibden Hall, Halifax. To be delving into her life in such close proximity to where her story unfolded is a unique privilege.

[111] The documentary covers her attending boarding school, her growth through Halifax society, her love affairs, her foes, her detailed diary and her death, but her dress and appearance is not once mentioned. Anne's time at boarding school was where she would identify the social circle that she would strive for, but also begin to experiment with her sexual preferences and discover her attraction towards females.

> her simultaneous desire to belong to be free of belonging to conventional norms.[112]

In the documentary, the presenter describes Lister as "a shrewd landowner, a pioneering industrialist, an intrepid adventurer and an ambitious social climber"; attributes and roles typically reserved for men in nineteenth-century Britain.[113] Overall, Anne was a proud character, and took pride in the fact she was not the wilting property of a man, like many of her peers. This sense of pride is demonstrated in her journal entry from May 5th 1820 – "One can hardly carry oneself too high or keep people at too great a distance".[114] Not only was it Anne's unique behaviour that made her stand out in society, but also the way in which she dressed; which was in a masculine style, and in all black.

Scholarly interest in women of the past who defied gender conventions often regards them as unique cases and modern women. However, when the research for this thesis was conducted into the dress of the case studies, it uncovered countless women who similarly rejected society's dress and gender expectations.[115] These also stretch back beyond the parameters of modern history and sometimes these women knew of each other. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lister embarked on a tour to visit the Ladies of Llangollen in 1822. In a journal entry on July 14th 1822, Anne described her visit: "They were about 20 when they 1st came there and had now been there for 43 years [...] I told him I had longed to see the place for the last dozen years…".[116] While it was reassuring for her to know that there were others who experienced the same kinds of desires that she did, she documented in her journal that they belonged to an "unrealistic utopia, as they have successfully reconciled convention and modernity, uniqueness and social belonging".[117] While they were a hopeful case for Anne to believe that she too would find the love

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[112] Roulston, C. (2013). The Revolting Anne Lister: The UK's first Modern Lesbian. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 17*(3-4), 267-268. https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1080/10894160.2013.731866

[113] Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC. While she was attracted to women and often adopted the masculine role, Lister showed no evidence of attempting to gender deceive people; this would have made her lose any respect and credibility that she had as a landed woman.

[114] Whitbread, H. (2010). *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister: Vol. 1: I Know my Own Heart.* (2nd ed.). Virago. p. 139.

[115]unknown, (2013). *10 Historical Cross-Dressers*. List Verse. https://listverse.com/2013/04/05/10-historical-cross-dressers/

[116] Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 214.

[117]Roulston, C. (2013) p. 276. While Butler and Ponsonby never confirmed a sapphic element to their relationship, they had succeeded in finding a life companion to live in their unconventional way, regardless of societal norms.

she longs for, there are also a number of factors that differentiate Butler and Ponsonby's relationship with one another, and Anne's pursuit of love.[118] Butler and Ponsonby arrived in Llangollen together and established home as one, whereas Anne did not have that reciprocated romance to ensure her stability within life at the time of her visit.[119] Furthermore, Butler and Ponsonby were elderly and in poor health when Anne met them. As Roulston argues, "they represent an end, rather than a beginning".[120] They did not face the same social scrutiny that Anne did due to their differing ages and locations.

Anne Clark notes Lister's desire to take advantage of male privileges, but emphasises that she did not want to masquerade as a man; she still maintained her female gender but with a masculine appearance. Lister already had advantages upon the average woman of the time, hailing from a landed family, that she would have risked losing her respectable position as an heiress had she attempted to truly gender deceive. Clark continues to argue that, due to her landed privilege, "she was able to pursue masculine tasks of classic learning and develop a personal style flavoured with masculinity".[121] This privilege enabled her to learn to read and write, to purchase rare foreign books, which would not have been possible had she descended from a less affluent lineage.[122] This is a demonstration of Butler's theory of performativity for gender identity construction; as Anne took advantage of these male privileges available in her advantaged

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[118] Although Anne continued to want a woman to love, her motives did change overtime. Rather than just seeking a partner in life, Anne grew to want someone who could bring benefits more than just emotional and sexual satisfaction. In the epilogue of No Priest But Love, Whitbread notes that Anne's "increased sophistication and financial independence had served to foster ambitions in Anne which were strong enough to overcome youthful idealisations. These ambitions held no place for Mariana (Anne's ex-lover), who would be a financial liberty to Anne. Anne now wanted a woman who could bring money, social status and, preferably, the éclat of a title to the partnership". Whitbread, H. (2020). *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister - Vol.2: No Priest But Love.* (2nd ed.). Virago. p. 300-31.

[119] Merely a matter of days before her visit to Plas Newydd, she documents a rogue sexual encounter in a shed with a Caroline Greenwood, someone who she did not have a history or ongoing relationship with. Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 167.

After visiting the Ladies of Llangollen, Anne mulls over meeting them in her journal: "I cannot help thinking that surely it was not platonic. Heaven forgive me, but I look within myself and doubt. I feel the infirmity of our nature and hesitate to pronounce such attachments uncemented by something more tender still than friendship". Whitbread, H. (2010) p.229. Here Anne is comparing her own situation to Butler and Ponsonby's, reflecting on her own feelings and interjecting that such a relationship must have more to it than just friendship.

[120]Roulston, C. (2013) p. 276. As highlighted in the previous chapter, their old age and reclusive nature shielded them from social scrutiny. This would not be possible for someone like Anne, who was so active in society and being controversial in her approaches to business, nevermind dress and love.

[121] Clark, A. (1996). Anne Lister's Construction of Lesbian Identity. *Journal of the History of Sexuality, 7*(1), 23-50. NaN. p. 42.

[122] From these foreign texts, she learned of other women like herself, with sapphic inclination or cross dressing behaviours, and her financial resources funded travels to the areas in which they frequented, such as Paris.

life, and used them to form this superior character. Whitbread notes when writing of Anne's trip to Paris in 1824, "the libertine atmosphere which prevailed in that era, particularly in Paris, towards sapphic love or love between women, inclined people to view with an affectionate and amused tolerance what later ages were to condemn as invert and unnatural".[123]

Clark describes Lister's construction of identity through dress as "not unified, but deliberately compartmentalised and contradictory".[124] Her dress consisted of spencers and pelisses – which were women's garments but resembled men's style – however she would walk with the authority of a man and partake in male-dominated activities, such as business and education. This contradiction between her dress and activity will have helped construct the boundaries of her cross-dressing, ensuring she kept her respect as a landed lady.

Clark references Butler's notion of performativity of gender in regards to Anne Lister - "Anne's combination of femininity and masculinity undermined and threatened conventional gender dichotomies during a period of great anxiety about the blurring of boundaries between genders".[125] In the case of female cross-dressing, the threat to men was women acquiring prominent status and positions of power, threatening patriarchal culture and establishing a form of authority, in a society where gender boundaries were so heavily enforced. However, Butler also disputes the heavily enforced gender ideals, arguing that "gender is performance, structured through repetition, and that we act out the signs of gender that are socially sanctioned and inculcated from birth".[126] Not only did Lister live in a time in which there were such differing expectations between men and women in regards to dress, behaviour and social class, but Lister also lived in a provincial town. As opposed to the urban, fashionable cities of London, Bath and Paris, Halifax would have had far less liberal views on sapphic behaviour and unconventional dress.[127] It is important to note, as Vickery reminds us, that

> The West Riding in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century is absolutely booming [...] it's like a kind of version of the Silicon Valley. It's really where

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[123]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 41.

[124] Clark, A. (1996) p. 49.

[125] Clark, A. (1996) p. 45.

[126]McNeil, P. (2018). *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World*. Yale University Press. p. 180.

[127] While these cities were not necessarily openly accepting of those who deviated from the prescribed norms, the size and increased population of the cities meant wider visibility of people with similar inclinations and more opportunity to experiment; as opposed to the small society in Halifax, in which everyone knows everyone.

> technology is happening, the Industrial Revolution is taking off, the woolen industry is really going full steam ahead[...] great demand for coal for fuel, later to steam power the factories.[128]

Whitbread contributes to this, highlighting that,

> commercially and socially, the town was run by a handful of large, energetic families, many of them inter-related by marriage, who had risen up on the crest of the Industrial Revolution. These were a new breed of wealthy people, distinct from the landowning oligarchy which had so far dominated the town".[129]

Perkins considers that "from her perch at Shibden Hall, Anne can see Halifax teeming with the grubby nouveau riche" which will have been "a sight to make any hardened snob queasy".[130] Reynolds confirms this, arguing that,

> once Anne inherits Shibden Hall and is settled there, and this is good because then she's secure, she comes from a very old family she has all that settled. On the other hand, because this is a period of great movement in terms of class, so that people were making money through manufacturing, through coal mining through trade and coming up the social scale, so she begins to feel threatened because suddenly her ancient lineage is not quite enough.[131]

It is clear then, that Anne could not remain on a pedestal at Shibden Hall, she had to assert her business acumen to secure her place in society. Even when gaining a greater level of stability upon her inheritance of the Shibden estate, Anne never felt entirely secure; a consequence of the accumulation of feelings surrounding her dress, her sexuality and the constantly emerging middle class which threatened her stability.

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[128]Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC. This is further supported in Whitbread's edition of Lister's journal: "the town was in the process of transition, moving from a predominantly agricultural market town, with a woollen trade dependent mainly on waterpower and cottage industry, to a fully-fledged industrial town based upon steam power and the organisation of labour into the factory system. The impact of the Industrial Revolution was as great in Halifax as in the neighbouring towns of Huddersfield, Bradford and Leeds." Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 138.

[129]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 139.

[130]Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

[131] Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

After attending several boarding schools, she moved back to Halifax in 1815, upon becoming heir to Shibden Hall after her brother's death. Throughout her life, she left and travelled Europe several times; either alone, with her aunt, or with friends, and as such, it was rare for her to spend more than a few weeks or months at a time living in Halifax.[132] It was only in 1826, when she legally inherited the Shibden Estate upon her uncle's death, that she returned and spent a substantial amount of time there, before making plans to depart again.[133] Descending from landed gentry, she had the advantage of an education as a child over some of her female peers, yet the Lister family was far from wealthy in comparison to other prominent families in the social circle of West Yorkshire. Whitbread suggests that,

> the people with whom she mixed at the school came mainly from wealthy families. Anne became fired with ambition to gain entry into their more sophisticated milieu and so leave her rustic origins behind. These ambitions, formulated in her early teens, never left her. They were to become the driving force behind her adventurous and problematic life.[134]

Anne Lister defied traditional expectations of women; while women of her class did not have the manual or maternal responsibilities of working class women – to make homes and care for children – she also defied the expectations of middle class women, which were to be idle ladies of leisure. [135] She was a businesswoman; having acquired the role of master of the Shibden Estate in 1826, in which Whitbread states:

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[132] Living in rural Halifax in the 19th century, it was likely that most of Anne Lister's female peers would not have travelled much of the country, never mind overseas. This highlights another area in which Anne was an oddity amongst her milieu; Anne embarked on expeditions, seeking adventure and education. On the contrary, speaking of 'the grand tour' and overseas travel, Vickery highlights that "as part of their education, women are usually lucky if they get a bit of a local tour of the country houses, or get taken to Bath of London for the season", and people would typically adhere to the accepted construct of the social hierarchy in regards to class and gender. Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC. Dr Margaret Reynolds notes that "from about the middle of the 18th century, young gentlemen of a certain class would make what was always called 'the grand tour', so they would take themselves off down to Italy in particular, through France, going to look at the beauties of classical architecture and art".

[133]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 175.

[134]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 5. While Anne's behaviours and interactions at the time may have been regarded as romantic friendships by onlookers, governed by her autonomy, Anne was fully aware that she wholeheartedly wanted a wife.

[135] Vickery argues that the rise in the ideology of domesticity was linked to the emergence of the middle class, which the separate spheres theory mostly links to. One argument of it suggests that "women in prosperous families were robbed of economic and political function and incarcerated in a separate sphere". It has been argued that the introduction of industrialisation caused the demise of "economic power, legal independence, public assertiveness and sexual respect" for women. A large factor of why Anne defied the private sphere of domesticity for women was because she was single, and did not have a man to submit to. Vickery, A. (1993). Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History. *The Historical Journal, 36*(2), 383-414. NaN. p.388, p.405.

> The management of a landed estate had become a very complex business in the 19th century [...] In Anne's case, coal mining, albeit on a small scale, was to provide a way of raising extra revenue from the estate. She also held shares in canal developments and turnpike trusts, which paid half-yearly dividends. Rents from farms, cottages and any other buildings, such as inns and the rents from Northgate House, when her father and Marian moved out of it, formed her main source of income.[136]

Margaret Reynolds highlights that "she was very unusual, there was so little land in England at that time owned by women".[137] Whitbread further argues that "strenuous walking, horse riding, shooting and flute playing were hardly compatible with the air delicacy required of the fashion lady of leisure of the early years of the nineteenth-century".[138] Here we see Lister subverting the gender expectations of the time further, in-line with Butler's theories of gender. Roulston suggests that masculinity doesn't just regard status within politics and business, but also "manifests itself in traditional models of chivalry and rakishness".[139] Anne Lister embodied masculinity in her business sense, her attitude towards economics and politics and her interactions with both women she did and did not desire. Therefore not only was Anne Lister outcast for her dress choices, but also for her lifestyle choices. However, to be able to perform the tasks and activities she did in society, it would have been extremely difficult if she was wearing fashionable dress.

To have any comprehensive understanding of Anne Lister's unique sense of dress, we must rely on scant sources. There is no surviving material culture, and visual sources are limited, however, there is a unique resource in this case study: Lister's life-long, four-million-word, twenty-six-volume journal. Lou Taylor reminds us of the importance of literary sources (such as novels, newspapers and journals) in dress history research, noting that such sources support visuals and lend accuracy and historical feel.[140] Without

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[136] Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 229.

[137]Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC. Vickery goes on to emphasis; "I think it's hard to overstate the importance of landed property in Regency England, so when Anne Lister is lucky enough to inherit Shibden she achieved this kind of fairytale thing; independence, a house of her own, and she likes to think she comes from this long and illustrious lineage".

[138] Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 3.

[139]Roulston, C. (2013) p. 271.

[140]Taylor, L. (2002). *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester University Press.

surviving dress, the journal becomes our only direct link to Lister. They are meticulous in detailing her day almost to the minute, as she wrote about everything she did; from mundane conversations, to intrepid adventures, often writing about the most personal topics in a cryptic code. These tended to be her love affairs, her sexual desires and, quite often, her dress. It is understandable why Anne would have wanted to keep her sexual desires and rendezvous a secret, however, it raises an interesting point of concern as to why Anne felt her dress was of an equal level of taboo that it also had to be written about in code (which only she and one of her lovers knew how to decipher, so that they could write amorous letters to one another without being exposed).[141] Did she feel such shame about her appearance that it could be deemed as damning as her sexual preferences? Whitbread explains how Anne "obviously felt reticent about her dress and appearance and was constantly the subject of criticism from her friends for her shabby and unfashionable wardrobe. She always used her cryptic code in her journal when referring to her clothes".[142]

The concealed nature of the journals remained until 1887 when John Lister, the last descendant of the Lister name to inhabit Shibden, discovered the journals and took it upon himself, with the aid of a friend, to attempt to decipher the code.[143] Successful, and upon discovering the true themes of the journals, his friend wanted them burned, as the contents was offensive and crude; discussing sapphic intimacy in a time where homosexuality was criminal, however John Lister decided against this.[144] Roulston suggests that Lister's journals could only "come to light in an era that was modern enough to receive them" and that while today we view the decoding of the journal as an advance in feminine history, at the time it was a regressive discovery. "When they became decoded, they became unspeakable", due to their explicitly

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[141] While there was knowledge that this behaviour would have occurred within the prostitutes and dancers in the bohemian culture in late 18th or early 19th century Paris, and more sophisticated and cosmopolitan areas of England, such as London or Bath, Anne knew of few people that would have approved of these inclinations in Halifax. Roulston highlights the term 'cryptic' to be associated with Ancient Egypt, the preservation of valuable things or beings that belong in a Fort Knox-worthy tomb, and highlights the fact that her journal is "already a private document, who is she hiding from?"Roulston, C. (2013) p. 272.

[142] Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 24.

[143] Arthur Burrell aided John Lister in deciphering the code, which made up approximately 15% of the journals. Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

[144] While never confirmed, there are theories that John Lister himself was a homosexual. This has been attributed to the fact he was still a bachelor at the time of discovering the journals, and while he did not agree with Burrell in that the diaries should be burned, he decide to conceal the diaries from the world once again in fear of his own sexuality coming under scrutiny, as homosexuality was not only a crime, but also believed to be an inherited trait by some. If this was the case, it may have been reassuring to John Lister that one of his blood also share the same taboo desires, perhaps preventing him from wanting the diaries destroyed, but the concealment of them would provide him some personal protection. Instead of burning the journals, John Lister buried them in the Shibden Hall archive.

homosexual, erotic nature.[145] However, it is interesting to mull over the fact that Anne left an index alongside her journals, as Perkins explores, "to help the reader navigate through her four million words. It's asif Anne willed her story to be told".[146] The code was to ensure that any prying eyes of friends or family who discovered her journals during her lifetime would not discover her explicit sapphic behaviours. However, by providing an index, it can be inferred that Anne wanted her story to be told; although perhaps not in her lifetime, she would ensure people knew of her real existence. Ever the autonomous, self-indulgent narcissist, in providing the index, and writing in code in the first place, she ensured that she was going to be remembered as more than just another Lister of Shibden.

Today, the diaries are held in Halifax Library, and although anyone can access them, Anne's code made them almost impenetrable, at least until Helena Whitbread, who spent the last thirty-five years deciphering the code, published her books.[147] A portion of the journals was first published in 1988, followed by another volume four years later, however, both have been updated in recent years.[148] *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister* features Anne's journal between 1816 and 1824, and *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister: No Priest but Love*, picks up from 1824 and continues to 1826.[149]

Anne's journal is a unique source, providing insight into her dress, the dress of her peers, and how she perceived dress. In contrast to visual sources such as portraits, which can be influenced by the artist's

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[145] Roulston, C. (2013) p. 269.

[146]Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

[147] In 1933, two weeks after John Listers death, by Muriel Green, who was tasked with surveying the Lister archive. She decided to keep the nature of the diaries concealed, as only five years earlier, society had been simultaneously gripped and outraged by The Well of Loneliness by Radclyffe Hall, a lesbian novel. Then, the Introduction of the Obscene Publications Act meant that any literature writing of homosexuality or sapphism would be corrupt. In the 1960s, a local Halifax historian, Phyllis Ramsden spent eight years deciphering Anne's journals, and she believed her discoveries would have been of great public interest in this more liberal time. However the Halifax Council, who had ultimate say of what she could and could not publish, as part of a deal for providing her with the key to decipher the code, stopped her from publishing out of fear of disgracing the town's name. It was not until 1988 that they would come to life, after Helena Whitbread spent seven years deciphering the code. Perkins, S. (Presenter), & Hill, M. (Director). (2010). Revealing Anne Lister [Television programme]. BBC Two: BBC.

[148] The second edition of *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister* was published in 2010, the second edition of *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister: No Priest but Love* was published in March 2020.

[149] It is not known exactly which year Anne came to keep her journal; the earliest evidence is from when she was around fifteen years old, however it is also believed some extracts of the journal have been lost overtime. While the published journals only cover a ten-year span of her adult life, they are arguably the most defining years; in which she explores love, acquires new status and begins to progress in society, which will have inevitably altered Anne's attitudes.

style or beautified for the sitter's satisfaction, the journal reflects Anne's raw feelings concerning dress – often feelings of judgement and shame – and can provide a reasonably comprehensive overview of what Lister wore, where she purchased clothing, and her attitudes towards dress and fashion more generally.

Anne frequently noted that she altered and mended her garments herself, or with the assistance of her aunt. A selection of entries in 1817 quote, "dawdled away the afternoon, looking over and unripping some old gowns and petticoats for my aunt to make into wearable petticoats for me", "sewing fast the crape trimming round the bottom of my gown and getting ready to go to Halifax…" or "spent the whole of the morning vamping up a pair of old black chamois shoes…", with several entries over the years where Anne is mending her stays and her stockings.[150] This evidences that while they were landed gentry and had some degree of wealth, they were not above the need of having to make repairs and alterations to their existing wardrobes; far from being at the level of wealth of freely purchasing dress whenever desired.[151] Despite this, Donald argues that people were generally conscious of their consumption, with "evidence of continuous re-making and refurbishment of garments at every level of society".[152] From screen adaptations of Lister – in which she moves with great authority – it is unlikely audiences will think that she had such a frugal, conscious attitude when it came to dress. This frugality may have stemmed from the fact that as she had not yet inherited Shibden, she was mostly dependent on her family for money – which she would prefer to spend on books – and therefore purchasing new dress was a lower priority. However, in contrast to the idea of Anne being particularly frugal, what was most odd about the situation was that Lister and her aunt would do the mending and alterations themselves, and not the servants. This does not necessarily relate to the genteel poverty, as they already employed the servants and had them working on many other things. Perhaps Anne felt such consciousness about her dress, coupled with her controlling and assertive nature, that she wanted to have control over how people visually saw her, as much as possible within her means.

From Anne's journals, we can gather an idea of what she would wear daily, and what she would wear on special occasions – "The first time I have thrown aside my winter things, having changed my black cloth spencer & straw hat for a black silk spencer & common straw hat. I have almost made up my mind

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[150]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 24.

[151] Woods notes that while the Lister's "were minor gentry, her branch was relatively poor. Inheriting Shibden gave her the means to support a more luxurious lifestyle". Woods, R. (2019). *The Life and Loves of Anne Lister*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/the_life_and_loves_of_anne_lister

[152]Donald, D. (2002). *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period.* Hayward Gallery. p. 13.

always to wear black".[153] One of the most interesting things about Anne's dress was her decision to dress in all black, all of the time, with the exception of small accents of white on special occasions. In *Gentleman Jack*, which will be discussed later in this chapter, Anne mentions that she chose to wear all black because she was mourning a lost love.[154] Alternatively, in a journal entry on June 1st 1817, Anne writes, "I have almost made up my mind always to wear black", and evidently this was the case, highlighted in her garments mentioned.[155] Anne's reasoning for this in her journal was her figure, writing on September 29th 1821, "said what a bad figure I had & explained a little my difficulty in dressing myself to look at all well. Told her that, for this reason, I always wore black" and further reaffirms it when visiting a dressmaker, "explained about my bad figure, etc. That I always wore black", on October 1st 1922.[156]

There are also entries, such as this one on August 26th 1922 – "about half hour putting cotton wool into stays and sewing in the steel…" – which she did in an attempt to add shape to her otherwise rather flat frame.[157] Although other entries document her lovers stating that they would love to give Anne a feminine figure, in the sense that they would like to give Anne a more feminine appearance, it appears here that Anne herself is also conscious of her figure. Her straight frame, combined with her masculine dress may have given too much of a convincing male appearance and compromised further her already questionable social position.

This consciousness of her figure and her attempts to disguise it by constantly wearing black was repeatedly written about throughout the years of her journals, demonstrating clearly that this was a key element of shame that Anne felt about her appearance. The shame was further emphasised by the comments made by friends, love interests, and strangers. On June 28th 1818, Anne enters into her journal:

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[153]Whitbread, H. (2010) pp. 17-18.

[154] Black and bombazine, were usually reserved for mourning dress, of which there was a great culture of in the 18th and 19th century. However Anne wore bombazine in her dress even when not in mourning. "Mending my gloves, the trimmings of my black bombazine petticoat & all in readiness for this afternoon". For more on mourning dress, see Taylor, L. *Mourning Dress* in Steele, V. (2010). *The Berg Companion to Fashion*. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/encyclopedia/the-berg-companion-to-fashion/mourning-dress.
Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 53.

[155]Whitbread, H. (2010) p.18.

[156]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 184, p. 242.

[157]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 234.

> The people generally remark, as I pass along, how much I am like a man. I think they did it more than usual this evening. At the top of Cunnery Lane, as I went, three men said, as usual, "That's a man" and one axed "Does your cock stand?". I know not how it is but I feel low this evening.[158]

This is followed by a similar entry on September 17th 1818, and again on 18th Feb 1819; "she (Miss Browne) mentioned on the moor my taking off the leather strap put through the handle of my umbrella, which made it look like a gentleman's".[159]

Black was not a fashionable colour in this period for women. As can be seen in the fashionable women's dress of this period, and more visible in the costuming of *Gentleman Jack*, women at Lister's level of society were wearing fashions of bright colours and patterns, with exaggerated silhouettes, which further emphasised the contrast between Lister's dress and others in her milieu. However, John Harvey further notes that there is evidence of women within the nineteenth-century who chose to wear black to exhibit the assertive values of the colour. He speaks of a 'Mrs Transome': a woman of gentry who regularly wore a tight black fitted dress to communicate her "smartness, state and style" alongside her "sense of presence and importance".[160] Although Harvey highlights that there is evidence of other women who dressed in black, it can be deduced from the way they conducted themselves and the level of society they were prevalent in that they too were not your average woman.[161]

While Anne did not dress in the fashionable dress of the time, she acknowledged, and regularly scrutinised, the dress of those around her if it lacked fashionable relevancy. This suggests that it is not that Anne is not aware of the popular fashions; she chooses not to wear them, as to stay true to her character. Here is a further demonstration of Butler's gender theory; as Anne rejects the social norms and dresses to represent her internal feelings. For example,writing of a Miss Pickford, who Anne took a brief interest in, on February 28th 1823 – "she cares nothing about dress; never notices it. [...] As to not noticing dress etc., she supposes me like herself. How she is mistaken! She loves her habit & hat."[162] Anne later journals on

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[158]Whitbread, H. (2010) pp. 60-61.

[159]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 94.

[160] Harvey, J. (1995). *Men In Black*. Reaktion Books. p. 197.

[161] Harvey continues to dispute women wearing black by also highlighting women within literature. Jane Eyre wore almost all black, which Harvey disputes not being entirely linked to the mourning of her parents, but to compliment her "strong sense of self awareness. They fit her emotional temper, [...] her intensity, her gathering clarity of will and decision". Harvey, J. (1995) p. 199.

[162]Whitbread, H. (2010) pp. 258-259.

March 7th 1823, “I wish she would care a little more about dress. At least not wear such an old fashioned, short waisted, fright of a brown habit with yellow metal buttons as she had on this morning. Were she twenty years younger I could not endure it at all.”[163] The level of detail Lister scrutinised Pickford’s dress confirmed her interest in dress, and her awareness of what she deemed acceptable for women; particularly those she associated herself with.

In Anne’s comments on the dress of her social circle, we can further see the contrast in the dress of Anne and her peers. Commenting on her sister's dress, she states, “looking very well but vulgar. Marian in a light-blue sort of lustre with as long a waist as any my aunt & I saw last year in Paris. Very unbecoming &, as yet, out eroding too much for Halifax”.[164] Here, Anne critiqued her sister’s dress, but also acknowledged the regional differences in dress; in that the waist was ‘eroding too much for Halifax’. As she acknowledged the resemblance to a Parisian dress from the previous year, she highlighted the differing expectations or accepted dress in these areas; Paris as fashionable cosmopolitan city, often setting the trends, and Halifax, the rural industrial town. This differentiation also occurs in a journal entry on October 1st 1822, in London:

> Marian, too, bought a leghorn bonnet, pair of stays, pair of shoes, & may at last begin to shift a little for herself. I had told her of a leghorn bonnet nine shillings dearer, but, more than that, neater, in Burlington, but of course have said nothing but of approbation of her choice, tho’ I certainly would not have advised so city-like a concern. It is too gaping & staring now when little bonnets are beginning to be worn.[165]

The consciousness of the bonnet being ‘so city-like a concern’ emphasises the focal lens on provincial Halifax dress and the fear Anne felt for Marian deviating from this, despite Anne having no fear of deviating from the status quo herself.[166] A further extension of the regional differences of dress is acknowledged by Lister in her journal, on April 13th 1825 – “the Parisian ladies spoil one for the dress of the English ladies. I thought all the people I saw in London shocking figures. The common people quite

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[163]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 262.

[164]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 145.

[165]Whitbread, H. (2010) pp. 242-243.

[166] Interestingly, in the Gentleman Jack series, episode one, Marian says to Anne “it’s all well and good being different in York or Paris, but this is Halifax and people talk, and it's not always very nice”. Here, Marian is the one showing concern for appearing to act outside of their provincial means. In this scene, she is talking about Anne’s masculine behaviour as Anne decides she will go and collect the rents on behalf of her sick uncle.
Lister, A., Liddington, J., Wainwright, S. (Writers), & Wainwright, S. (Director). (2019). I Was Just Passing (Series 1, episode 1) [Television series episode]. In S. Wainwright (Producer). *Gentleman Jack*. BBC.

louts after their compeers in Paris".[167] However, Lister continues to add to her contradictory character by then penning a letter to a friend on April 20th 1825 stating, "the style of the English elegance suits me better than that of French; it is more dignified & seems to me more purely angel-like than all that finished coquetry - that charm that lulls to sleep."[168]

Lister was also conscious of her dress, particularly depending on the company she was wearing it in. While Anne regards herself as a gentlewoman, and oftens talks ill of people whose appearance does not meet the standard she would expect it to, she is aware of her position within society and the fact that she too often does not meet standards of dress. When speaking of potentially meeting with her friend – and the woman she desired as a life companion at the time – Marianna Lawton and her husband Charles Lawton, she documented on 30th October 1819, "if C is not with them this is very well, but I am too forlorn in spirit and wardrobe".[169] This notion is further reinforced on June 7th 1821 – "till very near four, trying on different things to see what would do & be wanted for my going to Newcastle. I seem to have scarce anything fit to wear, have little or no money & altogether, I felt despairing & unhappy".[170] All written in code, the entries captured her financial struggle as well as her feelings towards her dress. Anne felt as though her dress was not suitable, further emphasizing her consciousness of others opinions on her dress, as her existing wardrobe was not appropriate for the occasion. An interaction with the Crompton's further enhanced this discomfort on September 15th 1823:

> They had seen me walk past on Sunday. I had then my cloth pelisse on & all the people stared at me. M owned afterwards she had observed it & felt uncomfortable. This morning I wore my velvet Spencer & a net frill over my cravat. I must manage my appearance & figure differently. Must get a silk pelisse, perhaps from Miss Harvey. When I have more money & a good establishment I can do better.[171]

It was not just Anne Lister's dress which led people to mistake her for a man; it was her overall appearance and general deportment. For example, "speaking of my manners, she owned they were not masculine but such was my form, voice and style of conversation" and "sat up talking about my manners

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[167]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 143.

[168]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 146.

[169]Whitbread, H. (2010) p .117.

[170]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 169.

[171]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 317.

being too attentive; having too much of the civility of a well-bred gentleman…".[172] Anne's brisk walk also contributed to her masculine character. On November 22nd 1824, she journaled that, " the people stop to stare at me. She thought it was my gown, it was so tumbled and shabby. I explained that it was not that. It was common enough to be stared at on account of my walk etc".[173] Whitbread reaffirms this by stating that Anne,

> often disparaged the rather unsophisticated female company available to her. She began to get a reputation as a snob and a 'loner' and people began to resent her standoffishness. At the same time they stood in awe of her undoubted intellectuality and her reputation as a 'bas bleu' or blue stocking.[174]

While Anne was not wholly proud of her dress, often writing of it critically, she did have a clear sense of self-identity when it came to dress. For example, on October 1st 1822 in London, she recorded, "I went out in one of Mrs Webb's bonnets, black leghorn, & looked very decent in it, but so unlike myself Mrs Webb almost smiled".[175] Furthermore, she documented on May 10th 1824:

> She said people thought I should look better in a bonnet. She contended I should not, & said my whole style of dress suited myself & my manners & was consistent & becoming to me. I walked differently from other people, more upright & better. I was more masculine, she said, she meant in understanding. I said I quite understood the thing & took it as she meant it. That I had tried all styles of dress but was left to do as I liked eight years ago. Had then adopted my present mode & meant to keep it.[176]

Interestingly, when it came to her romantic relations with women, it was often not the sapphic nature of them which made them fear ridicule of society; it was often Anne's appearance, and this is recorded in her journal. At the time, it may have been possible to keep a sapphic relationship relatively disclosed from the

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[172]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 132, p. 135.

[173]Whitbread, H. (2020) p. 75.

[174]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 15.

[175] Whitbread, H. (2010) pp. 242-243. Anne never consistently wore any version of headwear as she had previously documented that she does not like to wear bonnets as they restrict her view, and despite the depiction of her in Gentleman Jack, there is no evidence of the wearing of the top hat in her actual life. An entry in her journal on February 2nd 1822 notes that she borrowed Isabella Norcliffe's beaver hat, but none other than this. In an interview with Vanity Fair in 2019, Suranne Jones, who played Anne Lister in the Gentleman Jack series said "we don't think that she actually wore a top hat, but that's poetic license". Saraiya, S. (2019). *Inside the Story of the Real-Life Gentleman Jack*. Vanity Fair. https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/04/gentleman-jack-suranne-jones-sally-wainwright-anne-lister-true-story

[176]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 369. However there is evidence of Anne wearing bonnets on other occasions such as in Manchester; Anne entered into her journal on September 22nd 1825, "Certainly I did not look so well in my pelisse & in my French redingote & bonnet". Whitbread, H. (2020) pp. 190-191.

public due to the increase of women forming romantic friendships. In Anne Lister's journals, it is mentioned that she suggested moving in with Ann Walker as a companion. This was to watch Walker's health, which people were not deterred by, as cohabitation between two friends was not uncommon, and the sexual aspect of their relationship would occur behind closed doors. In the case of Mariana Lawton, "it's not lesbian desire that she cannot tolerate, it's Anne's gender presentation. The transgression of her femininity, not heterosexuality is what leaves her repulsed".[177] Anne records in her journal that Mariana once told her that she would want "to give her a feminine figure", "Mariana internalised the public gaze and can no longer find Anne desirable".[178] This suggests that Mariana's issue with the relationship was not the homosexual element, that was wrong in the eyes of God and society at the time, but more so that she could not stand Anne's masculine appearance, as that drew attention to the pair.

Anne often documented the purchasing of her clothing, and although it was infrequent, her journal entries of it were often detailed. For example, on August 23rd 1823:

> Wrote the following to Mr Radford, 188, Fleet St, London. 'Sir, if you turn to your day book of Wednesday 2nd October, 1822, you will find an anonymous entry of a lady's measure for a greatcoat. I wish you to make me a fashionable one, according to that measure, of good strong materials, sufficiently wide in the sleeves to be easy over my pelisse & not cramp my arms in driving. I understand the charge will be 5 guineas. I will pay you immediately on receiving the coat, which I particularly wish to be sent off not later than this day week, or tomorrow week, by one of the coaches, directed to Miss Lister, Shibden Hall, Halifax Yorkshire...[179]

At that point, greatcoats were still a garment only worn by men. However, Anne wore a great coat for riding, as opposed to the traditional riding habit; noting in her journal on April 20th 1824, "drove off in good style at a quick trot… my new hat and great coat on. An India handkerchief around my throat. My usual costume…"[180] This will have further added to her masculine silhouette, but was also a necessity for her active lifestyle and her fearless travels. The diary entry gives insight into the fact that she did not want it to hinder her riding, but also had a desire for it to be fashionable; striking the balance between style and substance, she still needed to be fully functional.

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[177]Roulston, C. (2013) p. 274.

[178]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 319. Roulston, C. (2013) p. 274.

[179]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 309.

[180]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 368.

For visual sources to understand Lister's dress, we are limited. There are no surviving garments, and despite her infamy – or at least her unusualness – we have only two contemporary portraits.



Fig 2.2: Anne Lister, Mrs Turner, 1822, © Calderdale Museums.



Fig 2.3: Anne Lister, Joshua Horner, c.1830, © Calderdale Museums.

It is assumed that both portraits were painted in Halifax. Fig 2.2 in 1822, when Anne was around thirty-one years old. Fig 2.3 was produced c.1830, when Anne was around thirty-eight years old.[181] Lister is

[181] Anne left Halifax yet again in 1829, travelled throughout Germany, Belgium, the Pyrenees and briefly Spain before returning to the UK in 1931. Therefore, is there a possibility the portrait was produced before her departure, or upon her return, or was the portrait produced on her travels? It also raises the question as to whether Anne's dress was influenced by her travels, are there any noticeable differences in the way that she is dressing that may have been influenced by the fashions of Europe that she observed? However, this does not seem to be the case.

seated in both of these portraits. In fig 2.2, she is sat on a wooden chair, visible from mid-calf upwards. She is in all black dress apart from the white ruffled collar and red heart shaped pin, her hair is curled in ringlets and centre parted, and she is holding some kind of paper, perhaps a piece of correspondence from one of the many friends she kept all over the country. Fig 2.3 again shows Anne dressed all in black, this time only visible from the waist upwards. Despite there being approximately eight years between the two portraits, Anne's dress and appearance seems remarkably similar to the original 1822 portrait; all black with a white ruffled collar, however in this painting there is no heart-shaped pin. Despite almost a decade passing between these images, Anne's dress choices appear to have changed little-to-none.

In both portraits, Anne's dress resembles a fashionable riding habit, however, closer analysis actually suggests a black pelisse; appearing to continue into one garment, as opposed to being a bodice and skirt. The pelisse is a long-fitted coat, fashionable in the early nineteenth-century and often inspired by military dress. This military influence is usually seen in the braided trim and the military-style frog fastenings. However, in these two portraits of Anne Lister, the pelisse lacks any kind embellishment, except for the red heart pin present in fig 2.2. On the contrary, Tom Pye, costume designer for *Gentleman Jack* disputes that she is wearing a brown pelisse with a red heart pin, which contributes to his costuming of the series (discussed further in this chapter). Because of this pelisse, we are unable to see what Anne is wearing underneath, however, we can see it is all black, with a white ruff.[182] At the time of the portraits, the fashionable neckline was much more open than what Lister is shown wearing. Pye claims that "there's a suggestion within her diaries that she was clearly conforming to some degree and wearing female clothing. A number of these terms suggest styles more popular in the 1820s rather than the 1830s".[183] Anne's journal supports the belief that this is a pelisse rather than a riding habit, as she regularly discussed her dress, and the purchasing of several pelisse's and spencers, but never a habit, particularly in

[182] Ruffs were originally popular in the 16th and 17th century, worn by both men and women, but became popular again in the early 19th century, for a short period of time. Britannica. (2016). *Ruff*. Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/ruff-collar

[183]Costume Co. (2019, July 15). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 2* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXU967Zai_k

the years in which these images were created.[184] In the costuming of Anne in *Gentleman Jack*, as to be discussed, her pelisse displays more of this traditional military trim.

A journal entry on November 20th, 1822 documents Anne sitting for fig 2.2:

> At 12:40, took George in the gig & drove to Mrs Taylor's. Sat for my likeness perhaps 1 ¼ hour. Very well satisfied with the sketch. There is something so very characteristic in the figure. Paid for it, 2 guineas… neither Mrs Rawson nor Catherine thought it a good likeness. Found great fault with the mouth &, at first, with almost every part of the whole thing"[185]. Anne received further critical comment from other friends the following day - "...thence to the Saltmarshes'. Shewed them my picture. They did not like it at all. Thought it very silly looking. The mouth, a little open, was frightful. Not at all like me. What was meant to be mouth seemed like the tongue hanging out… Mr Stansfirld Rawson thought [it] a very strong but very unpleasant disagreeable likeness...Went to Mrs Taylor...sat nearly an hour during which she closed the mouth, improved the picture exceedingly & made it an admirable likeness… Got home at 2.25. The likeness struck me as so strong I could not help laughing. My aunt came up & laughed too, agreeing that the likeness was capital. Ditto my uncle. We are all satisfied, let others say what they may.[186]

While Anne's dress is not mentioned in these conversations, it confirms the validity of the date and artist of the portrait, graces us with the knowledge that the portrait was revisited and what we see today was not the true first portrait; however Anne and her family believed it to be an accurate likeness of herself, therefore we can trust it to be a reasonably valid representation. While we cannot confirm the artist or date of fig 2.3 in the same way, as we know the first portrait is of accurate likeness, and analysis leads us to believe that she did not drastically change her dress, it is likely the second portrait is reasonably accurate also.

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[184]As written, a pelisse is a three-quarter-to-full-length fitted coat, similar in shape to the fashionable dress of the time. It has a high waist, typically close under the bust. For more on pelisses see The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (n.d.). *Pelisse*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82141. Alternatively, a spencer is a short bodice, cropped at the waist with no kind of skirt or tails, traditionally with long sleeves and a high neck. It was originally a men's style in the 1700s, believed to have been named after George, the 2nd Earl Spencer, who worn jackets of this design. It was later adopted by women who would wear it over their evening dresses, and was an early example of tailoring entering the female wardrobe after taking influence from masculine styles. For more see V&A. (n.d.). *Spencer*. V&A. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O125423/spencer-unknown/

[185]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 247.

[186]Whitbread, H. (2010) p. 248.

An interesting acknowledgement is that Lister did not choose to wear her best dress for her portrait, or to be drawn up in something other than her everyday dress.[187] Portraiture commissioned by the sitter is a freeze frame of how they wish to be portrayed for eternity, to friends and family but also observers beyond their lifetime. Ribeiro suggests that portraiture represents the contributions of the artist, sitter and costume, and the clothing can reveal both heroic and mundane elements of dress.[188] From the portraits and supporting evidence from the journal, we can trust that Anne did not fabricate her dress for the portraits. It may have been for many reasons; from the journal it is clear she had busy days and was not a lady of leisure, therefore it is possible she sat for the portrait between errands and did not change dress for it. Or, a more interpretative reason, is that due to Anne's strong sense of self-identity and knowledge of her indifferences, although sometimes conscious, she was generally proud and unapologetic of her desires, and her unique sense of being. Therefore, this pride may have carried over into the way she wanted to be frozen in history through the portrait. As previously mentioned, the coded journals and accompanying key for the code was an indication that she willed her story to be told. If the dress in her portrait did not reflect the image she portrayed of herself in her journals, it would have discredited her story – as her journal was entirely personal and could have been completely fabricated. The portrait provides visual support for the character built through her written word.

In recent years, Lister's story has become more well-known due to various media portrayals. In 1994, the BBC Two series *A Skirt Through History* dedicated an episode to Lister's life. In 2010, BBC Two produced *Revealing Anne Lister*, a 60-minute detailed unveiling of her life. The most recent, and likely most well-known interpretation of Anne Lister's life, is the HBO-BBC series *Gentleman Jack*; an eight-part period drama, based in 1832 when Lister returned to Halifax after a failed love affair, to restore Shibden and continue her pursuit to find a partner. When writing the script and musing how Anne Lister would visually be portrayed, director Sally Wainwright stated that "the biggest resource really was the diary itself".[189] This is not only due to the lack of visual resources that remain from Lister's lifetime, but also to the immense detail Anne would go into regarding all aspects, including her dress.

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[187]Taylor, L. (2002) p. 118. As Taylor has argued, in the late 17th and 18th century, ladies would not wear the fashions of the day whilst sitting for a portrait, as they "lacked the required gravitas and refined quality".[#] As a portrait is there to encapsulate the sitters whole being, women would often wear complete fantasy garments, or at the very least flavour their dress with touches of the fanciful.

[188] Ribeiro, A. cited in Taylor, L. (2002) p. 117.

[189]HBO. (2019, April 25). *Gentleman Jack: Invitation to the Set with Suranne Jones | HBO* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuLbSkV62cY

Pye recalls that he "started looking at other noticeable lesbians throughout history, that was really helpful in sort of building a picture of what this sort of masculine dress might look like".[190] These inspiration boards, found available on his Instagram page, show that the designer took influence from other unconventionally dressed women when designing how Anne Lister would be presented to a twenty-first century audience – "Tom said the idea for the top hat came from the Ladies of Llangollen and George Sand. Sand was one of the most notable nineteenth-century women who chose to wear male attire in public".[191] Furthermore, Pye recalled,

> I also had to support Suranne in forming a character that would leap off the page, so she probably is a slightly theatricalised version of the true Anne. I doubt Anne Lister really wore a top hat and her tailors may not have been quite so sharp.[192]

Therefore while there are very limited visual resources of Anne Lister, it can be understood that her appearance was altered and dramatised for the purpose of the period drama, as there is no evidence that Lister regularly wore a top hat, as she was portrayed to in *Gentleman Jack*.

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[190]HBO. (2019, May 20). *Gentleman Jack: Styling A Gentleman - Behind the Scenes | HBO* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHJKHMEeog0

[191]Costume Co. (2019, June 28). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 1* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HzKUaro3sE

[192]Costume Co. (2019, July 15). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 2* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXU967Zai_k



Fig 2.4: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -“Sexuality, Gender and Dress”, Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.



Fig 2.5: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -“Sexuality, Gender and Dress”, Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.



Fig 2.6: First research & influences boards for #gentlemanjack -“Pelisses, Redingotes and Military Influences”, Tom Pye, February 2017, © Tom Pye.

Figs 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 are Pye's inspiration boards for when he designed the costumes for *Gentleman Jack*'s portrayal of Anne Lister, in which the main themes were sexuality, gender and dress. The boards feature prolific lesbians and non-conforming women; Charlotte Cushman, Vita Sackville West, several images of the Ladies of Llangollen and George Sand, the artwork of Romaine Brooks and various other imagery displaying unconventional women's dress of the time. The periods these women were alive were not restricted to the years of Lister's life; Vita Sackville West was not born until 1892, therefore her dress can not be viewed as though it was worn when Lister dressed in her unconventional way. However, it provided Pye a base to build Lister's unconventional costumes, combined with her journals and limited portraiture.

Fig 2.6 shows a range of pelisses and reddingdotes (riding habit coats), displaying the military influence on the costuming. The top half of riding habits were inherently masculine in appearance as "men's suits and women's habits were made by tailors rather than dressmakers and cut and fashioned from the same selection of fabrics".[193] The ornate horizontal braided trims are inspired by the military uniforms of Hussars.[194] The integration of the military inspiration can be seen further in fig 2.7, featuring a sketch of Lister's spencer, and more specific costume references. The final outcome can be seen pictured in fig 2.8, on Suranne Jones as Anne Lister. Although Anne Lister does not wear a riding habit in *Gentleman Jack*, some elements are still visible in the spencer created by Pye. The high collar and horizontal braids are visibly inspired by military dress.

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[193] Matthews David, A. (2002). Elegant Amazons: Victorian Riding Habits and the Fashionable Horsewoman. *Victorian Literature and Culture, 30*(1), 141-156. NaN. p. 182.

[194] "The hussars were light cavalry regiments and their uniform was particularly decorative as it was derived from Hungarian national dress" - Johnston, L., & Wilcox, C. (2016). *Fashion in Detail: 19th Century*. Thames & Hudson. p. 16.



Fig 2.7: Spencer and skirt made by @cosproplondonuk @suranne_jones, Tom Pye, October 2017, © Tom Pye.



Fig 2.8: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for *Gentleman Jack,* unknown, 2019, © BBC/HBO.

It is interesting that Pye added the embellishments onto Lister's costumes, and made them more fashionable styles of the time, particularly as Jones states in an interview, "we didn't try to beautify me in

any way".[195] As mentioned, Pye believes she did conform to women's dress to some degree, and therefore this addition could be his inference to this, however it also presents Lister in more fashionable dress to the modern audience than, as far as we have evidence to, she actually wore.

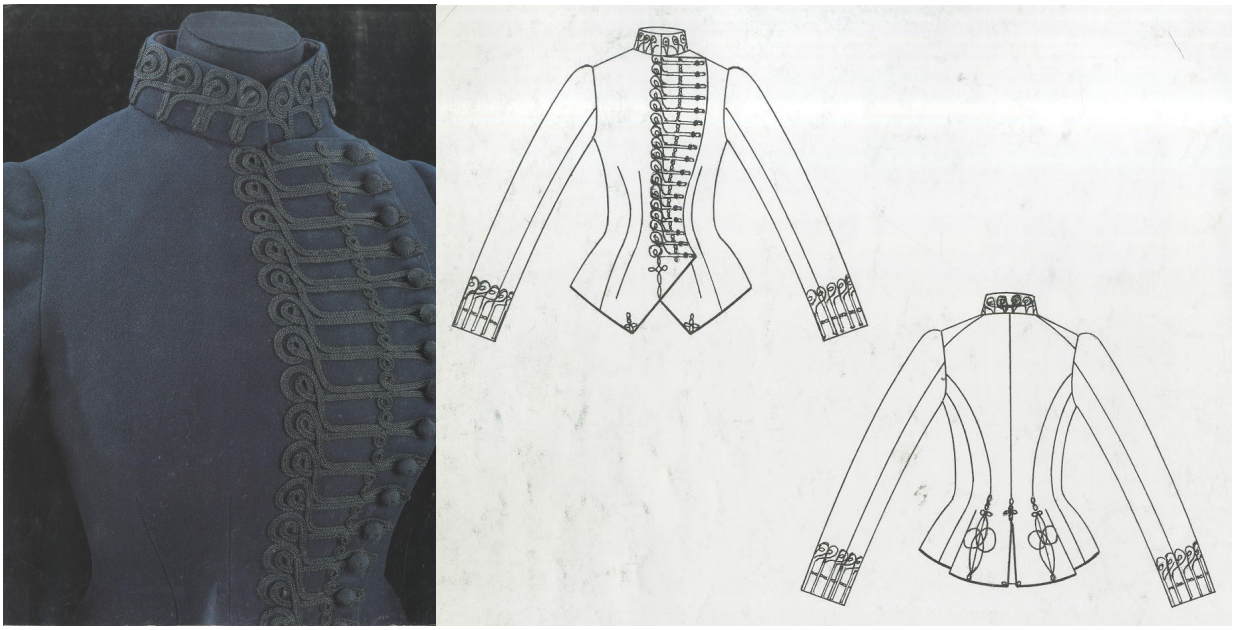

Fig 2.9: Woman's riding jacket of flannel trimmed with mohair and lined with sateen, unknown, 1885-1886, © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Fig 2.9 display a "woman's riding jacket of flannel trimmed with mohair and lined with sateen", circa 1885, which features similar braiding to the spencer design from *Gentleman Jack*.[196] Lucy Johnston recalls that,

> For much of the nineteenth-century, fashionable women wore dark woollen tailored jackets inspired by men's coats. By the 1880s, their dress was so similar that some observers noted that from a distance it was difficult to distinguish very young ladies from young gentlemen.[197]

However in the time of Anne Lister, this was not the case, which would explain the ridicule she received for her idiosyncratic appearance, standing out vastly from Halifax society.

> The collection of riding habits in the Victoria and Albert Museum demonstrates that plain dark habits replaced coloured ones as Victoria came to the throne. The ruby red attire of

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[195]HBO. (2019, May 20). *Gentleman Jack: Styling A Gentleman - Behind the Scenes | HBO* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHJKHMEeog0

[196]Johnston, L., & Wilcox, C. (2016) p. 16.

[197]Johnston, L., & Wilcox, C. (2016) p. 16.

the eighteenth-century horsewomen and the emerald green habit decked with hussar braiding of the early nineteenth century had faded by the 1850s, fully adopting the palette of men's dress. By mid-century, the only appropriate colours for a lady's riding habit were black, navy, gray and brown.[198]

[198]Matthews David, A. (2002) p. 182.



Fig 2.10: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister in *Gentleman Jack*, unknown, 2019, © BBC.

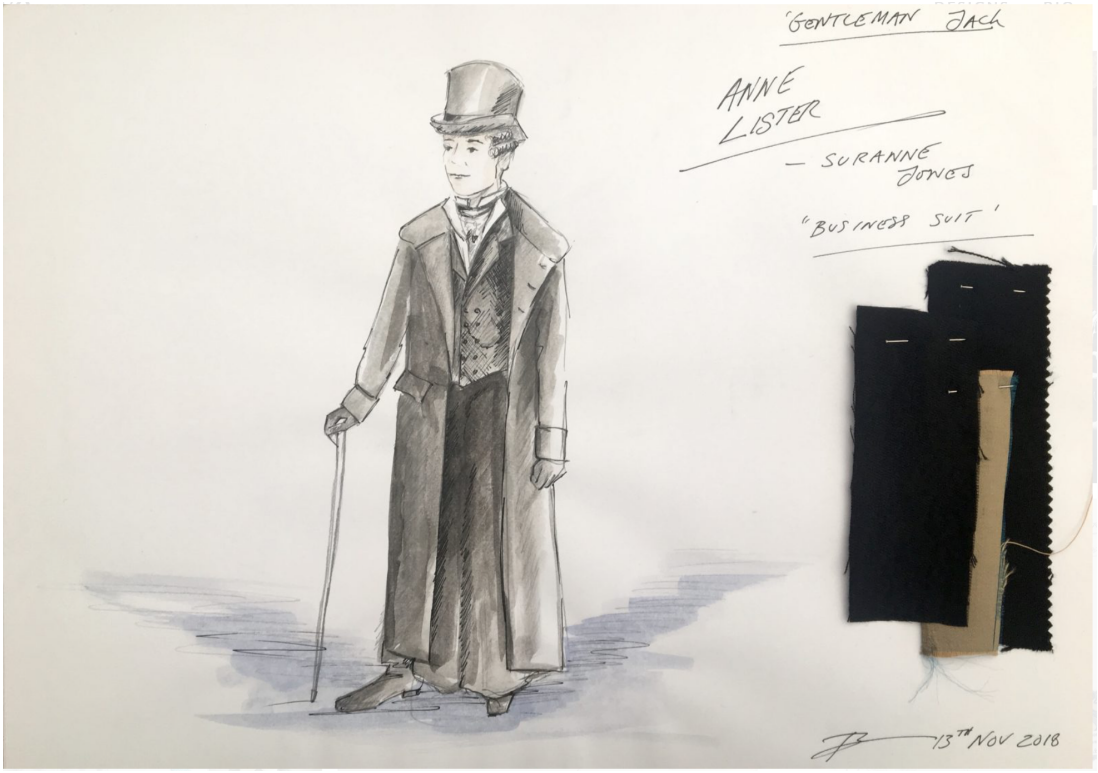

Fig 2.11: #annelister business suit, made by @the_bearded_tailor@cosproplondonuk for the superb @suranne_jones #gentlemanjack, Tom Pye, November 2018, © Tom Pye.

Fig 2.12: Suranne Jones as Anne Lister for *Gentleman Jack,* unknown, 2019, © BBC/HBO.



These images display the costuming of Anne's business dress; the attire she appears in most regularly within the series. Figure 2.12 shows Suranne Jones walking in *Gentleman Jack*, in the costume sketched in figure 2.11. Pye notes that "it was really useful for us both to try out everything she wore in movement, it's such a big part of who Anne was and really informed her character".[199] This costume resembles a female version of a three piece suit; including a ankle length black skirt, a black waistcoat with a pocket watch chain, a patterned undershirt, a dark coloured stock, a long overcoat, marching in strong black boots with gaiters, holding a cane and adorning a top hat. In figure 2.10 she is also seen to be holding black leather gloves. Pye took a detour from Lister's supposedly all black attire, stating that

> I wasn't fully believing her reasoning for the black as mourning. She did say that in the diary but i'm sure that it was also about wanting to adopt a more masculine colour palette too. In the few portraits of Anne that do exist, she is clearly depicted wearing a brown pelisse and a red heart pin, so I used this as a license to not take the 'black only' rule that seriously. If brown was okay I assume she must've worn a rather monochromatic palette, but maybe not strictly all black, so I crept in greys, silvers, dark blues, and browns, I felt that the most important thing was that she looked nothing like the other female characters.[200]

Similar to the embellishments on the spencer, there is no evidence Lister wore prints resembling that of her waistcoat in figure 2.10. As Pye states, his belief that differentiating Anne's costumes from all the other females in the series was the most important thing. Therefore, some historical accuracy was sacrificed to allow creative license, and ensure that the costumes clearly communicated to the audience the differences that set Anne apart from the rest of popular society.

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[199]Costume Co. (2019, July 15). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 2* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXU967Zai_k

[200]Costume Co. (2019, July 15). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 2* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXU967Zai_k



Fig 2.13: Photograph taken of Anne Lister's business dress @ the Gentleman Jack exhibition, Bankfield Museum, November 2019.

The business attire displayed at the Bankfield Museum's *Gentleman Jack* is a simpler costume than the one featured in Pye's Instagram. The costume in fig 2.13 consists of a double-breasted coat, skirt and a stock. Displayed next to Anne's business attire is Ann Walker's day dress costume, highlighting the vivid contrast in dress between the two lovers. Lister's costume falls relatively straight and although it is

tailored, it by no means aims to accentuate her figure. The cuts of the costume are masculine in appearance, dark in colour and defy fashionable female dress conventions of the time. As previously mentioned by Pye, movement was crucial to the representation of Anne Lister, the costume could not hinder her movements, but it should complement how active she was in life:

> In contrast to Anne Lister's more masculine looks, I ended up choosing particularly feminine and frothy looks for the women around her, fully embracing the more eccentric fashions of the 1830s with huge gigot sleeves, bell shaped skirts, large bonnets and hats.[201]

[201]Costume Co. (2019, August 2). *Gentleman Jack Costumes - Part 3* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTUCFd5zyas



Fig 2.14: Anne Lister and Ann Walker's costumes from *Gentleman Jack* @ the *Gentleman Jack* exhibition, Bankfield Museum, November 2019.

Walker's costume embodies the fashionable female dress of the 1830s, in which *Gentleman Jack* is set. Her skirt is fuller, the bodice is belted, accentuating a small waistline, with a wide bateau neckline, large gigot sleeves, in a light pink floral pattern with gathered detail on the front of the bodice. Displayed next to each other, it highlights the contrast in social footing of the women; Lister's costume is utilitarian, practical in silhouette, easy to disguise any dirt from activities and jobs she completes. Walker's impractical, feminine, exaggerated silhouette adds difficulty to certain movements and tasks, but it does not pose a concern due to her privileged lifestyle. Throughout the series, this juxtaposition of the two women and their societal roles and positions is explicitly expressed through their costumes.

Expanding on Roulston's comment that "her freedom makes her freakish rather than heroic", while we look at Anne Lister through a modern lens, we commend her for defying prescribed gender boundaries. However, this is also coming from a lens which has also witnessed suffrage, Stonewall riots, the legalisation of same sex marriage and increased bidirectional gender fluidity in modern western culture.[202] For nineteenth-century provincial Halifax, Lister was a maverick, but was frowned upon for overstepping the boundaries. Society feared Anne Lister, the respect she commanded, the way she rejected everything society had expected women to be. Her dress can be inferred as an extension of her personality and her rejection of imposed female restrictions.

While the costuming of *Gentleman Jack* is heavily informed by Lister's journal and portraits, it does not present an entirely accurate image. As Pye's inspiration boards show, the costumes were informed by multiple other unconventional women, both before and after Anne Lister's life. In reviews of the series, one common topic of discussion, which indicates her unconventional dress, is the wearing of the top hat, which in fact, Lister never actually wore. History tells us how she wore all black attire, in masculine cuts, with masculine accessories, which were amplified further by her gentleman-like deportment. Pye used this information to plant the seed from which blossomed the popular costumes for *Gentleman Jack.* Inspired by Lister's authentically masculine taste, Pye presented a stylised interpretation of Lister's costumed image; using a monochromatic palette with hints of prints and patterns to tell the story, which included complex themes of gender, sexuality, identity, status and romance. While it deviated from the real Anne's appearance, Pye's costumes aided in the adaptation to further distance her from the other female characters. As the term 'period drama' implies, the story, and ultimately the costumes, were dramatised for entertainment value, and while the image of Anne that was created was not historically accurate, it succeeded in communicating to the audience that she was an oddity in Yorkshire society; for her gentlemanly manners, desires and clothes.

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[202] Roulston, C. (2013) p. 274.

This chapter demonstrates, through an analysis of all the evidence available – from Anne herself, to those who have been tasked with bringing Anne back to life – a new understanding that, not unlike the Ladies of Llangollen, what Anne Lister actually wore was not all that shocking. While her dress was fundamental in constructing Anne's unconventional appearance, it was the combination of dress, with her styling and deportment, that created this extraordinary figure in ordinary provincial society.



Fig 3.1: Bessie Bonehill on a US Tobacco Company cigarette card, compared with Bessie Bonehill in costume, both unknown, both c.1890s, © New York Public Library.

On August 27th 1902, *The Tatler* announced the passing of a great entertainer:

> Miss Bessie Bonehill, who succumbed on Thursday to a melancholy malady, was one of the great figures in music-hall life. She had been a long time at the business, and was known practically wherever English was spoken [...] Personally I cannot say that I admire the misshapen art of a woman personating a man, but Bessie Bonehill carried off everything by her enormous flow of high spirits and good humour, and she will be missed by her peculiar public.[203]

Although not everyone could agree that male impersonation was a respectable form of entertainment, there was no denying the influence and status these performers enjoyed. This chapter considers the relationship between female cross-dressing and the theatre, with specific analyses of the boundaries of

[203]unknown. (1902, August 27). The Late Bessie Bonehill. *The Tatler. Retrieved from https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/cc08hf774*

gender, costume and performance. The central case study focuses on Bessie Bonehill (1855-1902), one of the earliest male impersonation stars in the music hall culture of the late nineteenth-century. It assesses the relationship between gender, dress and the theatre, and the fundamental role costume plays in this. It also discusses the rise of male impersonation as a form of popular performance with the growth of music hall and vaudeville theatre, explores the character of Bessie Bonehill on and off-stage, her costuming, and what messages her costumes communicate. Bessie Bonehill is a compelling figure within male impersonation and was chosen to shine a spotlight on early male impersonation. The chapter makes use of a variety of sources including visual analysis of a small selection of her costumes, photographs and playbills alongside analysis of reviews from critics who attended her performances. By offering a new perspective of cross-dressing and performance as these intersect with gender and dress more generally, this chapter enriches our understanding of the role that dress and costume played within these types of performance.

This thesis has already highlighted the important differentiation between dress and costume – both acting as extensions of the body and self, albeit in differing constructed scenarios – however Barbieri notes a dialogic relationship exists between the two. Speaking of a statement made by Goepp, Barbieri debates "she distinguishes between 'theatre' and 'social', exposing the word 'costume' as a generic term that could be applied either to clothing for the distinct moment of performance, or to that worn offstage in the everyday of social life."[204] Barbieri also argues, "hands that make, limbs that wear, and eyes that watch implicate the body as its central shared core, as costume becomes an object in movement— from material into embodiment on stage— in the affective communication between performers and audience."[205] Furthermore, the work of Barbieri and Pantouvaki acknowledges that "the study of dance, opera, theatre and film practice have often considered the performer as costumed, demonstrating the interdependence that exists between the costume and performance".[206]

It has been acknowledged throughout academia that costume remains an understudied area; Julie Lynch argues that understanding of stage costume can be gained from areas of art history, gender studies and semiotics – in which scholars dispute the social, political, technological and aesthetic factors – however

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[204] Barbieri, D., & Pantouvaki, S. (2016). Towards a philosophy of costume. *Studies In Costume and Performance, 1*(1), 3-7. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1386/scp.1.1.3_2 p.3.

[205] Barbieri, D. (2017). *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Culture and the Body.* London: Bloomsbury. pp.XX-XXI.

[206]Barbieri, D., & Pantouvaki, S. (2016). p.5.

costume continues to get lost and overshadowed by fashion theory.[207] She disputes that prior to the publishing of Aoife Monk's seminal work 'The Actor in Costume' in 2009, that there was little written about how costume created meaning in theatre. Monks argues,

> If we take the work of fashion theorists seriously, who point to the ways in which clothing anchors and produces the social body, and embeds that body within a web of social and economic relations, we might need to acknowledge theatre costumes' crucial role in the production of the body on stage. We might also want to turn our attention to the seemingly trivial aspect of costume, the visual playfulness they may introduce into the scene, the enjoyment they may create by revealing cleavages or biceps or ankles and their contribution to the pleasures of spectacles. [208]

This sentiment acknowledges that while costumes do often represent more underlying meaning than visual aesthetics, the entertaining value and intention of costumes should not always be so far read into. As Lynch suggests,

> Monks sees costume's wide-ranging potential in performance as less of an onion to be peeled away to reveal the 'truth', and more as a 'kaleidoscope' through which it is possible to receive multiple and often contradictory meanings from the same 'ingredients'.[209]

However, costumes not only have to be a visual representation of the character's self, but need to communicate various other elements that differ from the reality that the audience views the stage from. These include time and place, and other aspects of character, such as social class. To aid the audience's understanding, costumes are often exaggerated beyond a realistic representation of the type of character played. Further emphasised by Monks,

> Perhaps if actors move from the individual to the general once they enter the stage, they attain a generality that suggests that their clothes are the ideal, telling the audience: 'these are not just clothes; these are the spirit of all clothes'. Because in a theatre performance, costumes represent "clothes", they become symbolic of a series of moral, emotional and ideological qualities, and stand in for a set of broader social values.[210]

This notion will be explored further in this chapter, as the characters Bessie Bonehill portrayed in her act would often embody differing levels of social class; from middle class swells, to working class newspaper boys, performing the stereotypes that accompanied them. These portrayals were not based on one individual, but seek to typify a general representation, albeit in a comedic, and often satirical, way.

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[207] Lynch, J. (2016). Such stuff as dreams are made on: Exploring costume design's semiotic and scenographic potential in making meaning for performance. *Studies In Costume and Performance, 1*(1), 41-57. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1386/scp.1.1.41_1. p.42.

[208] Monks, A. (2009). *The Actor In Costume*. London: Palgrave. p.10.

[209] Lynch, J. (2016). p. 43.

[210] Monks, A. (2009). p.39.

Lynch's discussion on the understudy of costumes in regards to theatrical scenography is particularly interesting in regards to male impersonation of the nineteenth-century. Scenography includes the set design, sound design, lighting design and costume design in a production, and Lynch's disputes how costume is often lost within the realm of theatre studies approach to scenography. The scenography of male impersonation in the nineteenth-century music hall was more subdued; with no elaborate set designs due to the nature of the shows; with impersonators portraying different characters in each song, and multiple different performers taking the stage throughout the evening.[211] The illusion relies heavily on costume to communicate the character to the audience; particularly as they are solo shows, and feature no other actors in accurately gendered costumes to exaggerate the gender differences.

Monks proposes interesting analysis in regards to cross-dressing in theatre specifically;

> cross-dressing makes the difference between the actor and the role explicitly. In order to know that we are watching cross-dressing, we must see that performers are not what they play. Costumes must appear as costumes, separate from the performers body."[212]

This is a departure from scholars who propose that costume is an extension of the actors self.[213] As will be discussed further in this chapter, the audiences awareness of gender illusion is fundamental to the understanding and enjoyment of crossd-dressing in theatre. Monks continues by proposing,

> Through their acceptance that "that woman is a woman", spectators might produce and agree on the gender of the actor in performance. Inversely, when watching crossdressed performance, the audience might say, "that man is a woman" or "that woman is a man". And, as they sit in the auditorium for the length of the production, they agree to believe this statement, while also seeing doubly that "man as a man" or the "woman as a woman". Perhaps, when spectators leave the theatre they believe that those "men" and "women" will go back to their dressing rooms, take off their costume and makeup, and change back into their rightfully sexed identity. But, perhaps they also leave

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[211] While there are no videos available of Bessie Bonehill performing, videos of Ella Shields – another famed male impersonator from the late-19th/early-20th century – show Shields performing her most famous song 'Berlington Bertie from Bow' in front of a sheet backdrop, painted to resemble a street, as she performs dressed as a swell. It is likely that backdrops were not changed for each character, and as a street is a generic public space, it would have suited most characters portrayed on the stage.

[212] Monks, A. (2009). P.79.

[213] As Isaac proposes in a biographical approach to costume, costumes can participate in an "act for 'surrogation' [...] (becoming) carriers of 'memory' and 'identity' with the ability to conjure up the 'ghosts', not only of an interlinked cycle of performances, but also of specific performers". Isaac, V. (2017). Towards a new methodology for working with historic theatre costume: A biographical approach focussing on Ellen Terry's 'Beetlewing Dress'. *Studies In Costume & Performance, 2*(2), 115-135. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1386/scp.2.2.115_1. p.129.

> with the faint suspicion that actors have been altered by the act of dressing up. [214]

A huge part of the enjoyment for the audience attending these shows featuring gender illusion, was knowing that it was in fact a woman impersonating a man, but also knowing that after the show ended, a usual order of gender would be restored. This will be explored further in this chapter.

Drag is a tenent of modern performance and often comedy relies on the drag performance and the subversion of gender norms for narrative and character impulse. Imagine, for example, if Edna Turnblad was played by a woman in *Hairspray*, or if at the Christmas pantomime, Cinderella's ugly stepsisters were just plain young women?[215] Despite Cinderella's long and diverse history, from folk tale, through variations in different cultures, different periods and adaptations for stage, screen, and page, the only time the ugly stepsisters have ever been characterised as men in drag is within theatrical performance. Why is this? The relationship between theatre and gender is deep-rooted, with evidence of early cross dressing in Shakespearean plays and in Ancient Greek theatre, and it is clear that the theatre has long provided a safe space in which the boundaries of gender are often explored.[216]

While the Ladies of Llangollen and Anne Lister found fame and infamy as examples of masculine femininity in the context of dress, there came a time in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, when 'cross-dressing women' – rather than being victimised – were celebrated; through male impersonation. Through the introduction of music hall, audiences began to develop a genuine admiration for cross-dressing female performers, valuing them as real stars. This admiration is evidenced in countless newspaper articles and reviews of the most famed performers, which will be discussed briefly further through this chapter.

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[214] Monks, A. (2009). P.79.

[215] In 1988, when Hairspray was originally made, drag queen Divine played the role of Edna Turnblad, Tracey Turnblad's mum. Ever since then, the role of Edna has always been played by a man in drag; in 2007, Edna was played by John Travolta.

[216] McManus, C. (2016). *Shakespeare and gender: the 'woman's part'*. British Library. https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeare-and-gender-the-womans-part.
Gewertz, K. (2003). *When men were men (and women, too):*. Retrieved from https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2003/07/when-men-were-men-and-women-too/

Only a small selection of Bonehill's costumes survive in the archives of the National Museum of American History.[217] Such dearth of material evidence is not uncommon in the context of costume and theatre. As Donatella Barbieri has noted,

> the physical disappearance of the material costume that, separated from the performer, may have left traces of the coalesced, transient, onstage existence only on the wearer's physical memory. These traces are sometimes recorded in the performer's memoirs and, occasionally, in audiences' and critic's recollections.[218]

This has been the case with Bonehill, with a few reviews from her early performances in the USA. While commended for her overall performance, her costumes are evidenced in several critical reviews that will be discussed throughout this chapter. The ephemerality of dress exists in costume, with solo performers like male impersonators, or the material simply wearing itself to a point beyond repair; as Barbieri notes, "the few costumes that make it into the archive as preserved objects and as fragments of the performance may have been collected because of their association with famous performers", or if the costumes were created by prestigious designers.[219] Veronica Isaac has taken this idea further, arguing that,

> historic dress and textiles are vulnerable to the damage that can result from long-term exposure to light, dust, and fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity. Perspiration also breaks down fibers and stains fabric and is a particular issue with garments that were worn under stage lights and, in the case of dance costumes, used in physically demanding performances.[220]

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[217] In 1986, the Smithsonian Institute acquired approximately 942,000 new items to add to their collections; The New York Times reported that some of Bessie Bonehill's costumes were included in this acquisition, but have been put away for study purposes and are not able to be accessed by the public. Access to these images for this research was only gained on September 16th 2020. The New York Times. (1987). *WASHINGTON TALK; WHERE A MOTH IS A TREASURE*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/19/us/washington-talk-where-a-moth-is-a-treasure.html

[218] Barbieri, D. (2017). p. XXII.

[219] Barbieri, D. (2017) p. XXII. Evenson notes that while costumes have physical demands due to the performances they are worn in; "the performing arts often require a wider range of body movement than everyday life, costumes are generally donned and doffed at least eight times a week, and so costume changes are made very quickly". Evenson, S L., (2010) *Dress as Costume in the Theatre and Performing Arts* in Eicher, J B., & Tortora, P G., Berg *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion.* Retrieved from DOI: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch10018

[220] Isaac, V. (2014). *Costumes* in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera.* Retrieved from Doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195335538.013.025

Although theatres will have owned the costumes for larger productions, this was unlikely to be the case for male impersonators, who would often perform at multiple theatres a night to make good money.[221] They will have owned their costumes, aspects of which will have been reworn between several shows and characters as they will have had a limited wardrobe, especially if entirely self-funded.[222] This is further supported by Issac's working, which acknowledges,

> An additional challenge faced when analysing surviving costumes lies in the fact that not only were costumes seldom reserved for a single scene within a production, they also frequently reappeared in other works within a performer's or company's repertoire. [...] very few stage costumes survived intact or with a clear link to a single and identifiable original wearer and production, and whether by gift, sale or purchase, a theatre costume was generally passed 'down the social scale of artistes' until it was either recycled into a new garment or discarded.[223]

By Bonehill's time, dress was being mass produced, reducing the cost of having to have a tailor custom make designs. Furthermore large costume warehouses and costumiers had been established, such as Angels in London, therefore, theoretically, she would have been able to purchase costumes. However, Bonehill designed and made her own costumes, a reflection of her frugality. Evenson argues that "sometimes ready-to wear apparel is put to use as costumes [...] Why go to the expense of making a business suit when one can be purchased off the rack? [...] In addition, using everyday dress as costumes can popularize fashion trends".[224] Male impersonators' influence on fashion will be discussed further in this chapter.

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[221] The V&A states "the big stars were so successful that they would perform in numerous halls each night, frantically crossing London in their carriages. By performing in several venues a night, the top stars could earn big money." V&A. (n.d). *Music hall and variety theatre*. Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/music-hall-and-variety-theatre

[222] This may justify why limited amounts of costume from male impersonators survive, as it was reused and repurposed into other costumes in their growing repertoire. Furthermore, as the costumes aimed to emulate genuine male dress, they were not overtly glamorous and theatrical in appearance, and perhaps did not strike enough interest to warrant their keeping by a museum at their time.

[223] Isaac, V. (2017). p.127.

[224] Evenson, S L., (2010) Retrieved from Doi: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch10018

As noted, there is a long tradition of cross-dressing in theatrical performance. As Dennise Kennedy has pointed out, however, "women cross-dressing to represent men or boys, within a context of public performance, does not appear to have the long history or the roots in ritual practice that could be said to legitimise cross-dressing by men".[225] Senelick, meanwhile, suggests that "the theatre is grounded in religion, and having women on stage was not considered decorous. Their realm is the home".[226]

The nineteenth-century was a defining period for gender and women's progress. As a result of the social inequality under Queen Victoria's rule, while the poor population saw limited progress, the middle to upper class basked in a growth of wealth and culture. There were increased opportunities for work and education through the Industrial Revolution, and development in leisure activities.[227] However, one area that appealed to the vast range of English society and classes was popular entertainment, such as music hall and theatre. The nineteenth-century saw the rise in accessible and popular entertainment, with the introduction of music hall, vaudeville, and to accompany the already established pantomime, the pantomime dame.[228] In this way, the practice of men cross-dressing in performance continued in its long tradition.

Senelick highlights that the earliest evidence of 'drag' being used as homosexual slang can be dated back to Eric Partridge in the 1850s, which referenced the action of long dresses, being worn by men dragging

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[225] Kennedy, D. (2010). *The Companion to Theatre and Performance*. Retrieved from https://www-oxfordreference-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199574193.001.0001/acref-9780199574193-e-2454

[226]Laurence Senelick has written extensively around theatre and performance, his most informative text for this research being *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre.* Quote taken from Gewertz, K. (2003).

[227]Society was rigidly structured by social class in the Victorian period. While the poor did benefit financially from employment, the conditions of work were brutal; long days of labour for both adults and children, no breaks, little and low-quality food. Workhouses provided shelter and employment for those with no other means, but they did not provide a quality of life. On the other hand, the growing middle-class thrived from industrialisation; products were easier and cheaper to buy due to mass production, labour was cheap and popular entertainment to enjoy in leisurely periods was growing. For more see English Heritage. (n.d.). *Victorians*. English Heritage. https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/victorian/daily-life/.
Britannica. (n.d.). *Victorian Era*. Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Victorian-era

[228] Ward, N. (2016). *A brief history of the pantomime – and why it's about so much more than 'blokes in dresses'*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/a-brief-history-of-the-pantomime-and-why-its-about-so-much-more-than-blokes-in-dresses-69683. "The role came about in the early 19th century, developing from the "travesti" tradition of theatrical cross-dressing. Early masters (mistresses) of the role included Dan Leno who, like many of his successors, came more from a music-hall tradition, rather than a dramatic one."

across the floor. [229] The etymology of the term 'drag' indicates a clear industry for it; it was being talked about, be it in admiration or outrage, there was a community of people who were discussing and engaging with cross-dressing performance.

Although female cross-dressing was not as overly popular as male cross-dressing was, Geczy and Karaminas have examined a long-established convention of female cross-dressing in English theatre. They document that since the mid-1600s women played 'breeches roles', and that "out of some 375 plays produced on the London stage between 1660 and 1700, it has been calculated that 89, nearly a quarter, contained one or more roles for actresses in male clothes".[230] However, as noted by the Victoria and Albert Museum, "the theatrical device of gender switching became a mainstay of Victorian pantomime".[231]

Young women already existed in the theatre in Britain in the nineteenth-century, playing the role of principal boys in pantomime.[232] Barbieri suggests that this was a "well established tradition on the pantomime stage".[233] It is believed that while it became an established element of pantomime and theatre, it did still stir some controversy early on in its presence in nineteenth-century theatre – "theatre owner Augustus Harris capitalised on controversy by bringing music hall performers to his Drury Lane Theatre",

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[229] Senelick, L. (2000). It is interesting that as male impersonation and female cross-dressing became more popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the term 'drag' was coined specifically to refer to male cross-dressing. The coinage of words shows there was a prominent practice of it, but coils it be inferred that this was an attempt to further place distance between what men and women were doing, as drag only referred to male cross-dressing at the time.

[230] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013). *Queer Style.* Retrieved from DOI: 10.5040/9781350050723.ch-005. Geczy and Karaminas document that the American star Charlotte Cushman was evidenced to be performing cross-dressing roles as early as the 1840s. Furthermore *The Harvard Gazette* reported that women were banned from appearing on stage "until the seventeenth century when female singers began to appear in a new form of musical theatre called opera".
Gewertz, K. The Harvard Gazette. (2003)

[231]V&A. (n.d.). *The Story of Pantomime*. Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-story-of-pantomime

[232] Principal boys were often effeminate male characters, such as Peter Pan, whose legs needed to look good in tights, or young male characters "especially those of the lower classes – chimney sweeps, newsboys, characters whose appealing vulnerability could be enhanced by casting a woman in the role". Gewertz, K. The Harvard Gazette. (2003). *When men were men (and women, too)*

[233] Barbieri, D. (2017) p. 103.

to play various principal boy roles.[234] Similar to the dame, the principal comic role in pantomime, played by a cross-dressing male, in neither of these roles is there an attempt of genuine deception regarding gender; the audience is very aware that both roles are being played by the opposite sex. The audience's awareness is reassurance that they are not being deceived, and makes the audience comfortable with the gender play in the parameters of the theatre, to find the characters comical.

Judith Halberstam, professor at the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University, has suggested that "little attention has been paid to drag kings or male impersonators, or 'women behaving like men' ".[235]

Music hall and male impersonation were born in Britain in the eighteenth-century, but gained real traction in the nineteenth-century.[236] Some of the top male impersonators, including Vesta Tilley and Annie Hindle, gained stardom status and featured on some of the biggest bills possible, including The Royal Variety Performance at the time; thus it could be argued in this context that music hall stars became "the equivalent of modern-day celebrities".[237] Male impersonation being performed today would commonly be categorised as 'drag kinging', but this modern term cannot be used to explain this historical act accurately. However, it is important to establish the distinction between drag and transvestism; while transvestism is a performative state in the inversion of gender identity, it is often connected deeper with sexuality and gender identity; drag is usually reserved for stage or screen, or with an entertainment aspect, and there is a clear distinction between character and performer, which do not typically overlap in day-to-day life.

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[234] V&A. (n.d.). *The Story of Pantomime.* Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-story-of-pantomime. Harris brought both Vesta Tilley and Marie Lloyd to perform principal boy roles in his theatre. Music Hall performers presence in pantomime was fruitful; "they became central to promoting pantomime and often brought raucous energy to the carefully staged productions".

[235] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013) This statement strengthens the necessity of this study, as female cross-dressing is understudied in contrast with its male counterpart.

[236] Barbieri highlights that "Onstage female-to-male transvestism has existed at least since Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) and demonstrated its empowering agency via actor/manager Madame Vestris". For more on Madame Vestris, see Chapter 4 of Barbieri, D. (2017) p. 186.

[237] Vesta Tilley performed in the debut Royal Variety Performance in 1912. While male impersonation had proved popular throughout the years, there were still some who did not necessarily support, or perhaps just did not understand or appreciate the performance type. During Vesta Tilley's performance, Queen Mary reportedly buried her head in her programme upon seeing Tilley on stage in trousers, as at this time, it would have been immodest for a woman to appear in trousers. V&A. (n.d.). *The Story of Pantomime*. Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-story-of-pantomime.

Adam Geczy, lecturer at Sydney College of the Arts, and Vicki Karaminas, professor at Massey University in New Zealand, established a distinction between the two:

> The transvestite's concern is to pass as a woman or a man in a crowd using mannerism, clothing and dress codes to construct the illusion of the opposing gender, whilst drag mimics and exaggerates ideal characteristics or stereotypes of women and men. The story of drag began on the stage, in pantomimes, minstrel shows and vaudeville, whilst transvestism belongs to the domain of the fetishist. [238]

This distinction supports the idea that while male impersonation proposes temporary illusion on the stage, one of its main aims is to bring the exaggerated elements to the forefront, for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, for in most cases of male impersonators, their cross-dressing was not an expression of sexuality, nor used as a means to conceal homosexual desires.[239] However, Halberstam more succinctly divides female masculinity into three notable categories: drag king, male impersonator and drag butch. She argues that while

> male impersonation has been a theatrical genre for at least three-hundred years, the drag king is a recent phenomenon. Whereas the male impersonator attempts to produce a plausible performance of maleness as the whole of her act, the drag king performs masculinity (often periodically) and makes the exposure of the theatricality of masculinity into the mainstream of her act [...] Moreover, whereas the male impersonator and the drag king are not necessarily lesbian roles, the drag butch most definitely is.[240]

These definitions support the idea that male impersonation is a long-established theatre art, while simultaneously reaffirming that the act of cross-dressing is generally confined to the parameters of the stage, whereas drag butch is typically "a masculine woman who wears masculine attire as part of her quotidian gender statement".[241] In addition, there is evidence of male impersonators who amplify their femininity offstage through their dress, Bonehill included, to highlight the distinction between their

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[238] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013)

[239] Note the research states 'most cases'. In Bonehill's case, she happily married twice and had three children .Annie Hindle, early male impersonator who made great success on the American variety stage, married multiple women throughout her career, and often married using the disguise of Charles E. Hindle. Eventually the truth was revealed, however it did not really affect her career; Rodger highlights that "theatre managers continued to book Hindle because they knew she was a reliable performer whose skills on stage pleased her audience". For more see Rodger, G. (2018). *The Wondrous Life of America's First Male Impersonator*. Retrieved from https://www.whatitmeanstobeamerican.org/identities/the-wondrous-life-of-americas-first-male-impersonator/

[240] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013)

[241] Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013)

character and self. By condemning gender non-conforming activity outside of theatre, they further indicated their distinction from transvetism and drag butch behaviour.[242]

In the context of the case studies presented in this thesis, and applying Halberstam's categories to them, Butler, Ponsonby and Lister would all be categorised as 'drag butch', whereas Bonehill sits comfortably in male impersonation. Furthermore, Barbieri notes that,

> Both costume and fashion act through the body, intending to influence behaviour and thoughts, and to communicate. In costume this is organized not as a production of personal identity but within a "staged" world governed by its own interior aesthetic logic, functioning as an ordering principle that evaporates at the end of the performance.[243]

This sentiment reinforces points made earlier in this chapter: while both costume and fashion communicate a sense of person and character to an audience, the character in costume is not portraying the internal self of the actor, but of the character that is present in the constructed world in the theatre. When the costume comes off, there is a distinction between the onstage character who wears the costume, and the offstage actor underneath. Evenson argues that while the accompanying elements of performance, such as posture and movement, add to the character,

> it is the donning of a costume, including the makeup, that psychologically place the actor almost inside the character's skin. One of the first goals of a costume is to conceal or deemphasize the actor's own personality so that a new identity can be created.[244]

Early music halls lacked refinement. O'Hara suggests that

> The venue for broad comedy, variety acts, bawdy songs, and risqué costumes and skits, the music hall was widely regarded by respectable Victorian society as a disreputable and tawdry place, and the women who performed there were often held as morally suspect and 'low'.[245]

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[242] Hastings, C. (2019). *Drag kings, the gender rebels that history forgot: The fascinating legacy of male impersonators*. Retrieved from https://www.stylist.co.uk/long-reads/drag-king-female-entertainer-male-impersonator-vesta-tilley-drag-queens/330986

[243]Barbieri, D. (2017)

[244] Evenson, S L. (2010)

[245] O'Hara, P. (1997). "The Woman of To-day": The "Fin de Siècle" Women of "The Music Hall and Theatre Review". *Victorian Periodicals Review, 30*(2), 141-156. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/20082980?read-now=1&seq=1

The V&A adds, "the audience would chat throughout the acts and could be very rowdy, often throwing things at the performers, such as bottles, old boots and even dead cats. In industrial towns, the favoured object to hurl was an iron rivet".[246] Performers included singers, acrobats, trapeze artists, magicians, and throughout the years, male impersonation grew in popularity. [247]

By the 1860s, women were regularly performing as singers in music halls, and at this time early stages of male impersonation began to appear. It seems rather odd that the era in which there were such rigid gender expectations was also the era in which an art form toying with these expectations would become popular entertainment. It raises the question about the importance of the theatrical element of this cross-dressing behaviour, as cross-dressing was not acceptable in everyday dress and society. Through male impersonation, women dressed as men and explored a range of masculine experiences, through their costume and performance. A popular skit for male impersonators was to portray outrageous 'swells'.[248] However, they would also explore characters of lower society, such as newspaper boys and soldiers. As physical appearance was so fundamental to these performances, the performer's body shape would often dictate what type of male characters she would be able to portray. As Kennedy has made clear,

> According to physical type, ability, and temperament, they might represent slender youths in fashionable dress and especially in attractive uniforms (Vesta Tilley, Bessie Bonehill, Hetty King are examples of this mode) or heavyweight roistering swells or dudes (early examples were Annie Hindle and Ella Wesner in America, Fanny Robina in England, Louise Rott in Germany, and later the Australian Ella Shields, and the black vaudeville 'bull dagger' Gladys Bentley).[249]

Performing in the music halls granted these women an air of freedom and independence from their real lives; *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* affirms "the profession offered women autonomy and the

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[246] V&A. (n.d). *Music hall and variety theatre*. Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/music-hall-and-variety-theatre

[247] As music hall theatre grew in popularity, they outgrew the spaces of tavern rooms. The first purpose built music hall theatre was the Canterbury Hall in Lambeth in 1852. For more on this see V&A. (n.d). *Music hall and variety theatre*. Retrieved from https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/music-hall-and-variety-theatre

[248] The British Library defines swells as "young men who tried to rise above their class [...] Their ideals and aspirations were both mocked and at the same time admired by the popular culture of the period, especially by music hall performers with their exaggerated stage characters. A swell was flamboyant and confident whilst at the same time being stylish and blasé. Music Hall audiences were no longer entirely male, and female performers and impersonators such as W H Barry, poked fun at these social climbers." British Library. (n.d.). *Swells of London part 01*. British Library. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/vicpopmus/t/015hzz000001257u00014001.html

[249] Kennedy, D. (2010)

promise of great remuneration".[250] It allowed them to earn their own income and become less reliant on their husbands or families. Barbieri argues that male impersonation "contributed a disquieting challenge to the battlements of male privilege in the refusal of the limitations placed on the female sex and in the presentation of alternative female identities".[251] It was a method of escapism from the social shackles in which they were restrained for being women, whilst also undermining this prescribed authority, as their performances allowed them to obscure the boundaries of gender and class, albeit be in a restricted setting, confined to the theatre. This is still evident in elements of theatre in the modern day. Jessica Walker, star of in the contemporary male impersonation show *The Girl I Left Behind Me* notes

> By putting on trousers, these women are allowed to behave in a way that otherwise they wouldn't have been able to [...] Breaking out of gender stereotypes lent them a new power as performers and earners, but also made them objects of erotic fascination for men and women. What were audience members thinking, particularly the women, when they wrote love letters to performers who they clearly knew were really women? There was something magic and transformative going on, that touches upon issues of power and control".[252]

Male impersonation grew to be loved and respected by a range of classes, by both men and women. As Hartnoll and Found have explained,

> In its heyday, music-hall presented the type of entertainment most loved by the ordinary people. It was gay, raffish, and carefree, vulgar but not suggestive, dealing amusingly with the raw material of their own lives, their emotions, their troubles, their rough humour. Sophistication and subtlety were its undoing.[253]

The characters were often "socio-political reflection of the time and a satire of traditional male roles and behaviours", which likely contributed significantly to their success.[254] Rodger acknowledges that "the shows offered social critique and inscribed social order through humour and parody. The characters in the (variety) shows included caricatures of racial and ethnic groups, the old, the young, male and female,

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[250] O'Hara, P. (1997) p. 149.

[251] Barbieri, D. (2017) p. 186.

[252] Gardner, L. (2010). *Ladies as gentlemen: the cross-dressing women of Edwardian musical theatre*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/may/13/cross-dressing-women-musical-theatre

[253]Hartnoll, P., & Found, P. (1996) *The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from https://www-oxfordreference-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780192825742.001.0001/acref-9780192825742-e-2152#

[254] The University of Sheffield. (n.d.). *Vesta Tilley*. The University of Sheffield National Fairground and Circus Archive. https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/vestatilley

working-class and upper-class".[255] Characters of soldiers and naval officers were vehicles of pride and patriotism, popular when the British Empire was most powerful, whereas dressed as a suave swell, male impersonators took pleasure in lampooning the "counterfeit gentlemen whose lifestyle consisted of leisure, womanizing, excessive drinking, and loud, flashy clothes".[256] Just as caricatures of fashion in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries present an exaggerated, stylised interpretation of dress, emulating fashions but not completely true to life, male impersonators appeared in a similar way. They acted as a stylised representation of the character they portrayed, in which costume was fundamental, but they also appear to have been living fashion messages – intentional or not – influencing future dress trends.

In contrast to transvestism, male impersonation was not intended to deceive. Senelick argues that "gender impersonation should not be seen as an attempt to imitate the other sex, but rather as an effort to combine elements and create something fresh, but something that cannot be experienced outside the theatre."[257] Perhaps the reason why audiences in the nineteenth-century were increasingly accepting of male impersonation in the theatre, was because they were aware of the theatre's parameters, and that when they exited out into the streets at the end of performance, the regular order of gender would be restored. Theatre director Neil Barlett has explored this notion, suggesting that,

> the enjoyment is in the ambiguity. Mostly these women didn't even try to change their voices. The audience knew that what they were watching was a woman dressed as a man who was still singing in a woman's voice.[258]

Furthermore, while these women were dressing as men, performing masculine roles and male professions, their costumes did not aim to wholly emulate male dress. Male impersonators presented a stylised interpretation of these male characters through their dress to accompany their exaggerated performance of the characters; communicated through other theatrical elements such as body language and mannerisms, props, and costume. Veronica Isaac argues, "the theatre has often been described as a "mirror" of the

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[255]Rodger, G. (2018)

[256] Vesta Tilley became known as 'Britain's greatest recruiting sergeant', as she would have men sign up to the army throughout her performances. "In one week alone, while performing in Hackney, she managed to enlist a whole battalion" which became titled 'The Vesta Tilley Platoon'. She would often maintain friendships with those who enlisted as a result of her performances throughout their time in the army, sending souvenirs and messages to them on their deployment to maintain morale. The University of Sheffield. (n.d.). Swells in male impersonation were depicted in a way to highlight their lack of masculinities, which was done ironically to mock these supposedly masculine gentlemen. Foster, G. (1939, January 4). British Variety Thru The Years. *Variety,* p. 173. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/docview/1505794033?accountid=11526.

[257] Senelick, L. (2000) cited in Gewertz, K. (2003)

[258] Gardner, L. (2010)

public world, which though often deliberately skewed or imperfect, mimics our habitats, behavior, and clothing."[259]

However, as male impersonation grew, the costumes began to have influence on male fashions. Gillian Rodger, professor of musicology and ethnomusicology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, describes how Tilley's audiences would often take her representations of the swell quite literally. Roger, citing Sarah Maitland, suggests that,

> She began to set fashions for the young dandies of America - for instance her "Algy" costume was a pale grey morning coat and a preposterously embroidered waistcoat … In London this outfit was meant to suggest the extreme affectation of her hero; in America it was perceived as the height of European chic, and was taken up by fashion conscious young men and a real vogue for grey morning coats developed.[260]

Some sources suggest that "her costumes were made by a Bond Street tailor in London, whereas McAlpine accounts that it was Tilley's wearing of "such dapper Saville Row suits" that she would often wear that would influence male fashions.[261] What is not open for debate is the way in which she wore her costumes to influence male fashions – "She padded and constructed her figure so that her modest female curves were perfectly slim-hipped, angular, and lithe [...] reviewers joked that she was the best-dressed man in the house: "Her success was due to the fact that every male hopes one day, he may wear a dress suit thus, instead of have it hang all over him." "[262]

The manner in which male impersonators wore their masculine costumes and created trends in male fashions disputes the belief highlighted by Donald that fashion was fickle, and the outer-self was a reflection of the inner self. The belief women were frivolous and vain due to their infatuation with fashion is disputed in the way in which men responded to Tilley's fashions, showing that it was not just limited to

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[259] Isaac, V. *Costumes* in Greenwald, H. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195335538.013.025

[260] Maitland cited by Rodger, G M. (2018)

[261] Into the Limelight.org. (n.d.). *Vesta Tilley*. Retrieved from https://intothelimelight.org/category/male-impersonators/. McAlpine, F. (2014). *The Brits and Cross-Dressing: A History*. Retrieved from https://www.bbcamerica.com/anglophenia/2014/11/brits-cross-dressing-history. Rodger describes how Tilley once substituted her cufflinks with a piece of ribbon for a performance after misplacing them, only for multiple subsequent newspaper articles to be released, debating the fitness of cuff ribbons as opposed to cufflinks or buttons. Rodger, G M. (2018) When Tilley recognised the influence she had in regards to men's fashions, she acted in true entrepreneurial style and allowed various American manufacturers to license her name to promote various fashionable products; including the Vesta Tilley Socks, Vest Tilley Waistcoat and the Vesta Tilley Cigar.

[262] Foster, G. (1939, January 4)

women.[263] Furthermore, the costuming of male impersonators did not reflect the performers inner-self, so while dress is performance of inner-self, costume can be restricted to performance of a constructed character's self.

As demonstrated thus far, female cross-dressing has a deep history. The theatrical element was crucial in its acceptance, particularly in a period where gender boundaries were so heavily enforced, and while it provided entertainment for its audiences, it provided freedom for the women doing it. By developing a deeper understanding of Bessie Bonehill and her character, we will reveal the differentiation between the character and self, and strip back the curtain on male impersonators' reputation and public perceptions, versus their personal self, and the vital role costuming plays within creating this.

Bessie Bonehill (West Bromwich, 1855 – Portsmouth, 1902) was one of the earliest male impersonation stars of the nineteenth-century London music hall – self-proclaimed the first male impersonator – who went on to become a renowned star.[264] Born Betsey Bonehill to a poor family in West Bromwich, she entered the world of theatre at a young age, making her stage debut at six-years-old in the local pantomime. Like many young performers, she characterised principal boy roles in local pantomimes, and cropped her hair short to give her character more believability. Bonehill made her London debut in 1873, from which "she secured favourable reviews and, within a year, she was being described as a favourite of the metropolitan".[265] Bonehill performed as a male impersonator throughout the 1870s and 1880s in London; when she was then scouted by Tony Pastor, an American theatre owner and vaudeville pioneer, who enticed her across the Atlantic, where she was an immediate success. From that point, she largely

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[263] Donald, D. (2002). *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period*. Haywood Gallery. p. 11.

[264] One element of Bonehill's success can be interpreted through an article placed in *Bow Bells* magazine, on January 12th 1894. The article emphasises how much money she has saved for her child from the money that audience members throw onto the stage, of the value of £1,200. Using the currency converter provided by the National Archives, (last updated in 2017), the value of the £1,200 was converted, and would today be £98,459 to the value of the Great British Pound in 2017.This demonstrates that male impersonation was a profitable skit. This money that she placed into an account for her son was not payment from the theatre itself, but merely tips from admiring fans which would be thrown onto the stage, therefore this would be in addition to any payment she received from the venue itself. This further demonstrates the profitability of male impersonation in the nineteenth century. unknown. (1894, January 12). Art and Drama. *Bow Bells.* Retrieved from https://library.hud.ac.uk/pages/referencing-printnewspapers/ See *Bow Bell's* article in Appendix II.

[265]Baker, R. A. (2014). *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd. p. 170. Baker continues to highlight that we do not know any exact date or year in which Bessie Bonehill switched her performance style to male impersonation, how he does highlight that "her career was greatly assisted by her portrayal of William in a revival of F.C. Burnard's burlesque, 'Black Ey'd Susan', at the Alhambra in 1884. This helped establish her reputation on the legitimate stage".

remained in the USA until the fin de siècle, before returning to start a tour in England in 1901. On that trip she fell ill with stomach cancer, and passed away on August 21st 1902.

A review of an early performance in America captures Bonehill's stage presence:

> Miss Bonehill, besides being lithe and frisky, strident as to voice and nimble as to feet, is evidently a public performer of extended experience. Her command of the stage is something remarkable, and she is as much at home in masculine garb as if to the manner born. [266]

This reviewer commented on how she wore masculine dress with such ease, as if she were a man herself. Former BBC broadcaster Richard Anthony Baker argues that "her convincing male guise was not a complete asset" and that she would regularly receive dozens of marriage proposals from hopeful women each week.[267] This demonstrates her convincing appearance as a male impersonator.

Another review of an early American performance focuses on the costume:

> Her first two songs were done in full evening male attire, her third in a newsboy suit and her fourth dressed as a naval attaché. Her expressive face and lithe form were in accord with the song lyrics. Audiences quickly discovered she was a singer, an actress and a dancer.[268]

Not only does this review identify Bonehill as an accomplished entertainer, successful equally at singing, dancing and acting, but it also identifies her diversity as a performer in regards to her costume. Performing in evening attire, newsboy undress and naval uniform shows her ability to glide between the differing social classes associated with each, thus recognising the importance that each costume contributes to the overall character. Her diverse repertoire also demonstrates relatability and likeability to varying social classes. While *The Guardian* claimed that the USA "favoured a more manly style of male impersonation", some highlight that the most successful male impersonators in the USA were the more

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[266] unknown. (1889, November 5th). ANOTHER BRITISH ARTIST. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://dragkinghistory.com/1862-1901-bessie-bonehill/.

[267]Baker, R. A. (2014). p. 170. Baker also describes a situation at a wedding party in Glasgow, in which Bonehill escorted a girl home while she was dressed in men's clothing, "only to meet her angry boyfriend when she got back. Bessie had to do some quick talking to avoid getting into a fight".It is interesting to wonder why Bessie was dressed in male clothing at this wedding party. We do not know the year of the event, if Bessie performed there or if she just chose to dress in male attire. If so, this contradicts the idea of not wanting to deceive and appear as a man off stage. However there is no belief that Bessie was interested in having lesbian relations with this woman, as Bessie had never showed any behaviour of being this way inclined, and went onto have a happy marriage with a husband and child. This same text documents Bessie Bonehill going to meet a fan after a show, out of costume, and the fan becoming angry that she was not a man. However there is no further evidence of this to confirm it as true. It is possible that this was a propaganda tale, spread as hearsay to make people want to see her for themselves, to see if she was such a convincing man.

[268] Anthony, B. (2012). *Chaplin's Music Hall: The Chaplins and their Circle in the Limelight*. London: Bloomsbury. p. 103.

feminine ones, where it was evident that they were impersonating for entertainment purposes and not for transvestism.[269] However, Rodgers notes that the performance aesthetic for male impersonation in the USA changed between the 1870s and the 1890s; previously valuing realism in the performances and only beginning to prefer more feminine impersonators in the last decade.[270] Rodger's recalls reviews from the *New York Sun,* which highlighted the differentiation between Bonehill and other American male impersonators:

> Her voice is clear, her face is fresh, and her short-cut hair is parted on the left hand side. She looks like a handsome boy and dances like a sprightly girl. There is a vast difference between her and the other variety show women who have appeared in trousers, and it is in her favour.[271]

Rodger's continues to account how those variety reviews found Bonehill "more graceful and feminine than American male impersonators [...] and they were pleased by her lack of realism, praising her boyishness and appreciating her feminine charm."[272] Her lack of realism supports the notion previously presented, that she is a caricature of male dress; not attempting to appear as a man, but emphasise the masculine features of the character she is portraying. Senelick supports this notion that,

> "Bonehill's durable success and popularity in America were greater than what she had achieved at home because of the originality of the principal boy approach in the US. All the reviewers, while praising her 'manliness', also cited the intelligence and skill of her portrayal. 'She is never vulgar either in phrase or gesture', was one significant comment. Aware that the genre itself lacked novelty, they were fascinated by her style and an ambivalence that appealed to both sexes. 'The women who see her are charmed because she remains such a delicious young girl.' For the sexually mixed houses of turn-of-the-century vaudeville, androgyny was the potent charm that took the curse off impersonation".[273]

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[269] Gardner, L. (2010)

[270] Rodger, G M. (2018) Rodgers continues to discuss that the aesthetic changed due to the increased importation of English male impersonators, who were typically more feminine than their American counterparts. Furthermore, Rodgers accounts the change to accommodate for the shifting gender construction and social class in American society. The earlier generation would have "identified as white native-born working class" which then "came to identify more and more closely with middle-class values". This class shift saw the emergence of musical theatre, which retained some of the fun from variety theatre but had a higher degree of respect and decorum.

[271]Rodger, G M. (2018)

[272]Rodger, G M. (2018)

[273] Senelick, L. (2000)

O'Hara disputes how certain publications reviewed male impersonators; while they appeared to be celebrating, they would soften them and amplify their femininity:

> Reading these representations in the context of late-century sexual anarchy reveals that the public lives and celebrity of the singing and dancing women of the music hall did pose a threat to conservative Victorian gender ideology, and that we find various strategies for containing that threat.[274]

O'Hara raises an important question: "what were the reactions of the nineteenth-century music-hall goers to what we [...] now perceive as material that transgressed the boundaries of a gendered women's sphere?"[275] For example, *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* was a journal review that featured various acts of the music hall, but as O'Hara argues, they were reticent about the anxiety surrounding the shifting gender roles occurring at the turn of the century.[276] To summarise, while *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* intended to review the performances that occurred in the music halls, they were often used to "stress the artiste's off-stage domesticity and modesty", to reaffirm that while they were presenting a masculine facade onstage, they were still every bit as feminine a woman should be. Bonehill's review in *The Music Hall and Theatre Review,* on January 2nd 1892 read:

> The facility with which she compels admiration from all, is as noticeable in her private life as in her appearance before audiences. The crown jewel of her domestic life is studded with the priceless jewels of modesty, graciousness and charity. … As a dancer she is equally at home in the minuet or the hornpipe, and it is a bewildering experience for strangers to witness her rapid metamorphose [sic] from the bejeweled fop of the time of the merry monarch, to the street Arab of the present day.[277]

While most other publications commented on Bonehill's costume, refined talent and diverse repertoire, *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* emphasised her domestic life and drew attention to the qualities that are not visible on stage. Ultimately, while Bonehill's male impersonation was short-term cross-dressing, society feared the threat to the gender hierarchy caused by a woman, who appeared as a man. Therefore while appearing to celebrate her femininity off-stage, the publication also ushered her back to the private sphere in which she was meant to stay.

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[274]O'Hara, P. (1997) p. 143.

[275]O'Hara, P. (1997) p. 143.

[276]O'Hara notes that the journalists were all men, which made it near impossible to find a review in there that did not simultaneously try to amplify there off-stage femininity – "The fraternity [of male journalists' have […] made it almost impossible to discover what those responses were. The history of the halls is told almost through the mouths of men".O'Hara, P. (1997) p. 143.

[277]O'Hara, P. (1997) p. 147.

Although this may have seemed misogynistic, male impersonators themselves often made efforts to create a distinction between the character and self. As the next section of this chapter will highlight, Bonehill amplified her femininity out of costume through dress. Particularly in the 1890s to early 1900s,

> constrained by new, even stricter demands of femininity, actresses sought to maintain respectability by reassuring audiences that they were good and modest women. Toward the end of her career, Vesta echoed this sentiment: "While my business is that of impersonating male characters, I heartily detest anything mannish in a woman's private life."[278]

As this chapter has demonstrated thus far, there are several conflicting and exaggerated accounts of Bonehill's masculine costume and appearance. A range of images will now be used to conduct new analyses and draw conclusions from the collective findings.

Most surviving images of Bessie Bonehill are dated unknown, and the ones that are dated are predominantly c.1890 - 1900, the last decade she was in good enough health to perform. As Bonehill was wearing men's clothing in these images, it is important to note some key points regarding men's dress in this era. On the whole, trends in men's dress changed far less frequently and less drastically than in women's in the nineteenth-century. Trousers became the fashion for the daytime, whereas knee breeches were saved for evening dress. Langley Moore recalls that,

> in the last 200 years, mens fashions have evolved less rapidly than womens. At times they seem to have become almost stationary. That's an illusion but the changes are so very slight they make almost no impression seen from a distance. It was far different in those bygone centuries when men as well as women loved their clothes to be noticeable and individual.[279]

Playbills from Bonehill's performances in the late nineteenth-century are crucial evidence in any analysis of her costumed appearance. While music halls and variety theatre had become more accessible throughout the latter half of the nineteenth-century, not everyone was affluent enough to attend a show. As such, for the people who never saw a Bonehill performance or a photograph, the playbills – which had

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[278] Foster, G. (1939, January 4) p. 173.

[279] Langley Moore, D.,(Presenter). (1957). How Fashions Come and Go. (Episode 1) [Television series episode] in *Men, Women and Clothes.* BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/what-we-wore/zfhx92p Langley Moore continues to note that "only a man and a man interested in dress at that, would be able to recognise the tiny gradual changes in mens formal clothes during thirty or forty years of immense world changes in almost everything else. Formal attire for the evening has been even more static than for daytime occasions".Langley Moore, D., (Presenter). (1957). Formal Clothes. (Episode 4) [Television series episode] in *Men, Women and Clothes.* BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/what-we-wore/zfhx92p. However, while change was relatively slow and hidden in the detail, it defies the theory of the Great Masculine Renunciation, as proposed by Flügel.

been plastered in public spaces to advertise performances – would have been a powerful visual representation of her.[280] As supported by Taylor, artwork may not always have the most accurate visual depictions of people as there are many individual variables that can influence the artist's final work.[281]

[280] Although photography was invented in 1826, commercial photography did not become popular until the latter half of the nineteenth century and Kodak sold its first commercial camera as late as 1888. Therefore, earlier posters were made up of drawings and paintings of the stars. Science and Media Museum. (2017). *THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN PICTURES*. Science and Media Museum. https://www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/history-photography

[281] For example, their artist ability, style, whether the subject had any say in how they wanted to be depicted. It is unlikely that Bessie Bonehill herself had any say in the artists depiction of her.
For more on the pros and cons of particular fashion sources, see Taylor, L. (2002). *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester University Press.



Fig 3.2: Bonehill costumed as a newsboy, unknown, c.1890s, © New York Public Library.

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Fig 3.3 (L): Bessie Bonehill pictured in gentleman's costume, unknown, c.1890s, © unknown.
Fig 3.4. (R): Evening suit with dinner jacket, unknown, 1885, © Victoria & Albert Museum..

In fig 3.2, Bonehill portrays a newsboy, wearing a striped button-down shirt, with noticeable holes in the sleeves; dark coloured bottoms, unclear as to whether they are shorts or trousers; with a strap over her left shoulder – likely be a newsboy bag – with several folded up papers tucked under her left arm, her right arm extended, holding a newspaper, and her hair unstyled. As documented in reviews, she would often perform two songs in gentleman's attire, one as a newsboy and one as a sailor. In fig 3.3, she is pictured in gentleman's attire; wearing a dark coloured three-piece suit, dark heeled shoes, a white starched shirt with a wing collar, and a top hat. Fig 3.4 displays an evening suit from 1885, very similar to that of Bonehill's costume. Bonehill's costume has the addition of a top hat, which also would have been likely with the evening suit from 1885. The minimal differences between the evening suit and Bonehill's costume support the notion that male impersonators were presenting images of fashionable men in their acts. Comparing the images of the newsboy and the evening attire, the contrast between the characters she portrays and the power that costuming and styling plays in a character's identity is clear. While the time difference between these images being taken is unknown, they both display characters she would play

minutes apart in shows; showing the ability and ease to dress up to class status above your own. [282] Furthermore, this image supports the critics and contemporaries who stated that she looked at home in male attire; she had a naturally masculine face which is then complimented by the male attire. Unlike Tilley, who kept her hair long but braided it so it was easily hidden under wigs, as did many other male impersonators, Bonehill cut her hair to commit to her masculine impersonations.[283] Therefore, it is not surprising that she looked like a more convincing male, as there was no fake hair to cause a crack in her convincing guise.[284] However, fig 3.5 pictures Bonehill when she is not performing, and her femininity is undeniable.



Fig 3.5: BessieBonehill pictured on cigarette card, unknown, c.1880, © California State Library.

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[282] The ease of dress above your class was scrutinised in masquerade culture in the eighteenth century as it proved difficult to distinguish the wealthy upper-class from lower status imposters.For more on masquerade culture, see McNeil, Peter. *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World.* Yale University Press. 2018.

[283]Into the Limelight.org. (n.d.). *Vesta Tilley*. Retrieved from https://intothelimelight.org/category/male-impersonators/.

[284] In fig 3.2, it appears Bonehill is wearing a wig, although this appears to be the only image in which she is. The hair in this image looks very fake, and contributes to the reasons why Bonehill cropped her actual hair short, to deliver a more convincing male impersonation.

In fig 3.5, Bonehill is printed on a cigarette card, and it displays the contrast between her personal self and her character costumes.[285] Although only the top section of the bodice can be seen, it displays lace trimmings, with voluminous sleeves of her dress or jacket, feathers and pearls attached to the right side of the bodice, excessive jewellery and styled hair with decorative pins. Despite society being familiar with the masculine appearance of Bonehill in character, Bonehill was pictured as her feminine self, due to the target audience for cigarette cards. [286] As it was going to be predominantly men collecting these cards, they will have likely preferred an image of an attractive female, as opposed to one dressed as a man.

[285] "When cigarette cards were first launched, smokers were almost exclusively men and this male influence has permeated card themes ever since". Cigarette cards were considered collectables, "given as incentive when buying a cigar or pack of cigarettes"- Bessie Bonehill's object list, see Appendix I. They first began circulating in the 1880s and were called stiffeners, as they stiffened the cigarette box to prevent damage to the contents. Whilst general themes such as flora and fauna have been displayed on cards, there's also been dominant themes of sports, military, ships and planes.collectors would purchase with the aim of completing a full set, which ranged from 25 to 50 cards of a similar theme. For more see Johnson, B. (n.d.). *Cigarette Cards and Cartophily*. Historic UK. https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Cigarette-Cards-Cartophily/

[286]CigaretteCards.co.uk. (n.d.). *Cigarette Cards - 'Collect-it' Magazine.*. CigaretteCards.co.uk. https://www.cigarettecards.co.uk/collectit.htm

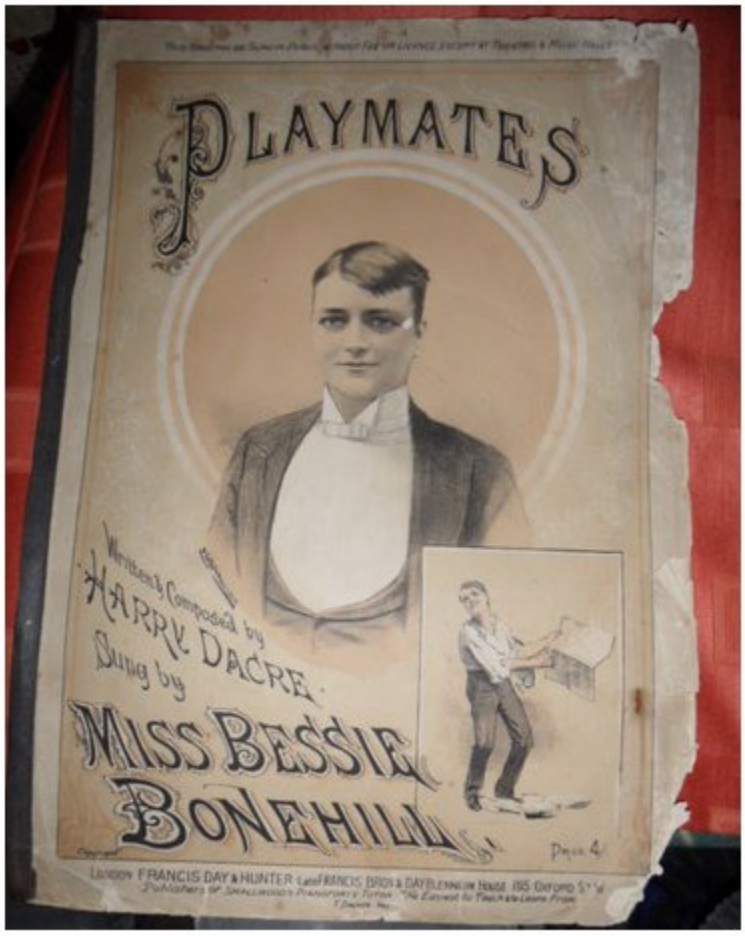

Fig 3.6: Bessie Bonehill's playbill for *Playmates,* unknown, c.1890s, © unknown.

Fig 3.6 displays the playbill from *Playmates*, the show for which Bonehill was pictured in fig 3.9. The costume is near identical, but missing the top hat. This playbill also displays another drawing of Bonehill in the bottom right corner, in which she appears to be dressed as a news boy; dark trousers, a white shirt with tattered sleeves, holding a newspaper. Bonehill's shows typically consisted of a song as a newsboy, one as a sailor and two in gentleman's evening attire, and the majority of her playbills depict her in the latter. Why should this be? Perhaps to disseminate an image of class and sophistication? These posters were visually the most important advertising materials for the shows, therefore the image portrayed of Bonehill was vital to attract an audience. Picturing her as a gentleman, as opposed to a newsboy, visually elevated the status of the show and therefore may have attracted an audience from a higher social strata.



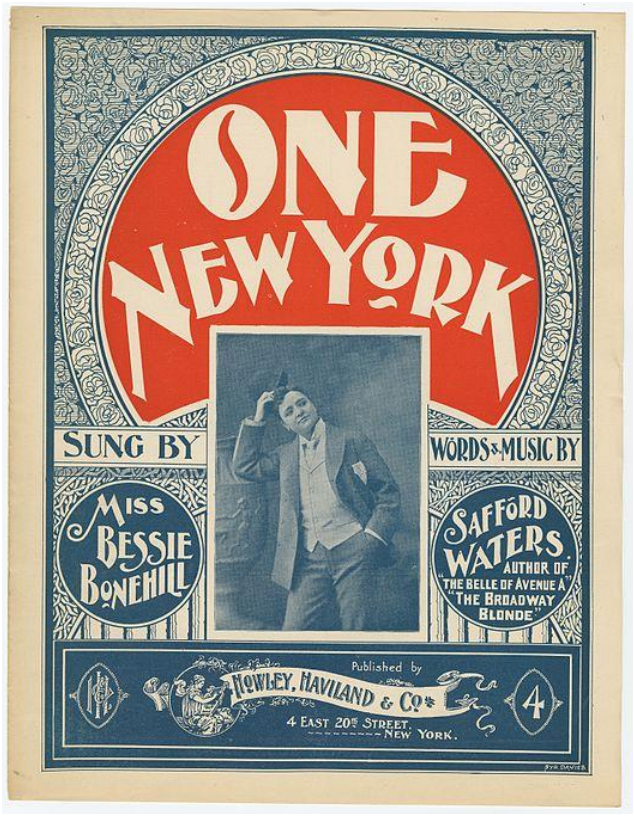

Fig 3.7 (L): Bessie Bonehill in English gentleman costume, unknown, n.d., © New York Public Library.
Fig 3.8 (R): Playbill for Bonehill's *One New York* show, unknown, 1896, © New York Public Library.

Bessie Bonehill is pictured in fig 3.7 in an unknown year, however the playbill in fig 3.8 displays Bonehill in the same costume, suggesting these photographs may have been produced once she had moved over to the USA, or at least within proximity to each other. This is a more traditional three piece suit; the trousers and jacket likely in a grey or a light brown tone, with a lighter waistcoat, worn with a wing collar shirt and tie. Bonehill is wearing a bowler hat and patterned handkerchief in her breast pocket.[287] It is interesting to identify the use of a more British style to advertise Bonehill's performances within the USA. It could be a demonstration of using the allure of the foreign to attract an audience, capitalising on the image of the less familiar English gentleman, to draw in the American customers.

[287] The bowler hat started out as popular with the working class in the Victorian times and later became popular with the middle and upper classes in Britain. History of Hats. (n.d.). History of Bowler Hat. Retrieved from http://www.historyofhats.net/hat-history/history-of-bowler-hat/





Fig 3.9 (L): Bonehill pictured in costume for *Playmates,* unknown, 1894, © New York Public Library.
Fig 3.10 (R): Caricature of Beau Brummell, Robert Dighton, 1805, © unknown.

In fig 3.9, Bessie Bonehill is pictured in her costume for *Playmates*.[288] The trousers are relaxed and in a lighter tone than her jacket, the jacket is a more traditional tail coat, cut short in the front with long coat tails, with white waistcoat, a white undershirt and a black narrow parallel square-end bow tie. The outfit is complemented with a black hat, unclear as to which style, and tall black top boots or riding boots, into which the trousers are tucked. "During the second half of the nineteenth-century men retained the white waistcoat and black tail-coat and trousers of the early nineteenth-century for evening wear. For day wear they wore a frock coat with straight trousers, a short waistcoat and a shirt with a high stiff collar".[289] The Fashion Institute of Technology argues, "menswear in the 1890s maintained an overall narrow silhouette, as in the 1880s. However, trousers became slightly more relaxed in cut. The frock coat remained

[288] Playmates was written by Bonehill's husband, before she became the head of her own travelling entertainment company in America, with her son and her husband.

[289]V&A. (n.d.). *Introduction to 19th-Century Fashion*. Retrieved from http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/introduction-to-19th-century-fashion/

fashionable for formal daywear until the turn of the century, as the morning coat slowly supplanted it."[290] This is a daytime outfit as white ties were worn in evening, where solid or patterned colours were worn in the day, however she is wearing a tail coat, not a frock coat. While not identical, as Brummell wears a cravat rather than a tie, the costume is undeniably reminiscent of the caricature of Brummell.[291] This is interesting as male impersonators were thought to be caricatures for modern mens fashions, yet here Bonehill is interpreting a style from almost ninety years earlier. As the photograph was taken for *Playmates,* and not one of Bonehill's solo shows, the costuming may have had other influences, or been required to fit a certain storyline or era. However, the costume that emulates, almost identically, Brummell's refined and modern dress, pictures Bonehill with an air of decorum and refinement that Brummell was renowned for.

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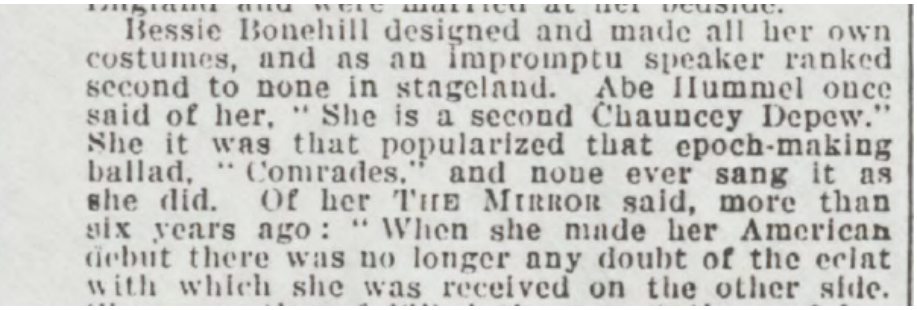
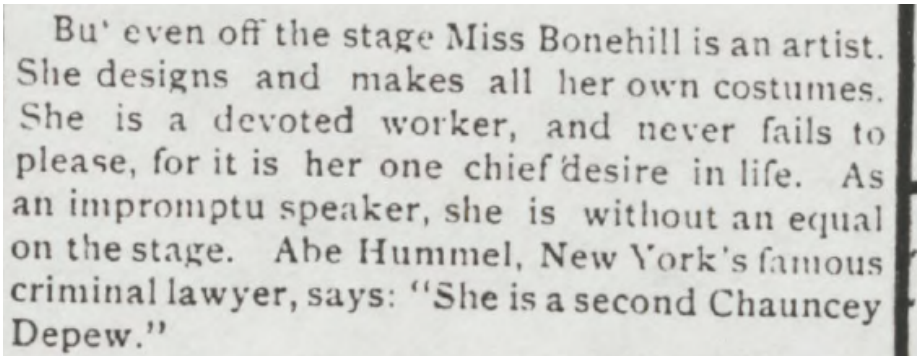
[290]Franklin, H. (2020). *1890-1899*. Fashion History Timelines - Fashion Institute of Technology. https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1890-1899/

[291] Beau Brummell is often considered the first English dandy, and was deemed "the leader of fashion at the beginning of the 19th century", after becoming the symbol of modern masculine dress. "Some historians believe that the sobriety of his style was linked to the relative modesty of his origins. As he could not compete in terms of jewels and ornamentation, he concentrated instead on refining the cut of his clothes." Britannica. (2011). *Beau Brummell*. Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Beau-Brummell-English-dandy
Peyró, I. (2019). *This 19th-century London dandy caused a style revolution*. National Geographic. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/magazine/2019/05-06/beau-brummell-nineteenth-century-fashion/



Bessie Bonehill designed and made all her own costumes, and as an impromptu speaker ranked second to none in stageland. Abe Hummel once said of her, "She is a second Chauncey Depew." She it was that popularized that epoch-making ballad, "Comrades," and none ever sang it as she did. Of her THE MIRROR said, more than six years ago: "When she made her American debut there was no longer any doubt of the eclat with which she was received on the other side.

Fig 3.11: Clipping from undisclosed newspaper regarding Bessie Bonehill's life, unknown, 1902, © The National Museum of American History.



But even off the stage Miss Bonehill is an artist. She designs and makes all her own costumes. She is a devoted worker, and never fails to please, for it is her one chief desire in life. As an impromptu speaker, she is without an equal on the stage. Abe Hummel, New York's famous criminal lawyer, says: "She is a second Chauncey Depew."

Fig 3.12: Clipping from undisclosed newspaper regarding Bessie Bonehill's life, unknown, 1902, © The National Museum of American History.

Fig 3.11 and 3.12 are taken from the accession file from The National Museum of American History -– see full accession file in appendix II – and while they are from undisclosed newspapers, they teach us that Bonehill designed and made all her own costumes. This means that Bonehill self-fashioned her masculine identity, and ultimately how audiences would interpret her. As Senelick describes, Tilley recalls seeing Bonehill, but wanted to distance her own performance from Bonehill's lack of variation in modern costume.[292] Figs 3.13 to 3.18 display Bonehill's surviving costumes.

[292] Senelick, L. (2000)



Fig 3.13 (L): Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.
Fig 3.14 (C): Shorts worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.
Fig 3.15 (R): Blouse worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.



Fig 3.16 (L): Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.
Fig 3.17 (C): Cap worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.
Fig 3.18 (R): Knickers worn by Bessie Bonehill, Bessie Bonehill, n.d., © The National Museum of American History.

These images display a selection of Bonehill's costumes.[293] As the small selection of Bonehill's surviving costume displays, these elements of her costume were very theatrical and did not resemble actual masculine dress of the time, if anything they appear almost camp. As Tilley criticised, it does not resemble modern costume, and since Bonehill had complete control to self-fashion, it raises the question as to why.

While the image of Bonehill presented in photographs and playbills to the public was typically the masculine gentlemen, reviews have informed us that she would portray three or four different characters in a show. The image used on playbills and used to advertise Bonehills act displays Bonehill in masculine dress, that resembles actual men's dress. This will have been done to keep up the reputation and the illusion of her masculine character, to draw in customers to attend the show by emphasising her

[293] These images were obtained through email correspondence with Ryan Lintelman, Entertainment Curator at the National Museum of American History, Washington, USA. The museum acquired the costumes in 1986 from Dorothy Wallace, one of Bessie Bonehill's great granddaughters. The museum has no knowledge of the life of the costumes between Bessie's death and the museum's acquisition of them. Lintelman informed me that the images are old and poor quality, and because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the museum would not have the opportunity to update the photographs before submission of this thesis. Although this would have been preferable, these images suffice in doing the job to highlight the difference between the perception of Bonehill through playbills and photography, and what actually survived from her costume wardrobe.

masculinity. These surviving costumes allow us a behind-the-scenes glance to access more than the public view, and to draw conclusions that while her masculine character was fundamental to her act, it was not the only layer to Bessie Bonehill, or her on-stage character. Although Bonehill's playbills and photographs present this believable masculine image, the research has demonstrated that she wanted to create a distinction between her character and her personal self, and even her masculine character was not as masculine as the portrayed one in playbills. It highlights the complexity of her character; her onstage one and her personal one. It was a game of catering to the audience, and gauging what people wanted to see – the collectors of cigarette cards preferred to see an attractive woman, whereas audiences to a male impersonation show wanted to see a convincing male impersonation, which was emphasised on the playbills.

While Isaac's work proposes that costumes, particularly those surviving from famous performers of the past, "whether used in performance or mounted for display, can take on the role of an 'effigy', perpetuating 'memory' of the lost production and, literally, 'remembering' the absent performer", that does not appear to be the case for Bonehill's surviving costumes.[294] The surviving costumes are a notable departure from the image Bonehill is remembered for, and as they are stored in the archives of the National Museum of American History, they are not on display for people to admire, or learn of the life of Bessie Bonehill. The surviving costumes, however, would provide an interesting starting point for future research into Bonehill and her male impersonation; to fill in the gaps, piece together the surviving material culture and explore deeper into Bonehill's gender illusion, and the life of her costumes after Bonehill died.

Nineteenth-century society became accepting of male impersonation in the theatre, as audiences were aware of the distinction between theatre and real life. While there are conflicting accounts stating that Bonehill was convincingly masculine in costume, and others claimed that her blatant femininity added to the act, it can be agreed that all understood it was performance. This research has displayed the contrast between Bonehill's actual self and her costumed character and, with reference to *The Music Hall and Theatre Review*, how others identified this differentiation too. Theatre is fantasy. While "some express surprise that theatrical gender impersonation was so popular during a period we have been taught to think intolerant of gender or sexual differences", the parameters of the theatre provided the safety net for nineteenth and early twentieth-century audiences that observed male impersonation. Theatre provided the security to know that, while they were aware of the gender illusions occuring on stage, they were also

[294] Isaac, V. (2017). p.129.

aware that it would end when the performer exited the stage and their regular identity was restored.[295] However, this tolerance and acceptance was also governed by society, and there came a time where "audiences that had previously enjoyed performers who lampooned strict Victorian conventions of behavior on stage became alarmed by 'mannish women' and 'effeminate men'".[296]

Without women including Butler, Ponsonby and Lister (and many others) gaining notoriety for their in masculine style, it is quite possible that male impersonation as a form of entertainment would not have become as popular as it did. While there was a history of female cross-dressing as principle boys, this strand of music hall entertainment allowed women to become stars in their own right, and profit hugely from it. The knowledge of women such as the Ladies of Llangollen, who were a tourist attraction for the area, proved that there was an interest in women with who subverted society's gender structure. Music hall allowed people to enjoy this intrigue, in a safe and entertaining atmosphere, but still feel confident that regular gender structure would be restored, through the method of male impersonation.

But while these performers became stars due to their use of costume to offer an illusion of gender, they made a clear distinction between their costumed character and their authentic self. The gender ambiguity often came with sexual dubiousy, or rumours of if it, which could be just as damaging to a reputation.

This chapter has proven that, incommon with the Ladies of Llangollen and Anne Lister, the popular image of Bessie Bonehill was far more extravagant, and far more dramatic, than the true image of Bessie Bonehill. Photographs of her look much more feminine than the drawings of her in the playbills, demonstrating that her masculinities were advertised to the masses, for the purpose of attracting an audience.

Male impersonation today may now be referred to with the contemporary term 'drag kinging', however cross-dressing on stage or screen, is still dominated by men dressing as women. Even so, the boundaries of gender within the theatre are constantly shifting; in 2019, a National Theatre production of Peter Pan defied all traditional castings and costuming. Peter Pan was played by a black man, who lost the tights and donned a dapper suit; Wendy did not sport the lucious long locks but instead a cropped androgynous style; Tinkerbell was a male, and Captain Hook a female. For a number of years, ethnicity has been a less defining factor in theatre – in 2006, mixed raced Layton Williams was the first person of colour to play

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[295] University of Saskatchewan. (n.d.). *Home Page*. Ambisextrous: Gender Impersonators of Music Hall and Vaudeville. http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/gallery/genderimpersonators/

[296] Foster, G. (1939, January 4) p. 173.

Billy Elliot – and while the theatre has long been a safe space for gender experimentation, now gender and blurring of the lines is going even further beyond the traditional roles. [297]

[297] "There were thousands of people and I very nearly turned around because I was the only person of colour I could see. It was just white boys everywhere." Bakare, L. (2019). *He acts, sings, dances – and calls out racial profiling: why everybody's talking about Layton Williams*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/jan/24/layton-williams-billy-elliot-actor-everybody-talking-about-jamie

Conclusion

This thesis has reassessed and reappraised dress and gender through the lens of three well known case studies, to offer new understandings of their use of clothes to construct their masculine identities. By using the eclectic variety of sources, the research has established new knowledge that, despite the popular images we have formed of the Ladies of Llangollen, Anne Lister and Bessie Bonehill, the authentic image was far less extravagant and dramatic.

Assessing these women through the lens of dress for the first time, this research has helped to form new understandings as to why they deviated from fashionable dress practice. Informed by the multiple strands of gender, dress, identity, performance, it has demonstrated the complexity of self-fashioning identity, particularly in a period where gender roles governed almost all aspects of life.

Through detailed analysis of literary sources, visual sources, and material culture, this thesis has identified influences that have previously been omitted from the conversations concerning the dress of these women. One of these being the concept of regional differences. Particularly in the cases of the Ladies of Llangollen and Anne Lister, their immediate society informed their dress decisions. Both hailing from provincial areas, their dress practice placed practicality above the wearing of fashionable modes. Living in smaller societies, their dress was subjected to scrutiny under a more magnified lens from their intimate milieus.

While fashionable dress was not a concern, propriety and deportment was. As scholars have highlighted, masculinity embodies itself in methods beyond dress and appearance. Their frugality and practicality is embodied in their hassle-free approach to dress; whilst lacking the financial means to splurge on fashions, they also lacked the interest to do so. Their deportment opened up the opportunity for demonstrations of class and refinement to be exhibited, through factors other than dress. These findings support Judith Butler's theory of gender formation and identity, as the case studies demonstrated that it was the subversion of social pillars, beyond fashionable dress, that shaped the women's identity in society. It was involvement in masculine activities – business and education – and the rejection of feminine ideals that helped to form their strong sense of identity. In the case of Anne Lister, it was taking up more space in society than was ever acceptable for a woman to do so. In the case of the Ladies of Llangollen, it was blissful retirement from society and uninterest in satisfying society's structured requirements of women.

Butler and Ponsonby's inactivity in Llangollen's society alleviated them of the pressures to conform to fashionable dress practice. Their riding habits, however, were not misplaced in rural Llangollen, as many sources have proven. Alternatively, they dressed in a way which was informed by a non-English, non-British culture, but their Irish and French heritages. Their heightened masculinity in visual sources was constructed to drive tourism into Llangollen in the nineteenth-century, and, inturn, visitors from far and wide were unaccustomed to the casual wearing of the habit; emphasising its unconventionality when compared with fashionable dress practice.

Alternatively, Anne Lister's active role in Yorkshire's business circles required her to be unhindered by the restrictions of fashionable modes. To move with ease and to be able to assert herself as a serious business

woman, she could not be bound by the frivolous fashions that women of landed gentry would typically have worn.

Social class, and in turn, privilege, played an active role in their ability to self-fashion their identity. Butler, Ponsonby and Lister all hailed from landed gentry, and had access to the resources and freedoms which were greater than the average woman in nineteenth-century society. While these resources were not always financially ones, the access to education and travel broadened their knowledge outside the parameters of their provincial towns. In Lister's case, her knowledge of urban dress caused her to dress for her rural surroundings, as not wanting to dress in anything 'too city-like a concern'.

The popular costumes of *Gentleman Jack* abandoned this concern and dressed Suranne Jones' representation of Lister in garments and palettes she never actually wore. Tasked with bringing this vibrant character back to life, Pye's deviation from historical accuracy was necessary in telling Lister's story visually, while making her stand out in ordinary society.

Assessing costumes in the theatre, Bessie Bonehill's costumed identity relied on amplified masculinities, to maximise the theatrical aspect and attract an audience. As argued by Elizabeth Wilson, "a new fashion starts from rejection from the old, and often an eager embracing of what was previously considered ugly".[298] While this quote primarily concerns new trends within fashion, the sentiment can here be applied to the rise of music hall as popular entertainment. Without the likes of Butler, Ponsonby, Lister, and countless other women who deviated from nineteenth-century societies concepts of femininity, it is likely male impersonation would not have gained the prominence it did.

The on-stage costume, and the off-stage dress, are equally important in male impersonation, in differentiating the character and the self, placing them at opposite ends of the spectrum of gender. Despite her masculinity in costume captured in images, her playbills stretched this image even further, to emphasise the illusion. However, to reiterate the findings of Monks, audiences must be aware of the illusion in order for cross-dressing theater performance to have significant effect.

This research calls for further distinction between dress and costume, particularly when being discussed in historical context. While the language has been interchangeable, a lack of clarity has led costume to be understudied and under appreciated in the studies of various disciplines. While ultimately being cut from the same cloth – both literally and figuratively– they serve distinctly different functions.

When these strands of influences are brought together, contemporary societies' understanding of these women is shaped by artistic and stylised representations of them. Whether it be tourism memorabilia featuring the Ladies of Llangollen, the playbills advertising Bessie Bonehills shows, or the twenty-first century interpretation of Anne Lister, costumed in *Gentleman Jack*, the popular images formed are far from the authentic realities these women lived. This thesis has proven that it was all exaggeration, in each case study, to applify masculinity in all visual representations of these women. Dress, gender and fashioning identity are complex issues that cannot be informed by visual sources alone. In these cases, the visual elements of fashioned masculinity are full of nuances that contribute far greater insight with a collaborative approach from literary sources and material culture also.

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[298] Wilson, E. (2009). *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (2nd ed.). I B Tauris & Co. p. 9.

Given its interdisciplinary approach to the subject, it is hoped that this thesis will act as an anchor, and a starting point, for further research. There is much here to interest scholars of many disciplines.

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Appendix I: Object list & extracted pages from Bessie Bonehill's accession file from the National Museum of American History

Object List



ID_NUMBER	**1986.0432.01**
accession number	1986.0432
catalog number	1986.0432.01
Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	jacket
Title:	**Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	White satin jacket with 5 gold-colored buttons on each side. Long sleeve with cuff. Part of vaudeville costume. Worn by vaudeville performer, Bessie Bonehill (b. 1867?-d. 8/21/1902), a male impersonator, in New York City.
Materials:	Satin
Credit Line:	Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace



ID_NUMBER	**1986.0432.02**
accession number	1986.0432
catalog number	1986.0432.02
Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	shorts
Title:	**Shorts worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	White satin short pants. 2 hook and eye fasteners on each side. Elastic waistband. Part of vaudeville costume. Worn by vaudeville performer, Bessie Bonehill (b. 1867?-d. 8/21/1902), in New York City.
Materials:	Satin
Credit Line:	Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace



ID_NUMBER	**1986.0432.03**
accession number	1986.0432
catalog number	1986.0432.03
Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	blouse
Title:	**Blouse worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	White satin blouse with front opening. Long sleeves. Part of vaudeville costume. Worn by vaudeville performer, Bessie Bonehill (b. 1867?-d. 8/21/1902), in New York City.
Materials:	Satin
Credit Line:	Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace

Object List



ID_NUMBER **1986.0432.04**
accession number 1986.0432
catalog number 1986.0432.04

Division and Collection: Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name: jacket
Title: **Jacket worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description: Dark green velvet jacket worn by male impersonator and entertainer Bessie Bonehill. The jacket has white lace extending from its sleeves and collar and is lined with green satin. The jacket was worn on stage as part of a costume in Bonehill's popular male impersonation act in New York City.
Materials: Velvet; satin
Credit Line: Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace



ID_NUMBER **1986.0432.05**
accession number 1986.0432
catalog number 1986.0432.05

Division and Collection: Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name: cap
Title: **Cap worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description: Green velvet cap worn by male impersonator and entertainer Bessie Bonehill. The cap has a 2-inch cuff at its bottom edge and a tassle at top. The cap was worn on stage as part of a costume in Bonehill's popular male impersonation act in New York City.
Materials: Velvet
Credit Line: Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace

ID_NUMBER **1986.0432.06**
accession number 1986.0432
catalog number 1986.0432.06

Division and Collection: Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name: sash
Title: **Sash worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description: Green velvet sash worn by male impersonator and entertainer Bessie Bonehill. The sash is lined with green satin. The sash was worn on stage as part of a costume in Bonehill's popular male impersonation act in New York City.
Materials: Velvet; satin
Credit Line: Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace

Object List

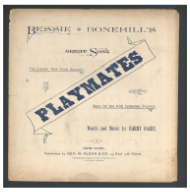


ID_NUMBER	**1986.0432.07**
accession number	1986.0432
catalog number	1986.0432.07

Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	knickers
Title:	**knickers worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	Green velvet knickers worn by vaudeville performer Bessie Bonehill. The waistband of the knickers is made of white muslin. These knickers were worn on stage as part of a costume in Bonehill's popular male impersonation act in New York City.
Materials:	Velvet; cotton
Credit Line:	Gift of Dorothy M. Wallace

ID_NUMBER	**1986.0432.08**
accession number	1986.0432
catalog number	1986.0432.08

Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	dickie
Title:	**Dickie worn by Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	Green silk dickie worn by male impersonator and entertainer Bessie Bonehill. The dickie is lined with unbleached muslin. The dickie was worn on stage as part of a costume in Bonehill's popular male impersonation act in New York City.
Materials:	Silk; cotton
Credit Line:	Dorothy M. Wallace



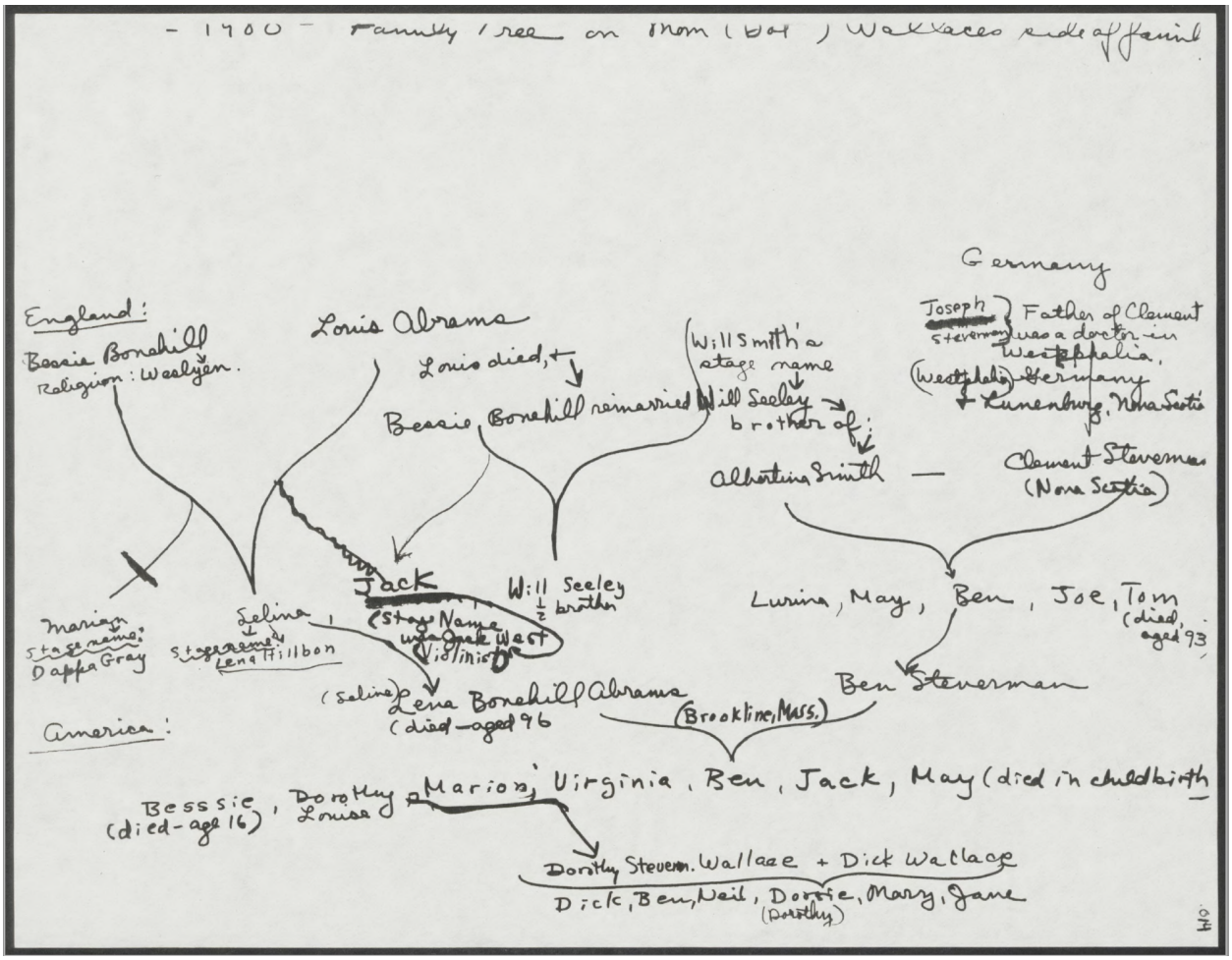
ID_NUMBER	**2015.0019.01**
accession number	2015.0019
catalog number	2015.0019.01

Division and Collection:	Cultural and Community Life: Entertainment
Object Name:	sheet music
Title:	**Playmates**
Description:	"Playmates." Words and music by Harry Dacre. (Geo. M. Klenk & Co.: New York, 1889). White paper with black ink. Printed on cover: "Bessie Bonehill's Great Song."
Maker:	George M. Klenk & Co.
Place Made:	United States: New York, New York
Date Made:	1889
Materials:	paper; ink
Measurements:	overall: 14 in x 10 3/4 in; 35.56 cm x 27.305 cm

Object List

ID_NUMBER	**CL.59.0789.030**
catalog number	59.789.030

Division and Collection:	: Archives
Object Name:	card
Title:	**Bessie Bonehill**
Description:	Theatrical cigarette premium depicting 19th c. actress, Bessie Bonehill. Small black and white photo mechanical reproduction on thick paper given as incentive when buying a cigar or pack of cigarettes.
Materials:	Paper


- 1900 - Family Tree on Mom (Dot) Wallaces side of family
Germany
Joseph Steverman
Father of Clement was a doctor in Westphalia, Germany
(Westphalia) + Lunenburg, Nova Scotia
England:
Bessie Bonehill
Religion: Wesleyan.
Louis Abrams
Louis died, +
Bessie Bonehill remarried
Will Smith's stage name
Will Seeley
brother of:
Albertina Smith
Clement Steverman
(Nova Scotia)
Jack
(Stage Name was Jack West Violinist)
Will Seeley
½ brother
Marian
Stage name:
Dappa Gray
Selina
Stage name:
Lena Hillbon
Lurina, May, Ben, Joe, Tom
(died, aged 93)
(Selina) Lena Bonehill Abrams
(died - aged 96
Ben Steverman
(Brookline, Mass.)
America:
Besssie (died - age 16), Dorothy Louise, Marion, Virginia, Ben, Jack, May (died in childbirth
Dorothy Steverm. Wallace + Dick Wallace
Dick, Ben, Neil, Dorsie (Dorothy), Mary, Jane

British Music Hall - Raymond Mander & Joe Mitchenson
Studio Vista Ltd. 1965
London

.013





114 Millie Hylton, 1891. Started her career in pantomime in 1883, coming, via burlesque at the Gaiety, to the halls as a male impersonator in 1888, making her debut at the Cambridge, the Canterbury, and the Metropolitan on the same night. Her songs included *Dear old Boys* and *The Last of the Dandies*. She returned at times to musical comedy, later becoming an established straight actress. She lived till 1920, dying aged fifty-two. One of a famous family, her sisters were Letty Lind, Lydia Hopp, Adelaide Astor, and Fanny Dango.

115 *Above right:* Bessie Bonehill, singing *The Girls of To-day*, 1890. A popular male impersonator both in England and in America, who died young in 1902.

116 *Right:* Fanny Robina, a male impersonator a burlesque actress who divided her time between t halls and the Gaiety, she epitomizes this aspect o the 'nineties.

Hats off! Hats off! Hurrah for the king of the boys!
Happy and free where'er I may be found of a frolic and noise;
King of your game, and king of your fun, the monarch that leads you to joys.
So off with your hats, and give a loud cheer: Hurrah for the king of the boys!

1902.012

'ats and Dogs, Johnson and Dean, lin, Sparrow, the mad juggler, and ."

* * *

y the staff of the Paragon proceeds l excursion. The destination of ll be Purnham-on-Crouch, where be beautiful stretch of water will in.

* * *

NY HAPPY RETURNS.

.....	Fri.,	Aug. 22.
it	Fri.,	Aug. 22.
Mattie	Sun.,	Aug. 24.
.....	Mon.,	Aug. 25.
obson	Mon.,	Aug. 25.
.....	Tues.,	Aug. 26.
.....	Thur.,	Aug. ...
.....	Tues.,	Aug. 26.
s Tree	Wed.,	Aug. ...
.....	Wed.,	Aug. 27.
.....	Thur.,	Aug. 28.
ustie	Thur.,	Aug. ...

* * *

IP YORKE has prepared for pre- the Tivoli, within a few days, an matic tableau, sung and by ombre poem "Fra Jacimo." The ienely short. It only lasts about —and there is only one speaking t the tragic sadness of the setting ny ieality of the principal cha- up a most impressive picture. A es a sweet *Bernicia* wife, who id, and goes into a convent. He and masterful, and has tried in her to reciprocate his fierce love, ays cold though kind. When she jealousy and suspicion spring up By a ruse he manages to take the ra Jacimo" in the confessional, in ove or disprove his maddening fears. His wife enters the con- e oblivious of the substitution that ted, and he hears her breathe out "Fra Jacimo." He subsequently priest, and finds his wife lying couch. After fiercely denouncing 's" treachery he buries a stiletto s heart.

* * *

he theme of the poem, though the if it is conveyed in the husband's h the priest in the chamber where dead. This line has been followed ke in planning the sketch. Mr. lliams takes the part of the husband, sisted by Mr. Charles Raymond cimo"), Mr. George Almonti, as nt, and Miss Emmie Hall, whose it is to impersonate the corpse of fe. Every detail in connection the production has been carefully studied, ... the contrary, the idea one singularly vivid fragment from the ole. Mr. Yorke has opened up a w field with this venture.

* * *

he recent wonderful inventions of been a menace for the production the idea has appealed to that very manager, Mr. Philip Yorke, and ers to the Tivoli will enjoy all the sea air while watching the pro-

* * *

celebration of the eleventh anni- the Tivoli, which takes place on 15th inst., Mr. Philip Yorke has ge programme. It includes the osta Tilley, R. G. Knowles, Esmé Little Tich, Diane de Fontenoy, ar, Bransby Williams, Ray Wallace, my Fields, the Perman Trio, George n Alexander, Mary Desmond, Maud les Austin, Violet Dene, William taggie Carr, the three Haytors, the Molasso and Salvaggi, and Maggie

* * *

HARLES MORTON, now holiday- Bournemouth, celebrated his



DEATH OF BESSIE BONEHILL.

ALTHOUGH it was known that the long illness of Miss Bessie Bonehill could not have other than a fatal termination, yet the announcement of her death yesterday, will come as something of a shock. She was a notable instance of an artiste who had maintained her position in the very forefront of the profession for quite a remarkable number of years. Her popularity, great as it always was, continued undiminished, and but for her illness she would, only a few months ago, have been on her way to Australia to fulfil a long deferred starring tour in the Commonwealth under the management of Mr. Harry Rickards. In America, she was as well known as in her own native country, and in recent years she has spent a considerable part of her life there. She was an artist with a most captivating personality, and a wide versatility of talent. Her fine robust style enabled her to rank as a male impersonator entirely without a rival in declamatory and patriotic songs, yet she displayed in her celebrated street Arab song an infinity of pathos which never failed to stir an audience. "Bonnie Bessie Bonehill," as she was familiarly called, aptly described her appearance, and until quite recently she never had an illness in her life. She has always been esteemed in the profession as a wife and mother. All her life she has been devoted to her own family, and it was a great and genuine grief to her when the former died in America only a year or more ago. To her children she was a bright example, and she unselfishly lavished on them all that affection could suggest.

Born at West Bromwich, near Birmingham, she made her first appearance as a fairy in the local pantomime at the early age of six. She was always a great favourite in pantomime, and during her career she has taken principal parts in no less than seventeen. In her early days she appeared with her two sisters as the Three Sisters Bonehill, a turn which won a fair appreciation as clever singers and dancers, the latter more especially in the Lancashire style with clogs. After an uneventful career as a single turn male impersonator, during which time she steadily made her name as a singer of singular charm and a dancer of grace and style, her chance came when she was asked to play the part of William in "Black Eyed Susan" at the Alhambra, Arthur Roberts playing Garden Crosstree. This was an immense success, and the name of Bessie Bonehill from that time forward was made. She was the first to introduce impersonations of the courtly age. When in wig, ruffles, silken hose, and with jewelled sword at side, she made a magnificent figure, in fact, an ideal exponent who might have stepped from a Hampton Court picture. Her rapid metamorphose from the bejewelled fop of the time of the merry monarch to the street arab was always a bewildering change to strangers, but delightful in its clever versatility. The sympathy of the profession will go out to her husband, Mr. W. R. Seeley, who mourns the loss of a devoted wife and sincere comrade.

OF William T. Francis, the new conductor (in succession to John Stromberg) at Weber and Fields, the "Music Trades Review" says:—"Jefferson de Angelis, though reluctant to part with his musical director and composer, released him to accept this advantageous offer. Mr. Francis began work immediately, finishing up the score of the new burlesque, 'Whitley Twirly,' where it had been cut short by the death of John Stromberg. Mr. Stromberg had written seven songs for the new production brought his fame to the South. Later he turned his attention to ballads of the popular order, and 'The Old Organist,' 'Honey, You'se My Turtle Dove,' 'Down Old Tampa Bay,' and 'In the Springtime,' were whistled and sung everywhere. He composed all the music for 'A Royal Rogue,' in which 'Jeff' De Angelis successfully starred, and also wrote the music for 'The Little Host,' for Miss Della Fox, who starred in it until illness cut short her tour. Prior to joining Mr. De

an old English festival, pair Stacey Marks, R.A. I have that during one of the recer the theatre this picture, which as the stage opening is wide, artistic paper-hanging, and fairly good state of preservat

* * *

"If I am right (and Messrs. Smith and Campbell if I am wrong), I hope when commences that care will be t this work of an artist of reputa away with the ordinary theatre. Before it was cel hangings, I would rather it ha by a good railway clock—the managers; I know that my is dead, and the date of the p uncertain, I am afraid as County Council that controlle should know that such a ted ally in existence."

* * *

REMINISCENT of the Ly porary says:—The origina erected in 1705 for exhibition the Society of Artists, who m Royal Academicians, and m quarters. It subsequently variety entertainment busines to be seen in succession conjuror, equestrian perform glasses," Inchedon's "Voy Bologna's "Phantascopia," I mical Exhibition," the "Wh and the "Porcupine Man," a Roman Catholic chapel, an Winsor with his experiments

* * *

THEN came an interregnu until 1809, when Samuel J. a theatrical license from the L but only for the performance ballets. His father, Dr. Arno had tried to obtain a similar but had failed in consequence on the part of the manager and Covent Garden. At this was called the English Ope Moore's comic opera, "M. Stocking"; Monk Lewis' " the Knight, and the Wood Dibdin's "Harlequin Hoax the pieces staged here. In closed, and an "entirely ... was opened in the

* * *

THE Paris "Figaro" ha original competition for music be open till October 1 for amateurs or professionals, F who have not yet been heard at grand concerts. Manuscr be of two categories—an air w instrument, or a piece for the exceed two bars for the air, pianoforte piece. The word either in prose or verse, in French, and only new com accepted. Two prizes of 50 be awarded, and four second category of 100 francs each consolation prizes to those ju as coming next in merit. honourable mentions in eac awarded.

* * *

QUEEN ALEXANDRA has taste for art, says a writer in t Review," and discerns the gre called upon to play in mod not only encourages artistes to them how much she reli and their help in hours of much she is awake to every n thought and labour. Her ha

DEATH OF BESSIE BONEHILL.



Bessie Bonehill died on Aug. 21 at Portsea, England, after a long illness, during which her death had been reported more than once.

Born in England about forty-five years ago, she made her professional debut as a child in that country, but came to this side in 1891 under the management of Tony Pastor and made a notable success in vaudeville. Her extreme cleverness, keen intelligence and daintiness of manner, supplemented by rare graces of beauty, won instant recognition. Pastor's Theatre in this city was packed for 300 consecutive performances and her magnetic presence was the cause of it. So it was throughout the land, and Miss Bonehill did us the honor to make our country her home. After a brief absence in England she returned in 1893 to star, under management of J. J. Rosenthal, in a play called Playmates, the company including Ward and Vokes, and Seeley and West. She married William Seeley, and their three children, John, Marion and Leon, are members of Weber and Fields' company, the two girls adopting the stage names Leona Hillson and Daffa Gray. Her success here in musical comedy, burlesque and vaudeville continued practically undisputed by any one, and her last engagement began at Hyde and Behman's Theatre, Brooklyn, on Nov. 26, 1900.

She had purchased a country place, Deer Hill Farm, at Sayville, N. Y., and there she had wished to pass the last days of her life. But upon a recent visit to her old home in England a cancer developed and she was removed to a hospital where all available surgical skill was unable to save her life. When the inevitable became known her son, John Seeley, and his betrothed, Lillian C. Rogers, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. Treadwell Rogers, of Sayville, went to England and were married at her bedside.

Bessie Bonehill designed and made all her own costumes, and as an impromptu speaker ranked second to none in stageland. Abe Hummel once said of her, "She is a second Chauncey Depew." She it was that popularized that epoch-making ballad, "Comrades," and none ever sang it as she did. Of her THE MIRROR said, more than six years ago: "When she made her American debut there was no longer any doubt of the eclat with which she was received on the other side. She more than fulfilled the expectations of her friends, and created hundreds of new admirers at every performance. Her work had a something not seen before. Added to it was her personality, endowed with all the grace that nature could bestow upon her. Miss Bonehill has always had the trust in herself which invariably leads one to success. She has never been before an audience which she did not succeed in pleasing. It takes her but a moment to fall in with all those who go to see and hear her. She captures them with a grace that is all her own; with an originality to her alone becoming. She has very much about her suggestive of Agnes Huntington, and it has been said of her as of the hero of Paul Jones, that she was 'divinely tall, still more divinely fair.' The intonation of this magnetic woman's voice is such as to cause question of its particular calibre. In rich and powerful mezzo strains she pours forth melody in an enchanting way. Her critics have differed as to what quality her tones really were, and instead of calling her's a mezzo voice, they all agreed it was a Bessie Bonehill voice."

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BESSIE BONEHILL AT HOME.

On Friday evening, Nov. 7 th, Mr and Mrs William Seeley tendered an informal reception and midnight banquet to about half a hundred of their professional associates and friends at their city home, the Hotel Hungaria, New York. Besides being principally a kind of prolonged honeymoon celebration by Mr Seeley and Miss Bonehill, who were joined in wedlock a few weeks ago, the occasion also partook of the nature of a reunion and general jollification by the members of Tony Pastor's recent road company. The affair proved an immense success. A brighter or more talented coterie of popular vaudevilles has seldom been gathered together hereabouts, and all seemed in their merriest mood. Among those present were Tony Pastor, Pat Reilly, Maggie Cline, Marie Loftus, Pritchard Sisters, Harry Le Rose, Frank Haytor, Arthur Haytor, Edith Haytor, Jennie Yeamans, G. E. Bryan, Nellie Forrester, Thos. Moulton, Nellie Wilson, Marie Lloyd, Thos. Eberts, Lloyd Courtney, James Russell, Thos. Le Mack, H. W. Frillman, Sisters Hedderwick, John Coleman, Dora Smith, Raymond Moore, J. Royer West, Mrs Stockvas, Prof. W. L. Bowron, Alice West, Mr Seeley's father, Mrs Stahl, some press representatives, and others. Just about the hour of midnight the guests assembled in the cosy back parlour of the hotel, and, after several pleasant moments of welcome, were led by the very captivating hostess into the spacious dining hall. Here an elaborate feast was temptingly spread. The tables had been arranged in the shape of a box U, and were not only loaded down with the good things of life, but were also handsomely embellished with vases of choice flowers and urns of palms and magnolias. Boutonnieres of snow-white chrysanthemums were presented to all the gentlemen, and each lady received a pretty corsage bouquet of tea roses. The menu was very lengthy and varied indeed, comprising dainty dishes of almost every conceivable kind, as well as all the delicacies of the season. Baskets of choice wines, cerafes of cordials, boxes of fine cigars, and, in fact, every perquisite to conviviality and good cheer abounded. During the collation Mr Seeley, in response to a unanimous call for a speech, very feelingly expressed his happiness at the presence of so many of the friends of himself and his better half, and gave warmest welcome and best wishes to all. Continuing, he spoke in glowing terms of the joyous satisfaction surrounding his wedded life, and strongly advised each unmarried man present to at once repair the damages of his existence by taking unto himself a wife. In conclusion, the popular host expressed the hope that all might be as lucky as he. It is hardly necessary to add that these sentiments were soundly cheered. Miss Bonehill, answering to a vigorous demand, then arose, and in her truly charming way thoroughly emphasised her husband's words of greeting, as well as his assertions concerning connubial bliss. Incidentally, she counselled the maidens to use good judgment, and hasten their selection of a mate, if they wished to enjoy to the fullest extent the gifts of the gods. The attractive hostess then spoke in the most complimentary terms of her manager, Tony Pastor, whom she aptly and repeatedly designated as her "wise governor." She counted him, she said, as one of her best and truest friends here or abroad, no one knowing better than herself how good, kind, and generous he is. Then, referring to the many pleasantries attending her tour this season, she expressed her deep and sincere regret at the unavoidable absence from the circle of three or four of her late fellow travellers. She ended her breezy remarks with a stirring toast to the members of Tony Pastor's company, absent and present. It was drunk amid a cyclone of hurrahs. Miss Bonehill then received probably one of the greatest yet most agreeable surprises of her life through the spontaneity and fervour with which her guests sang "For (S)he's a Jolly Good Fellow," topping it off with three cheers and a tiger that fairly made the walls quake. As the echoes died away, Marie Loftus proposed a toast to Jennie Hill (who will shortly visit the country), and Tony Pastor followed with words of remembrance to an old and honoured friend of the profession across the water, "Pony" Moore. Then the diners retired to an anteroom until the hall could be prepared for an impromptu entertainment, with the genial veteran, Tony Pastor, as "Governor" of ceremonies. Bessie pleased everyone by singing "How I Long for England Dear." With "Auld Lang Syne," the company rose, and joining hands, made the rafters ring with the good old chorus. The approach of dawn was here remarked by the ever watchful Mr Pastor, whereupon Miss Bonehill suggested "The Star Spangled Banner" and "God Save the Queen" as a fitting finale to the festivities. Both were given with a will. Amid rousing cheers the guests then departed, voting the night one long to be remembered.

THE LATE BESSIE BONEHILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ERA.

Sir,—In your kind notice of the late Miss Bessie Bonehill you quite correctly refer to her playing the part of William at the Alhambra when Sir Frank Burnand's charming burlesque *Black-Ey'd Susan* was put up. Ned Danvers (and right excellently did the old Royalty veteran play on the occasion) was in his original part of the Widow, and Arthur Roberts was the Crosstree.

May I be pardoned for drawing attention to the fact that the clever Miss Bonehill, years previously, essayed the part of William with the original "Crosstree" of burlesque, my dear friend, Fred Dewar, when Wybrow Robertson produced the piece so successfully at the Imperial Theatre. Jamie Thorne undertook the rôle of the widow, and was very firm in the part.

Now, parenthetically, may I further add that I had seen in my time Miss Rosina Rance play William, her Crosstree being the author of the burlesque, Sir Frank Burnand (not a bad Crosstree, but *sans* the gossamer, airy, Nelsonic, Comedie-Française, artistic touch of Fred Dewar). Edith Bland, too, I had seen in the part of William. Nay, I had also witnessed the late Mary Henderson (Mrs Aubrey) play William. The Crosstree on the occasion (and it was a good, light, neat, legitimately artistic performance) was my old sincere friend John H. Glyndes. But Miss Bessie Bonehill's William was as good as any of the admirable performances I mention. It was excellent, in fact.

In the initial performance at the Imperial Miss Bonehill wore a light-haired boy's wig. I'll never forget Dewar, with all the dignity of a courtier, suggesting how much more effective Bessie would look if she, in stage parlance, "wore her own hair." With the sincere gratitude of a true artiste, as Miss Bonehill was, she promptly discarded the wig, and appeared in her own natural beautiful hair; and a more dashing sailor lad the stage has never seen. It will be difficult to replace Miss Bessie Bonehill.

Yours faithfully, GEORGE ROY.

London, Aug. 23d, 1902.

BESSIE BONEHILL'S FAREWELL.

Last Friday evening a pleasant farewell supper was given by Bessie Bonehill, at the Hotel Hungaria, to her American colleagues and friends. The tables were tastefully decorated with cut flowers and elaborate floral pieces bearing appropriate inscriptions, such as, "Bon Voyage," "Farewell Bessie," "*au revoir*," etc. The amiable and pretty hostess, radiant and smiling at the head of the horse-shoe, wore on her bosom a handsome medal, the gift of Tony Pastor. On one side of which were two bees set in diamonds on a ground of dull gold, and on the reverse was a glowing inscription. She wore other presents from Mrs. Pastor and Mrs. Yeamans and her daughter.

With the cognac came the toasts, the first being Miss Bonehill herself, proposed by Mr. Pastor. W. J. Scanlan spoke of the hostess' charming personal qualities, and Harrison Grey Fiske referred to her refined and unique accomplishments as a vaudeville artiste. Miss Bonehill expressed her gratitude for the courtesy and kindness she had received in this country, and said that her departure meant but *au revoir*.

Several good stories, capitally told by Frank Bush and George Marion, followed the speeches, and later, songs were sung by Maggie Cline, Bessie Bonehill, W. J. Scanlan, and the Old Homstead Quartette.

Among the guests were: Mrs. Annie Yeamans, Jeannie Yeamans, Emily Yeamans, Maggie Cline, Charles Roche, George Marion, Mr. and Mrs. Tony Pastor, Harry Sanderson, Mr. Colville, of the *Clipper*; Gussie De Forrest, Lena Merville, Ad Ryman, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Scanlan, Mabel Fenton, Frank Bush, Signor Rudolph, and the improvisator, Arthur West.

Last week I had briefly to record the death of that well-known favourite, Miss Bessie Bonehill (Mrs. Seeley), but my allotted space would not permit me to furnish any particulars of her history, which from beginning to end was triumphant.

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Miss Bonehill commenced her professional career at a very early age, and no sooner did she do single-handed work than her talent was appreciated and made her exceedingly marketable. It was her male impersonations that first brought her reputation, and these were emphasised by her genial, boyish face and figure.

***

When Bessie Bonehill impersonated a midshipman she looked the real article, while her great vivacity and intelligence never failed to give these impersonations every significance. Although she was but quite a young woman when she passed away last week, she was one of the oldest friends of THE ENTR'ACTE, in which she had professed a lively interest for over a quarter of a century, I think.

***

Great as was her success in England, even greater were her triumphs in America, where from the first time she made an appeal to her trans-Atlantic audience, she won immense favouritism. But when she was over the seas, she was always staunch to her English friends, and the popularity of her songs preceded her at every move she made. I well remember her telling me how nervous she was when she made her first appearance at Johannesburg and how quickly all this was changed when she found an audience cheering her as "Bessie," those good people chanting her choruses with a heartiness, that, in her own words, "made her feel at home at once."

***

Mr. Clement Scott unbent to the music-halls for a short time, and he it was who wrote for Miss Bonehill, the patriotic song of "Here stands a post." The last time I had the pleasure of speaking to Bessie she told me that she had seen Mr. Clement Scott at the Oxford, and that in talking over the old song of "Here stands a post," the well-known critic shed tears, and promised that if she would revive the old success he would write fresh verses for it.

***

It is only a matter of months ago that Miss Bonehill's condition gave out symptoms of her being the victim of an insidious malady for which there is apparently no cure. Her good and loyal husband at once took measures to stem the tide, and placed her in the hands of the best specialist of the day. An operation of a serious nature was at once advised and performed, with the result that at first appeared to give promise. The patient bore up bravely all through this, and talked hopefully of the time when she would resume her professional engagements.

***

As time went on, however, it became evident that the seriousness of her condition had been under-rated rather than exaggerated. She never successfully combated the grave difficulties with which she was beset, and she soon apprehended that her case was a malignant one. She, however, bore up courageously to the last, and passed away peacefully last Thursday, the 21st inst., at Portsea.

***

Happily the deceased lady was in good circumstances, and better still, she was cared for by a husband who attended to her every want, and treated her with a devotion that served to yield her every possible comfort, and to this gentleman I offer my sincere sympathy.

***

Apart from her artistic capacity Bessie Bonehill possessed social qualities which endeared her to everyone with whom she was brought in contact, and I have never known anybody speak disparagingly of her, though I have heard her praises universally sung. Peace to her memory.

***

Mr. William Seeley wishes, through THE ENTR'ACTE, to sincerely thank the many sympathising friends for flowers, elegrams and letters received in great profusion.

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Died Aug
Aug 1902

DEATH OF BESSIE BONEHILL.

The music hall profession loses by the death of Miss Bessie Bonehill one of its best-known and most popular members, and though the sad news did not come as a surprise, it has been received with expressions of the deepest regret, not only from those who esteemed the deceased comedienne as a fellow-worker in the same field, but from many who have a pleasant recollection of her bright and pleasing performance as a variety artiste. Happily married, Miss Bonehill was as blameless in her private life as she was successful in her public one. Her good name was never sullied by the breath of scandal, and she was a true wife and a devoted mother. Though a woman of business and thrifty, she was, on the other hand, generous and charitable to a degree. Not content with being merely open-handed, Miss Bonehill took an active interest in the various benevolent efforts in connection with the music hall profession for the relief of genuine cases of distress. She became the first lady member of the Music Hall Benevolent Fund; and when she entered fully into American life she was equally active in the same laudable direction, and received from the members of the American organisation a jewelled souvenir of their esteem, which she highly prized. Having always at her command a high salary, and leading a quiet, domesticated life, she was in affluent circumstances at the time of her death. Her investments have been mainly in America, where she acquired on Long Island a farm of over 600 acres, actively devoted to industrial work. On it are a capital residence, a prosperous fruit farm, granary, dairy, and cheese factory, in the supervision of which she took a keen personal interest. Her father died in America only about a year or so ago, and the loss was keenly felt by his devoted daughter, who has so quickly followed him to the grave.

As an artist Miss Bonehill had a long and eminently successful career. She was born at West Bromwich, near Birmingham, and made her first appearance as a fairy in the local pantomime at the early age of six. Subsequently she was one of the Three Sisters Bonehill, singers and dancers, who appeared at the halls, one of their specialities being a dance in the Lancashire style with clogs. Still later, she became known as a male impersonator, a line of business for which she was well suited and in which she had many successes. When F. C. Burnand's burlesque, *Black Ey'd Susan*, was produced at the Alhambra on Aug. 21, 1884, with Mr Arthur Roberts as Captain Cranstree, Miss Bonehill was secured for the part of William, an admirable performance, which brought the clever comedienne to the front at a bound. Previous to this, however, she had had considerable experience as a pantomime artist, appearing as Boy Blue at the Aquarium in 1879, and as King Auriol at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in 1880. Then she was engaged for four successive seasons at the Pavilion Theatre, Mile-end, the characters she played being Jack, in *Jack and the Beanstalk*; Dick, in *Dick Whittington*; the Prince, in *Cinderella*; and Sinbad. At Christmas, 1884, she appeared as Aladdin at the Alexandra Opera House, Sheffield, and her next pantomime engagement was at the same theatre, in the role of Dick Whittington. Other pantomimes in which she appeared included *Aladdin* at the Prince of Wales's, Birmingham; Sinbad at the same theatre; Sinbad at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester; and Robinson Crusoe at the Alexandra Theatre, Sheffield. Miss Bonehill sailed for America in July, 1892, and joined Tony Pastor's company. She was as successful in New York as in her native country. Miss Bonehill has sung many popular songs during her stage career, and amongst these may be mentioned "Money," "The Noblemen of Merry, Merry England," "George the Third," "Both Sides of the Picture," "The Old Tattered Flag," "King Charley," "Playmates," "Buttercups and Daisies," "The Knickerbocker and the Shoe," and "He's a Jolly Good Fellow." In the picturesque dress of a bygone age Miss Bonehill always looked well, and some of her most successful songs are associated with this costume. About six

In our memoir of Miss Bonehill we spoke only generally of her engagements, but perhaps the following particulars will be interesting to our readers. She went to the States for the first time in 1888 to fulfil a six weeks' contract with Tony Pastor in New York, and returned to him in the following year to play a fourteen weeks' engagement, and, returning for the third time, remained seven years. She won her first great success in the States at the Garden Theatre, New York, in the title-role of *Little Christopher Columbus*, and afterwards toured the principal American cities with her own company, in *Playmates*, written for her by Mr W. H. Seeley. She then played the star part in Edward Rice's "1492" company, under the management of Klaw and Erlanger, appearing for the first time on the stage in petticoats. She also played in several other productions. Mr Sydney Hyman came to America and induced her to sign a contract for South Africa, where she was under engagement when the war broke out in 1899. She then returned to England, and played for twenty-seven weeks on the Moss and Stoll tour, returning to America to fulfil several engagements and to take a rest on her farm. The Oxford, the Tivoli, the Metropolitan, and the London Pavilion claimed her services later, and it was while fulfilling an exclusive engagement at the last-mentioned establishment that she had to undergo an operation for the malady that has ended the career of one of the most gifted artists that has ever graced the variety theatres.



oto by Hall.

THE LATE MISS BESSIE BONEHILL.

ah Harrison

the door she stumbled against a
ange, which thudded and rumbled
loor.
nning up the stairs, blind to the
d in the dark corner by the library

e lay round and bright, like a star-

Flowers of the Field
Sarah Harrison
Pg. 83

Three

Playmates were we: Little we thought it then . . .
How we should change, when we should all be men!
Bessie Bonehill—"Playmates"

Thea ran into her room and sat on the edge of her bed, pressing her fingers against her eyes. She sat rigidly upright. Perhaps if she herself kept very stiff and still, she could reduce everything to a pinprick of stillness—simply wipe out the quick breathing, the jerking bodies, the clutching hands, the gasp—

The door opened, with a little rush, and closed again quickly. Thea's eyeballs ached with the pressure of her fingers. A slight tilting of the mattress beneath her told her that someone had sat down on the bed.

She lowered her hands and saw Dulcie, leaning against the barred, wooden bed-end, arms folded. Her face, now, was completely composed, the eyes steady, even accusing. But Thea noticed a stain on her skirt, and a feral, tainted odour which emanated from her.

"Go away," she said dully. "Please go away."

"Why?" Dulcie's tone was truculent, matching the folded arms, the defiant stare. She was spoiling for a fight.

"Because this is my room and I want it to myself," replied Thea, determined to let her have it.

Irish variety - Eugene Watters + Matthew Murtagh

Gill + MacMillan 1975 Dublin

Dan Leno's Music Hall – 1879–97 by

.007

But neither Lottie nor Bonnie Kate broke the Victorian taboo as cheekily as did the Celebrated Characteristic Vocalist Bessie Bonehill. Bessie's gift was to exhibit her figure and personality in the guise of a man. She was English to the knucklebone, born at West Bromwich where as a small girl she had won local fame as a clogdancer. Her sharp sense of realism soon learned to see through the boys; she began to mimic the males, their cocky self-assurance, their raffish way with a maid; and in the Seventies these sharp-edged male personations attracted London attention and earned Bessie engagements at The Metropolitan, The Royal, The Oxford. Clement Scott wrote her a song, 'Here Stands a Post', a patriot piece which went through many versions until it finally became the sinewy 'Waiting for the Signal' which the fetching figure in the male attire sang with the angel cheek of a stiff little soldier boy.

On the high cars jingling through the streets Dan's posters announced: 'Tremendous Success of Bessie Bonehill!' Underlying the serio-satiric comedy there was a deep psycho-attraction in her act. The audience felt it as 'naughty', but it was never vulgar for it was presented with all the finesse of a breezy and soignée style.

5

But the Male Comics and the Serios were by no means the whole of the picture. All the teeming life of the Circus, the wandering one-night Acrobats and Animals of the Sawdust Ring, the Enchantments and Necromancers, the Puppets and Peepshows that had enlivened the streets – all now joined the caravanserai passing across the Stage at Dan's.

Among the Puppets, Codman's Punch & Judy and Jennion's Marionettes were outstanding. Like Punch & Judy (Pontius Pilate & the Jews), and indeed like most things in Theatre, the Marionettes had come down from the colourful religion of the Middle Ages. They had begun as little figurines of the Virgin, called 'marions' (marys) or 'marionettes', which were worked on strings to enact the Christian Mysteries for an unlettered people. At Dan's, with the Starlights dimmed and the limelight focused on the perky little puppets, their mimicry of life was curiously more convincing than actual life itself.

Among the Novelties, the Clown Raffin with Performing Pig and Monkey



The Diorama presenting views of the United Kingdom was an early attempt to provide moving pictures. The comic paper *Zoz* describes it: 'A long picture wound on sticks and indicating (at the pleasure of the proprietor) Jerusalem, Madagascar or Connemara. An Artist travels with the outfit and paints in, as occasion may require, a cedar tree, a black man, or an outside car.'

Through the streets in February and again in November came the cavalcade of Delhi & Poonah the Musical Elephants. People stood to watch them pass on their way to Dan's: the plod of the feet and the trained curl of the patient trunks brought a whiff of the glamorous Victorian Empire of India. The Elephants were sick on their second night and unable to appear 'in consequence of having experienced a sea-passage of twenty-four hours in the storm'. But thereafter they were put through their paces nightly by Captain Harrington; they rolled on globes, walked on a tightrope, stood on their heads, danced, played drums, trumpets and clarinets. As well as being a wonder in themselves, they brought respectability to Dan's, for it was known that the Queen Empress had

1885 The Idols

1

In the *mélange* of Circus acts and wonders, Enchantments, miniature Drama, Opera airs, Wild Beasts, Midgets and Mystagogues, the Male Comic and the female Serio came more and more to be recognised as the intrinsic Idols of the Music Hall. In a predominantly male Audience, romantically minded, the true Serios were slow to catch on. Ada Lundberg this year made her fourth visit to Dan's. Billed: the most Artistic Low Comedienne before the Public. Each Character a Study. 'She is one of the best Artistes seen at the Hall for some time' – *Evening Telegraph*. But this critic was rather alone in his opinion. Ada was still ploughing the difficult furrow of the low-life female Clown, not yet taking the fancy of Victoria's Dublin to the extent that it was tickled by such sweet singers and fluent figures as Katie Lawrence and Bonnie Kate Harvey.

Nellie Farrell had little of the Lundberg bite. Billed as the Glittering Star of Erin, she was idolised as a singer of patriot songs such as 'Her Lad in the Scotch Brigade' which became the 'Tipperary' of the First Sudan Campaign; or that song with the fetching chorus:

We are still staunch and true to the red, white and blue,
Our loyalty is firm as a rock.
The sorrows of today will tomorrow pass away
For one black sheep will never make a flock.

Daisy Hughes was a Low-cut Lady. 'Her first song was attractive, and its rendering should not have been marred, as it was, by the *décolletée* she exhibited' – *Telegraph*. The split-bodice trick was a favourite one with Grand Opera singers in eliciting applause. Emily Soldene wittily describes the method: Prima Donna bows to the Audience – faint applause. She bows lower – applause warms up. She bows still lower till the gap yawns down the break of the bodice disclosing the 'lily boleros' – thunderous applause from the Music Lovers.

Poor Daisy (her real name was Alice Victoria Villiers) was subject to fits of depression. Desperate for success, she lived in a shadowland of dim faces, terrifying silences and handclaps of applause. One Friday in the August of 1893 she made her last low-cut bow at The Brighton Empire; late that night she threw herself from the balcony of the Grand Hotel and fell eighty feet to her death.

The West Bromwich girl, Bessie Bonehill, made her last appearance at Dan's this year in her trim and tailored act of male impersonation. She had brought the act to the perfection of an art-form and paved the way for the Boy-Girl Idol of the age, Vesta Tilley.

2

The Idol was born at Worcester in 1864, the daughter of Henry Ball, Comedian and Chairman of a local Tavern Theatre. As a tiny mite, watching from the wings, she was absorbed in the facial antics of her Father. The sensitive little mind became shaped to the male image. At four, dressed as a mannikin, she ventured out on the Stage. There was a Peter Pan quality – a fairy-like ambiguity of sex – in the little waif which had an odd fascination for the Audience. Father, glimpsing the boy-girl possibilities, wrote her some male-character songs, dressed her in little-man

The Star of Erin Music Hall opened in Dublin in a blaze of glory at Christmas 1879.

Dan Lowrey, its owner and manager, had already made a name for himself in Liverpool. Penniless and illiterate, he had done the rounds of back-street song-and-drink rooms before spotting the potential of the 'musical taverns' which were coming into fashion. He bought one, remodelled it, amassed a modest fortune and returned to Ireland to repeat his success.

For seventeen years, under Dan, his sons and grandsons, The Star shone out brightly into the murk of the late Victorian Dublin scene, boasting all the great names in international vaudeville.

The Great Macdermott, Arthur Lloyd, Leybourne, Pat Kinsella, Vance, Chirgwin, Ada Lundberg, Leno, Little Tich, Vesta Tilley, Marie Lloyd . . . all flashed across its stage amidst a sparkling parade of high-kickers, acrobats, prizefighters, serio-comics and blacked-up acts.

No scheme was too ambitious, no expense spared, as Dan Lowrey's Music Hall mirrored the fashions and interests of the day: the nineteenth-century obsession with primitivism, the popular appeal of scientific discovery, the new craze for motion pictures.

Infinite Variety recaptures all its glamour and excitement in a vivid text, scores of songs and a mass of photographs and cartoons.

It is in fact a classic account of the way in which the music hall, which had developed out of the tavern theatre, degenerated into the opulent but impersonal variety theatre as Victorian prudishness gave way to the gay, risqué **fin de siècle.**

DRAMATIC MIRROR.

No variety performer that has come from England has either merited or received the degree of popular favor enjoyed by that extremely clever young woman with that extremely disagreeable name; to wit, Bessie Bonehill. Her engagement at Mr. Pastor's closed on Saturday last and she took ship yesterday for England, where she is under engagement to appear in a Christmas pantomime production at Manchester. She tells me that she is delighted with New York, and that it is her fixed intention to come back for good next year—family and all.

✣

Miss Bonehill occupies a unique place on the British variety stage. Her artistic work has attracted the serious attention of a no less exacting and noted writer than George Moore, who has commended her to the length of several pages in his best-known book.

The only novelty about Miss Bonehill is her refinement and facility. Her line of business is not new by any means, but she infuses into it a freshness, an incisive intelligence and an accurate skill that are *sui generis*, and that even the gallery-boy is quick to see and admire.

She has a bright face and a flexile figure; she is a nimble and graceful dancer, and what is more conspicuous still, she has plenty of brains lodged in her shapely head.

If Bessie Bonehill comes back she will have a warm welcome. If she does not, her pathetic Newsboy, her gallant Cavalier of gay Prince Charlie's time, and her natty Midshiman will be long remembered by the lovers of genuinely good variety performances—of whom there are many in this city.

✣

BONNIE BESSIE BONEHILL.

Bonnie Bessie Bonehill, called the queen of comediennes and character descriptive singers has been asked to tell about herself. Her picture appears on the first page this week.

Miss Bonehill's career upon the stage is the simple story of her life. Looking back to her very childhood her talent seems to glimmer through the silver mist of youth with every suggestion of peace and comfort. When only six years old she astounded the London public with her cleverness, and later took to traveling with her talented sister in specialty parts throughout the English provinces. In the children's ballet which then was a reigning fad with managers on the other side, "Bonnie Bessie," as she was always called, became the child sensation. She sang character songs with the ability of a thorough professional. And then she began to grow. As she developed in years and size she took to burlesque, and at once became the rage in London. She played boy parts principally, and appeared in every big production known at the time. Her performances in Sinbad, Robinson Crusoe, Aladdin, and as William in Black-Eyed Susan became the talk of the English metropolis.

In all her work Miss Bonehill particularly made a study of nautical characters, and it is due to this fact possibly that her first great hit was made in Black Eyed Susan at the Alhambra Theatre, Leicester Square. Arthur Roberts, who is now the greatest living comedian of the Old World, was the principal comedian of the production. Even Lillian Russell was engaged to play a girl part in this burlesque. Miss Bonehill was really the star, and was directly charged with the enormous success of the performance.

Five years ago, the redoubtable Tony Pastor secured Miss Bonehill for America, after giving her a contract for $450 per week. That the investment was worth the money proved to be more than true. She went into the hearts of New Yorkers and instantly became the rage. Tony Pastor's Theatre was packed nightly for 360 consecutive performances, and Bessie Bonehill's magnetic presence was the reason for it. Several high class English stars have attempted recently to attain the same success and popularity in New York, but none could duplicate "Our Bessie's" hit. And through the country she has as many friends and admirers as in New York. English managers are not pleased with her success here, as they claim she was stolen from them by Mr. Pastor. Nevertheless they are proud of her, and repeatedly express their regret at her having adopted America as her home.

But even off the stage Miss Bonehill is an artist. She designs and makes all her own costumes. She is a devoted worker, and never fails to please, for it is her one chief desire in life. As an impromptu speaker, she is without an equal on the stage. Abe Hummel, New York's famous criminal lawyer, says: "She is a second Chauncey Depew."

When she made her American debut there was no longer any doubt of the eclat with which she was received on the other side. She more than fulfilled the expectations of her friends, and created hundreds of new admirers at every performance. Her work had a something not seen before. Added to it was her personality, endowed with all the grace that nature could bestow upon her.

Miss Bonehill has always had the trust in herself which invariably leads one to success. She has never been before an audience which she did not succeed in pleasing. It takes her but a moment to fall in with all those who go to see and hear her her. She captures them with a grace that is all her own; with an originality to her alone becoming. She has very much about her suggestive of Agnes Huntington, and it has been said of her as of the hero of Paul Jones, that she was "divinely tall, still more divinely fair." The intonation of this magnetic woman's voice is such as to cause question of its particular calibre. In rich and powerful mezzo strains she pours forth melody in an enchanting way. Her critics have differed as to what quality her tones really were, and instead of calling her's a mezzo voice, they all agreed that it was a Bessie Bonehill voice.

Miss Bonehill has made one of the greatest hits of her life as Johanna in 1492, notwithstanding the fact that this is the first time she has played a girl's part since the age of eight.

BESSIE BONEHILL.

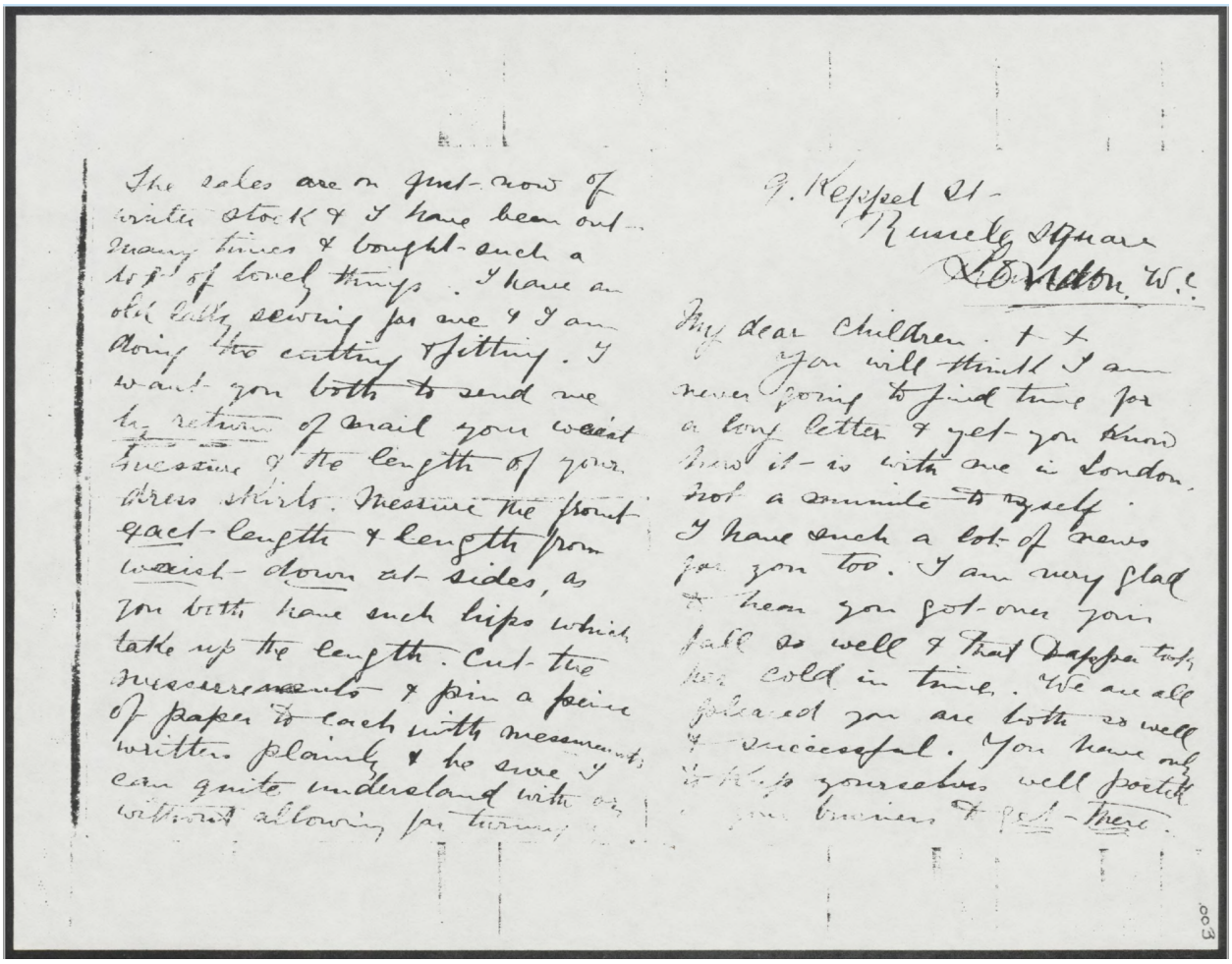
One of the most charming and clever little comediennes that ever came out of "Merrie England" is Bessie Bonehill, who is pictured upon THE MIRROR'S front page this week.

When Miss Bonehill made her first appearance in this country, at Tony Pastor's in 1889, her attractive face and form, her grace and magnetism of manner made an instant impression. Now that she has adopted America as her home, and is widely known in the United States and Canada, she has created this same impression in the minds of thousands of audiences, and a very large number of theatregoers unite in declaring her the queen among artists in her line of work.

Miss Bonehill began her career as a fairy in a Christmas pantomime in London when she was about six years old. Afterward she went into vaudeville, and sang topical songs so cleverly that she became, while still very young, a great favorite in the large music halls of London. Her dainty and fascinating way of rendering these songs made her equally or perhaps even more popular in this country than she was in her native land, and after her first visit eight years ago she soon returned, and now may be fairly claimed as an American. Her first two years here were devoted to vaudeville. Then she toured in Playmates, playing the leading part with great success. Later she appeared in Little Christopher, then in 1492, and recently in The Little Monte Cristo, in which she again won enthusiastic praise for the charm of her performance. She has just returned to her first love, the vaudevilles, and appeared last week at the Pleasure Palace.

One of Miss Bonehill's hobbies is farming, and she has indulged it by buying a twenty-acre farm near Sayville, L. I. Here, with her husband, R. W. Seely, to whom she was married in Buffalo about six years ago, and her father, whom she brought from England, she spends her vacations and revels in rural life.

The sales are on just now of winter stock & I have been out many times & bought such a lot of lovely things. I have an old lady sewing for me & I am doing the cutting & fitting. I want you both to send me by return of mail your waist measure & the length of your dress skirts. Measure the front exact length & length from waist down at sides, as you both have such hips which take up the length. Cut the measurements & pin a piece of paper to each with measurements written plainly & be sure I can quite understand with or without allowing for turning



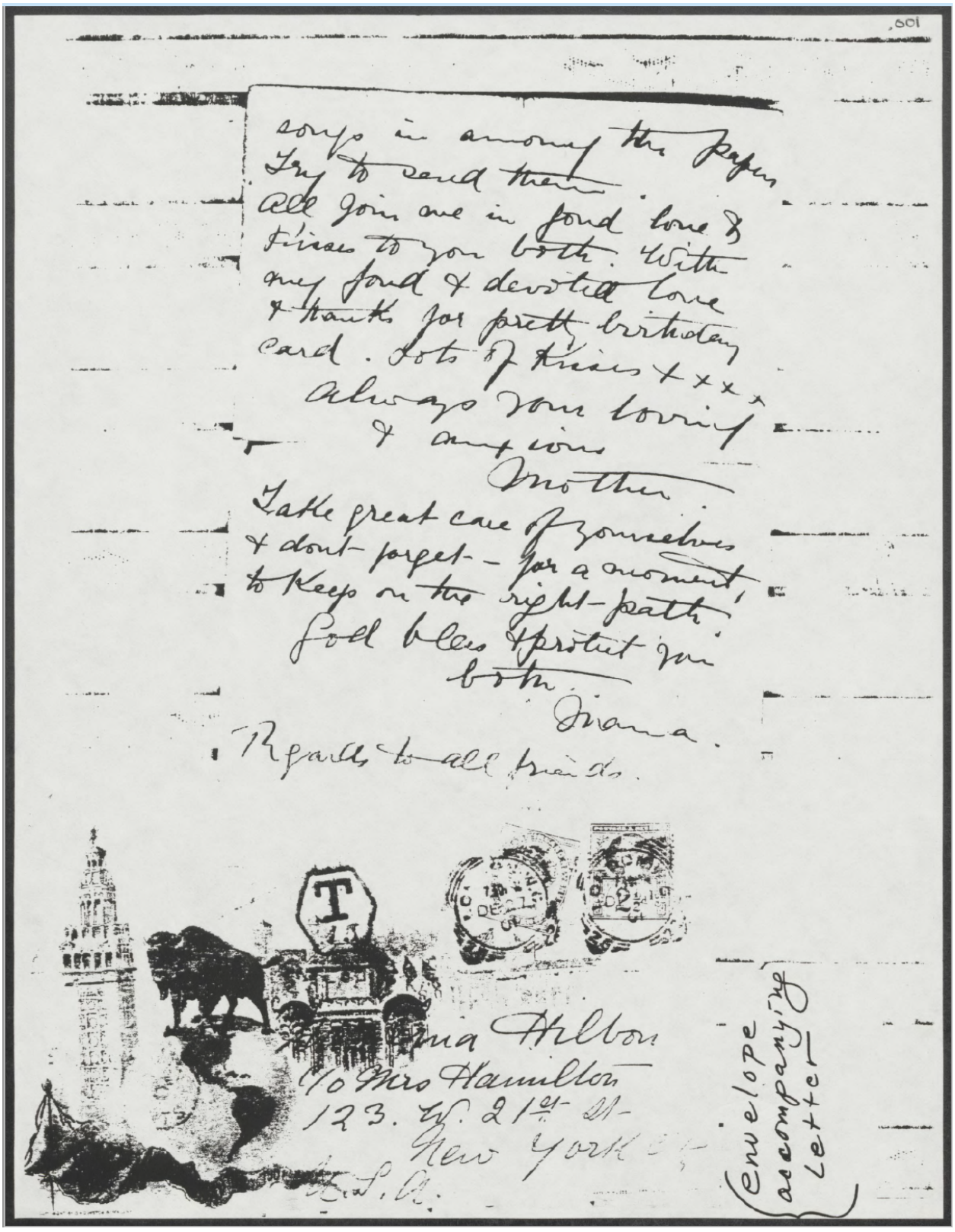
9. Keppel St.
Russell Square
London, W.C.

My dear Children. + +
You will think I am never going to find time for a long letter & yet you know how it is with me in London. Not a minute to myself. I have such a lot of news for you too. I am very glad to hear you got over your fall so well & that Dapper took her cold in time. We are all pleased you are both so well & successful. You have only to keep yourselves well posted in your business & get there.

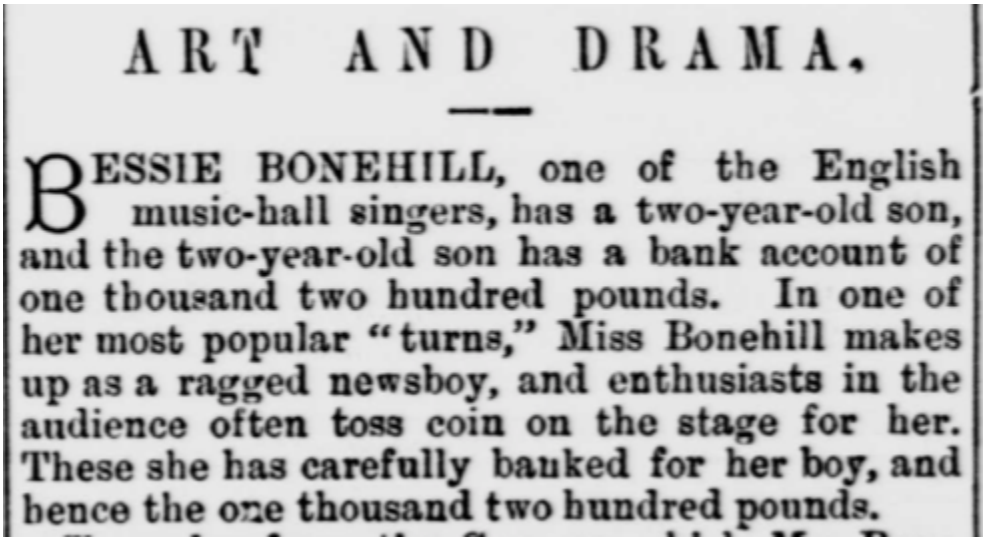
003

I have bought you each a lovely ball dress. Simply lovely. But I must have the alteration in length of skirt done while I have this woman. Lisas is pale yellow as canary colour satan (stands alone) embroidered with Marguerite daisies & leaves. Daffas Corn flower blue embroidered with corn flowers & leaves. Both cut almost alike & very rich satan. Yards & yards round each skirt & the very latest style. I am only in London four weeks longer so if you dont send the waist & length by return I cant have the alterations made. I am going to appear at the Shakespeare Theatre Clapham tonight for Marie Loftus's benefit & have a very bad cold & cough of course because I want to be well I am feeling pretty well though all things considered. Papa is only very so-so. Jack is well but has a cold. Grandma spent a day with us a day or so ago. She seems much better than she was at times. I will tell you more news in my next as I must close now to catch the mail. We did not find the

Remains of this dress with remaining costume
– Dorrie Wall



Appendix II: Bessie Bonehill's *Bow Bells* article



ART AND DRAMA.

BESSIE BONEHILL, one of the English music-hall singers, has a two-year-old son, and the two-year-old son has a bank account of one thousand two hundred pounds. In one of her most popular "turns," Miss Bonehill makes up as a ragged newsboy, and enthusiasts in the audience often toss coin on the stage for her. These she has carefully banked for her boy, and hence the one thousand two hundred pounds.

unknown, . (1894, January 12). Art and Drama. *Bow Bells,* p. 69. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/docview/3199912?pq-origsite=summon

Declaration of Originality

RESEARCH DEGREE COVERSHEET AND CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

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This form must be completed in full and submitted to your School Research Office. If you have any accompanying documentation and/or material please contact registryresearch@hud.ac.uk so that we can support you to submit this electronically. Please be aware that no alterations to your submission will be permitted once it has been accepted for examination.

Please ensure that you provide the full title of your thesis exactly as presented on your submission. Subject to the recommendation of the Examiners, this title is exactly as it will appear on your degree certificate.

CANDIDATE'S DETAILS

Student Name:	**GEORGIA ROGERS-SMITH**
Student Number:	**U1663972**
School:	**ART, DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE**
Intended Award:	**MA by Research (Art and Design)**
Collaborating Establishment: (if any)	**N/A**
Supervisor:	**Dr Jade Halbert**
Co-Supervisor:	**Dr Tracy Cassidy**
Co-Supervisor:	**N/A**
Title of Thesis:	**AMBIGUOUS OR AMBISEXTROUS? Exploring dress, gender and the fashioning of masculine identities by unconventional women in the long nineteenth century.**
Date of Submission:	**22/09/20**
Submission Type:	First attempt

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, the above named, confirm that:

1. I acknowledge that the submission of this thesis and any accompanying documentation and/or material, hereafter referred to as the 'Work', for examination is at my sole discretion and by submitting this Work I am confirming that I have complied with the regulations and associated policies of the University of Huddersfield, including those concerning submission, extenuating circumstances procedures and research misconduct;

Candidate Declaration Form Aug 2016

2. the Work has been prepared in accordance with the University's criteria for the submission of work for postgraduate research awards;

3. the Work presented is wholly my own, unless otherwise clarified as part of the submission, and it is correctly referenced as required by the appropriate referencing protocols;

4. where the Work is based on work done by myself jointly with others, as part of a collaborative group project or a PhD by Publication submission for example, I have clearly indicated the extent of the collaboration and what I have contributed myself;

5. this Work **has** been done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at this University (5a will apply if you have selected 'has not');

   5a) this Work includes research previously undertaken as a candidate for a research degree at another University, or any other institution, and I have obtained the agreement of all institutions involved;

6. this Work **has not** (in full or in part) been submitted for a comparable academic award (6a will apply if you have selected 'has');

   6a) this Work covers a wider field of study than work previously submitted for a degree or comparable award, at this University or any other institution, and I have clearly indicated which work has been so incorporated in the thesis and as an attachment to this declaration form;

7. this Work **does not** include parts which have been published prior to submission (7a will apply if you have selected 'does');

   7a) this Work includes parts which have been published prior to submission and I have clearly indicated which work has been incorporated in the thesis by:

      i) including a list of any publications arising from the work and a statement of my contribution to each paper listed, which I have provided at the start of the thesis;
      ii) referencing the published work clearly;
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8. the final version of my Work **has** been uploaded to the University's Turnitin site and a copy of the submission receipt has been appended to my work (please complete 8a if you have selected 'has not');

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9. this is the final version of my Work and it **has** been seen by my Supervisor (*delete as appropriate);

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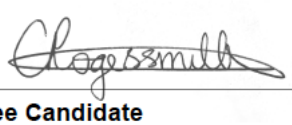
10. I have at least one durable backup copy of the final version of my Work that is retained in a secure location away from University property and can be provided electronically if required.

Signature:  Date: 22/09/20

Research Degree Candidate