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A note on terminology

Throughout this study, the term ‘transgender’ will be used as an umbrella term to refer to anyone who displays deviance from accepted gender norms.[1] Though these figures could be interpreted as ‘queer’, the term ‘transgender’ specifically focuses on their existence outside of the gender binary.[2]

The term ‘transmasculine’ will also be used throughout this study, referring to someone who was assigned female at birth (AFAB) but who portrays themselves in a masculine manner. This is distinct from a ‘transman’ or ‘transwoman’ – two contemporary identities that the subjects of this study may not have aligned with. ‘Transmasculine’ is not an identity posited onto these past, transgender figures, but a description of their gender presentation.

The acronym ‘AFAB’ will be used throughout this study. Though this is a modern acronym, it accurately describes the body of the transgender subjects in this study without assuming anything about their gender identity.

The term ‘cisgender’ will be used to refer to someone who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, if they are AFAB, and present socially and privately as a woman, we can infer that they are cisgender.

[1] Jen Manion, 'Transgender Representations, Identities, and Communities', in *The Oxford Handbook of American Women's and Gender Histor*y, ed. by Ellen Hartigan O'Connor and Lisa G. Materson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 311-332.

[2] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). Halberstam has published under the names ‘Jack’ and ‘Judith’. Out of respect for their gender fluidity, I am referring to them by their initial.

Introduction

In November 1746, Charles Hamilton was sentenced for fraud under the vagrancy act in Taunton, Somerset. They were to be whipped publicly in six towns in the surrounding area, their body paraded for all to see. Unusually for a small case in a rural area, professional city lawyers heard the charges against Hamilton.[3] News of this trial for fraud was reported on by the nearby city of Bath, with those articles reprinted for an even broader audience in London. Merely two weeks after news of the trial had spread, a pamphlet was circulated telling the alleged life story of this deviant criminal. The element that made the case so unusual, so fascinating? Hamilton was a woman.

Charles Hamilton is one of many 'female husbands' whose lives were reported on in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hamilton's notoriety, and reason for being the focus of this study, comes from the anonymously published pamphlet that claimed to tell the story of Hamilton 'from her own mouth.'[4] The title of this pamphlet, *The Female Husband*, popularised this term for referring to AFAB individuals who presented as men. The juxtaposition of the words 'female' and 'husband' ensured that this term has retained dramatic and scholarly relevance. However, many historians have taken the term and focused on the 'female' part, consequently portraying individuals like Hamilton as lesbians in same-sex relationships. This study posits that we should re-examine these 'female husbands' with an aim to look at how they experienced and performed gender, rather than examining them with a focus on their assumed sexuality. This approach complements recent scholarship that calls for independent transgender study, detached from studies of the sex or sexuality.[5] The sources examined in this study will show us how contemporaries received and responded to transmasculine individuals, as well as how contemporary society understood gender.

By interrogating the presentation of a transmasculine identity throughout Fielding's pamphlet, as well as looking at newspaper reports on Hamilton, this study returns agency to Hamilton as a transmasculine, gender-non-conforming individual. Their sexed body is secondary to the study of their gender

[3] Caroline Derry, 'Sexuality and Locality in the Trial of Mary Hamilton, "Female Husband",' *King's Law Journal*, 19 (2008) pp. 595-616, p. 600

[4] Anonymous, *The Female Husband: Or, The Surprising History of Mrs Mary, Alias Mr George Hamilton, Who was convicted of having married a Young Woman of Wells and lived with her as her Husband. Taken From Her own Mouth since her Confinement*. (London: M Cooper, 1746) <link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0112018985/ECCO?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=3c072875&pg=1> [accessed 28 October 2022]

[5] Cáel M. Keegan, 'Getting Disciplined: What's Trans* About Queer Studies Now?', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 67 (2020) pp. 384-397 <10.1080/00918369.2018.1530885>

presentation, and from the sources we will see that contemporaries were equally as concerned about gender deviance, not just about same-sex relations.

Methodology

This study is not suggesting that Hamilton identified as transgender. To use modern terminology removes agency from Hamilton and the other 'female husbands' explored throughout this study.[6] Instead, I will be reconstructing the image of the female husband through a transgender lens. This approach reinterprets sources by putting gender, rather than sexuality, first.

By repositioning these figures as transgender subjects, this study offers them agency and autonomy that prior studies have typically not permitted them. In this dissertation, giving 'agency' to these individuals means respecting their gender presentation throughout their life; the act of the agent (the transgender subject) is the focus rather than something they are unable to control (such as their sexed body). 'Autonomy' further analyses their gender presentation, understanding their actions to be a conscious choice that reflects contemporary understandings of how gender was constructed. Rather than their gender-transgressive actions being understood as secondary to their sexuality, the act of presenting gender is the focal aspect. The conscious choices, as well as the lived reality, of these transgender individuals are being studied objectively, without assumptions about their sexual or gendered identity.

The 'transgender lens' has been recently used by Jen Manion in their book *Female Husbands: A Trans History*. Manion, a non-binary historian, stresses the significance of using a transgender approach to histories of gender and sexuality because of the nuance such an approach offers.[7] Manion builds off the work of queer and transgender scholars combining transgender theory and a historical approach in *Female Husbands.*[8] This approach is important because engaging with gender-fluid identities and presentations means the scholar does not assumptively label an individual, nor does the scholar cling to the old-fashioned gender binary. The expanding field of transgender scholarship has been, and continues to be, greatly informed by Manion's methodology. Likewise, this study draws on it throughout.

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[6] Victoria Harris, 'Sex on the Margins: New Directions in the Historiography of Sexuality and Gender,' *The Historical Journal,* 53 (2010) pp. 1085-1104

[7] Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) p. 11

[8] Elizabeth Freeman, 'Introduction: Queer and Not Now' in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* eds. J Halberstam and Lisa Lowe, (New York: Duke University Press, 2010); Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The roots of today's revolution,* 2nd edition, (New York: Seal Press, 2017)

The transgender approach is demonstrated clearest in Manion's work through their use of gender-neutral pronouns for transgender subjects. Using gender-neutral pronouns ensures that the individual is not retrospectively labelled and can be examined according to their gender presentation.[9] For this reason, this study will be using gender-neutral pronouns throughout. Where quotes include 'she/her' these will be left in, as they demonstrate how these transmasculine individuals were contemporarily received. The mutability of pronouns is all the more significant when constructing a transgender subject.

This study will use some secondary literature, such as the work of Dianne Dugaw and Fraser Easton, as primary sources as they explore how transmasculine figures have been received throughout history. A transgender lens will be applied to critically examine how scholars interpret or neglect transgender figures.[10] This study seeks to interrogate the reception of transmasculine figures over time and reposition these figures as transgender subjects rather than as the lesbians they have historically been understood to be.

Structure

This study will use a three-chapter structure to examine how transmasculine individuals have been received, grounding the argument in the critique of primary and secondary source material.

The first chapter is a literature review, examining the evolution of gender studies. This chapter will critique how and why transgender individuals have been absent from studies of gender.

The second chapter uses a thematic approach to look closely at how Charles Hamilton was received by contemporaries. Newspaper reports, as well as Fielding's *The Female Husband*, will be examined using a transgender lens to interrogate how contemporaries understood gender.

The third chapter compares the reception of Hamilton to three other case studies, one from the eighteenth century and two from the nineteenth. This chapter will demonstrate that the use of a transgender lens can reform the reception of transgender subjects, returning autonomy to them. In examining this further, the chapter will critique secondary literature that has overlooked transgender themes in favour of emphasizing the subjects' sex.

[9] Kathryn Wichelns, '*Female Husbands: A Trans* History by Jen Manion (review)', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 31 (2022), p. 254
[10] Manion, *Female Husbands*

Chapter 1: Literature review

Literature on AFAB, gender-non-conforming individuals has typically viewed them as queer or female subjects, often concluding that these individuals are lesbian.[11] This is because they were studied in the context of women's or gender history. As women's history began as a field in the 1970s, influenced by second-wave feminism, its approach to gender was inspired by the mid-twentieth century cultural turn. Women's historians argued that gender is relational, defined by roles and interactions between the sexes.[12] This attitude has informed social, cultural, and gender scholarship to the present day.

Women's and gender history was further informed by the theories of Michel Foucault, a philosopher and historian of sexuality. Foucault's three-part work, *The History of Sexuality*, criticised the idea that identity was something innate.[13] He suggested that identity was something created by society and 'external to the individual'.[14] This argument complemented discourses in women's and gender history that argued gender was relational. However, Foucault expanded on this by connecting identity to power. One's relations with others were part of a hierarchy; your sexuality and identity were created by institutions and discourses of power. This idea, termed 'social constructionism', influenced women's history, particularly feminist history. Feminist history was concerned with how women were understood under the patriarchy, and so Foucault's theories of relational, socially constructed identity were useful for feminist scholars, as argued by Jill Matthews.[15]

As the twentieth century drew on, women's history evolved. Postmodernist feminist historians, such as Joan Wallach Scott, interrogated what defined gender, and critiqued Foucauldian ideas of power and hierarchy. Hera Cook, for example, rejects Foucault's focus on power as the driver for identity as both niche and limited as it simplifies the nuanced, contested, and multifaceted nature of identity. Declaring that power dominantly shapes one's identity makes the scholar 'complicit in power, because

[11] Cookie Woolner, 'Review of *Female Husbands: A Trans History*, by Jen Manion,' *Journal of History*, 57 (2022) pp. 503-505
[12] Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5 (1986) pp. 1053-1075
[13] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998). Originally written in 1976 and translated in 1978.
[14] John DeLamater and Janet Shibley Hyde, 'Essentialism vs. Social Constructionism in the Study of Human Sexuality,' *The Journal of Sex Research*, 35 (1998) p. 16
[15] Jill Matthews, 'Feminist History',' *Labour History*, 50 (1986) pp. 147-153 <https://doi.org/10.2307/27508788>

no other values than those of power can exist in the discourse.'[16] A pure Foucauldian approach closes the scholar off from a nuanced interrogation of identity, gender, and sexuality. A broader social constructionist theory, one that hesitantly questioned the gender binary, was constructed through postmodernist feminist discourse.

These social constructionist theories informed the shift from women's history to gender history, broadening the scholarly critique of gender relations. Gisela Bock, writing in the foundational volume of *Gender and History* in 1989, outlined this influence clearly. Bock argues that gender is something 'context-specific and context-dependent'.[17] Whilst still arguing that gender is relational, Bock moves beyond simple social constructionism by arguing that gender is 'specific' and 'dependent'. Individual circumstances, rather than institutions of power, influence one's identity. Expanding on this, Bock argues that women's history must be seen as gender history; scholars must move beyond previous conceptions of womanhood and re-evaluate who can be defined as a woman.[18] With this claim, Bock clearly marks the evolution from women's history into gender history. As previously argued by feminist historian Wallach Scott, Bock concurs that scholars must stop linking gender-based histories to histories of sex.[19] To focus on someone's sex reduces them to their genitals alone, ignoring the social and cultural context that informed their gender expression and identity, thus neglecting a significant part of what made them, them. Postmodernist approaches influenced the shifting scholarly approach to gender, paving the way for queer theory and building the foundations for the transgender lens.[20] Modern transgender scholarship cannot be understood without twentieth century women's and gender history.

Despite Bock's argument, women's and gender history scholars continued to cling to the biological sex binary.[21] This is likely due to the context of the time that these scholars were writing in. The 1980s saw very few transgender or gender-non-conforming individuals in the public eye, and discussions of genders beyond just 'man' or 'woman' were in a minority.[22] We see this in the work of Dianne Dugaw, whose critical approach to 'warrior women' included some understanding of the need for a transgender

[16] Hera Cook, 'Sexuality and Contraception in Modern England: Doing the History of Reproductive Sexuality,' *Journal of Social History*, 40 (2007) pp. 915-932, p. 919
[17] Gisela Bock, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate,' *Gender and History*, 1 (1989) pp. 7-30, p. 11 <https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1989.tb00232.x>
[18] *Ibid*, p. 15
[19] Wallach Scott, 'Gender', p. 1059
[20] Harry Cocks, 'Approaches to the History of Sexuality Since 1750', in The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the Present eds. Sarah Toulalan, Kate Fisher, (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 38-54; pp. 46-47
[21] See Alison Oram, *Her Husband Was a Woman! Women's gender-crossing in modern British popular culture*, (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2007); Ula Lukszo Klein, 'Eighteenth-Century Female Cross-Dressers and Their Beards,' *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 16 (2016) pp. 119-143
[22] Christine Burns, 'Introduction' in *Trans Britain: Our Journey From The Shadows*, ed. by Christine Burns (London: Unbound, 2018) pp. 1-20

approach and yet remained grounded in the sexed gender binary.[23] In chapter six, Dugaw begins by noting that contemporary sources on transmasculine individuals '[imagine] the heroine's transvestism', with Dugaw understanding 'transvestism' to mean how 'gender, behaviour, intention and identity' were constructed.[24] In the 1980s, the term 'transgender' was a lot less common than 'transvestite' or 'transsexual', hence Dugaw's use of the term 'transvestism'.[25] Regardless, Dugaw's awareness of gender fluidity suggests the embracing of a transgender approach to the ballads she examines, reflecting the broader shift in late twentieth-century women's history.

However, Dugaw undermines this approach by linking gender transgressions to the binary of male and female. Whilst a transgender lens suggests that the 'Female Warrior' is a third kind of gendered identity, Dugaw simply assumes that one can only be either a manly woman or a feminine man; there is no middle ground.[26] Her persistent return to the traditional gender binary is indicative of a common problem in histories of women and gender, observed by queer scholar J. Halberstam in 1998. Halberstam highlights that gender-non-conforming individuals are often reduced to 'a blurred version of either male or female' and criticises this approach, arguing that people of '[a]mbiguous gender' need to be studied without attempting to fit them into a binary.[27] We can see from these two contrasting attitudes in gender studies that in just over a decade, scholars were obliterating prior assumptions of binary gender.

This revolutionary change reflects how gender and queer histories started to intersect in the 1990s. This broadening approach led to a more accepted idea that gender was fluid, informed by society, but defined by the individual. Whilst this has similarities to the argument proposed by Bock in 1989, the 1990s dramatically expanded the relational aspect of gender. This is seen in the contrast between the work of Dugaw and Halberstam, but there was one pivotal text on gender in the 1990s: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Butler advanced social constructionist theories on gender. She argued that gender is a role that can be adopted at will, consolidated by repeated acts.[28] Even though gender was something imposed externally on an individual, they could still manipulate and embody it in varying ways e. g through presentation and performance.[29] Her argument created the methodology that one should be examined for how they presented and lived their life, rather

[23] Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry 1650-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). 'Warrior women' refers to AFAB individuals who took on masculine dress and behaviour for various reasons, often going to war.
[24] *Ibid*, p. 143
[25] Stryker, *Transgender History*, p. 1
[26] Dugaw, *Warrior Women*, p. 162
[27] Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (London: Duke University Press, 1998) p. 20.
[28] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1990)
[29] *Ibid*, p. 33

than focusing on their sexed body and making assumptions. This returned autonomy to the gender-non-conforming subject. The theory that gender is constructed through presentation and acts is incredibly significant for all studies of gender.[30] Consequently, Butler's philosophy informs this study of transmasculine individuals.

Examining the individual in the context that they presented themselves in is crucial to ensure that a scholar does not impose modern ideas and identities onto their subject.[31] It was only in transgender studies of the twenty-first century that gender-non-conforming individuals were actually viewed 'according to the narratives they meticulously circulated about themselves when they were alive.'[32] Halberstam's 2005 work argues that gender-non-conforming individuals, were distinct from binary studies of men and women. They should not be examined according to contemporary expectations of dress and biology but should be understood by how they experienced life and gender.[33] In broadening the scope of transgender studies to anyone living outside capitalist norms, Halberstam's work was a founding text for twenty-first century transgender studies.[34] An individualistic, gender-based exploration of 'queer subject[s]' provides the foundation of the transgender lens that this study uses.[35] Consequently, this study draws on the methodology of both Butler and Halberstam, adopting the theoretical understanding of gender and applying it through a transgender lens.

A transgender lens primarily examines gender presentation, with an individual's sexed body and sexuality as secondary. Manion passionately argues for a transgender approach to histories of sexuality and gender because it offers a 'more nuanced understanding' of how the two interact.[36] The 'groundbreaking' way in which Manion revolutionised transgender study was through their use of gender-neutral pronouns.[37] When examining a transgender subject, it may seem self-explanatory to use gender-neutral pronouns rather than identifying the individual as male or female. However, prior to Manion, most gender and queer history continued to use pronouns that matched their subject's sex rather than their gender presentation. An exception to this is the work of Halberstam, themself a gender-non-conforming individual, who adapted their approach to transgender studies to focus on the presentation of an individual, rather than their sexed body.[38] However, Halberstam has evidence of the

[30] Toby Ditz, 'The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power,' *Gender & History,* 16, (2004) pp. 1-35
[31] Harris, 'Sex on the Margins', p. 1102
[32] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place,* p. 48
[33] *Ibid*, p. 48
[34] *Ibid*, p. 9
[35] *Ibid*, p. 48
[36] Manion, 'Transgender Representations', p. 326
[37] Wichelns, '*Female Husbands*…(review)', p. 255
[38] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place,* p. 17

pronouns that the individual used. For premodern transgender histories, where these resources are lacking, using gender-neutral pronouns returns agency to the transgender individual.[39] The success of Manion's gender-neutral approach to gender-non-conforming subjects has further influenced this study, which uses gender-neutral pronouns for the figures throughout.

Cookie Woolner argues that Manion's successful transgender methodology also derived from their decision to use 'trans' as a verb rather than a noun.[40] This literary device, inspired by the work of Susan Stryker, offers further fluidity when discussing gender presentation of historical figures.[41] Whilst the people Manion studies can still be regarded as transgender subjects, their use of 'transing' as a verb rejects the possibility of posthumously labelling these individuals. Instead, they are simply regarded as 'transing' away from the gender they were assigned at birth.[42]

The extent to which an individual can be viewed as 'transing' their gender differs within transgender studies. Some scholars, such as Alison Oram and Jay Prosser, firmly argue that the body of a transgender subject is significant when examining their gender.[43] Prosser discusses the 'transsexual' subject: someone who has medically transitioned, taking hormones or having surgery to present in a manner that matches their gender identity. He argues that due to the existence of a transsexual subject, the transgender subject must also be examined with reference to how they understood their sex.[44] Gender identity is inherently tied up in the sexed body.[45] This conflation of 'transgender' and 'transsexual' is a contrary argument, particularly when it is applied to transgender subjects from before the twentieth century. These individuals did not have access to modern medicine for transition, nor did their understandings of the body match modern assumptions. Transgender studies must therefore continue to examine gender presentation as detached from sexuality and the sexed body in order to give agency and autonomy to gender-non-conforming subjects throughout history. Whilst Prosser's argument is grounded in other arguments from the field of sexuality – that the body cannot be detached

[39] Jeremy Chow, 'Review of *Female Husbands: A Trans History*, by Jen Manion,' *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830,* 12 (2022), pp. 1-6, p. 4 <https://doi.org/10.5038/2157-7129.12.2.1318>
[40] Woolner, 'Review of *Female Husbands*,' p. 504
[41] Stryker, *Transgender History*
[42] Sven Van den Boscche, 'Manion, J. (2020). *Female husbands: A trans history.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,' *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies,* 9 (2022) pp. 110-111 <https://doi.org/10.21825/digest.84824>; Stryker, *Transgender History,* p. 1
[43] Oram, *Her Husband Was a Woman!*; Jay Prosser, 'Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex', in *The Transgender Studies Reader,* ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 257-280
[44] Prosser, 'Judith Butler', p. 278
[45] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)

from any study of queerness – his synonymous use of 'transgender' and 'transsexual' reflects the need for nuanced transgender studies.[46]

From 2020 onwards, transgender studies has consolidated itself as a distinct field with a gender-based methodology. Manion's study of 'female husbands' was significant for beginning this truly discursive approach to transgender subjects. Mo Moulton, writing in February 2023, interprets Manion's approach as a 'non-binary' methodology, an approach that embraces and examines multiple gender identities and presentations.[47] The 'non-binary' approach is influential in detaching transgender studies from binary ideas of gender. This inclusive approach to gender presentation and identity moves beyond gender history, recognising nuance and complexity in transgender subjects. A 'non-binary' methodology grants autonomy and agency to the transgender individual as it examines them primarily for their gender presentation, rejecting a focus on their sex. By using a broad transgender lens throughout this study, and taking care to emphasise the gender expression of individuals rather than their sexed body, this study contributes to the growing field of transgender scholarship. This study can be identified as a 'non-binary' examination of transgender subjects, consequently positioning this study on the cutting edge of transgender studies.

Chapter 2: The eighteenth century on Charles Hamilton

Transgender individuals should be studied based on their gender presentation throughout their life.[48] It is unfortunate that the only testimony we have from Hamilton themselves is one source, from the day of their arrest. Due to a lack of evidence, we must use the ways in which Hamilton was received to understand how their gender was perceived. This approach supports transgender studies that focus on gender presentation as the key for understanding gender. In the absence of evidence about how Hamilton felt about their biology, we must use commentary about their gender presentation to understand their experience of gender. The reception of Hamilton will also reveal how contemporaries understood gender to be constructed.

Comments from contemporaries differ remarkably to Hamilton's own words when describing their gendered identity. By examining Hamilton's testimony with a focus on gender presentation, and the

[46] Thomas Laqueur, '1. Of Language and the Flesh' in *Making sex; body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990) pp. 8-11
[47] Mo Moulton, '"Both Your Sexes": A Non-Binary Approach to Gender History, Trans Studies and the Making of the Self in Modern Britain,' *History Workshop Journal*, 95 (2023) pp. 1-26 <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbac033>
[48] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place,* p. 48

use of a respectful, transgender lens, this study goes beyond any previous studies of Hamilton that have focused predominantly on Fielding's *The Female Husband*. A comparative account that examines how a transmasculine individual was received is important for building a picture of how contemporaries understood gender to be constructed. Using their own words is significant for returning autonomy to them.

Hamilton's attitude to gender presentation can be used to critique how others reported on them. In their testimony, taken on September 13th 1746 when they were arrested, Hamilton says they had worn male clothing since they were fourteen. They took their brother's clothing and travelled to England, enlisting as a mountebank's apprentice.[49] Whilst some scholars, such as Vern and Bonnie Bullough, would argue that Hamilton entering into a masculine profession was the reason they initially started wearing men's clothes, there is no indication from Hamilton that economic reasons were their motivation to present masculine.[50] They simply 'put on my Brothers Cloaths and travelled for England…continuing to wear mans apparel ever since I came out of Scotland'.[51] Unlike other examples of transmasculine individuals from the eighteenth century, such as Hannah Snell, Hamilton offers no motive that could explain their behaviour.[52] As nothing explanatory is presented as evidence, we must examine their identity based on the evidence that we have available: their known gender presentation. This can be further found in texts that write of how Hamilton was received.

Newspapers have profound influence in shaping the reception or legitimization of one's gender identity.[53] The fact that Hamilton has been remembered for their sexed body and sexuality supports this claim, demonstrating the significance of studying the reception to gender-non-conforming individuals. Whilst contemporaries obsessed over Hamilton's sex, a focus on gender presentation in these sources reshapes Hamilton's legacy. The use of a transgender lens is crucial for reassigning autonomy to past gender-non-conforming individuals.

The first account of Hamilton in newspapers occurred on September 22nd, 1746, in the *Bath Journal.* They are simply referred to as 'a Woman, dress'd in Man's Apparel', with the focus of the report being their appearance and profession.[54] This is due to this being the first report on Hamilton after their arrest, and so has an introductory purpose. The *Bath Journal* ensures that the reader is opposed to this criminal

[49] Sheridan Baker, 'Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*: Fact and Fiction,' *PMLA*, 74 (1959) pp. 213-224, p. 220.
[50] Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross dressing, sex, and gender*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)
[51] Cited in Baker, 'Fact and Fiction,' p. 220.
[52] Snell reportedly started passing as a man in order to follow their husband to sea after he abandoned them. See Anonymous, *The Female Soldier: Or, the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*, (London: R Walker, 1750). <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36461/36461-h/36461-h.htm> [accessed 12 August 2022]
[53] Manion, *Female Husbands*, p. 8
[54] Baker, 'Fact and Fiction', pp. 221-222

for more than just their gender deviance. By claiming that Hamilton had 'deceived several of the Fair Sex, by marrying them' the article promotes the falsehood that Hamilton was a prolific sexual criminal.[55] It is significant that this report comes over a week after Hamilton gave their own public testimony which mentioned only one marriage. The *Bath Journal* has purposefully chosen to demonise Hamilton, with this widespread article replacing and erasing Hamilton's own voice. They are a fraud in their profession (being 'a Quack Doctor'), in their gender, and are a threat to 'the Fair Sex'.[56] It is evident that contemporaries saw gender transgression as one symptom of a broader criminality.

When, on the 3rd of November a full account of the trial was published, the masculine identity of Charles Hamilton is undercut by the newspaper as it prints that Hamilton was 'Mary Hamilton, otherwise George, otherwise Charles Hamilton'.[57] By printing the name that matched Hamilton's assigned sex first, the paper ensured that they were to be understood by their sexed body rather than their gender performance. Same-sex relations were also repeatedly associated with their gender presentation, suggesting that sexual desire was the motivation for their masculinity. *The Newgate Calendar* reports similarly, meaning that Hamilton's official criminal record was tied up in same-sex desire.[58] The association between sinful sexuality and 'vile and deceitful' behaviour, such as cross-dressing, demonstrates that contemporaries conflated the terms 'gender' and 'sex' into one overall image of deviance.[59] This understanding of gender and sex is also seen in the *Bath Journal*. Despite previously describing Hamilton as appearing masculine 'with Perriwig, Ruffles, and Breeches,' the knowledge of Hamilton's genitalia, and the printing of their legal name, forces a correlation between transmasculinity, same-sex relations and criminality.[60]

The Female Husband: Or, The Surprising History of Mrs. Mary, alias Mr. George Hamilton, despite being 'thirteen percent' truthful, is significant in showing how gender performativity was understood by contemporaries.[61] Past studies of this work have only examined the text from the perspective of same-sex relationships. Fielding's pornographic obsession with same-sex relations has influenced the reception of Hamilton, contributing to their retrospective labelling as lesbian, as seen in the work of Terry Castle.[62] However, when we move beyond a focus on sexuality, as transgender studies do, and

[55] *Ibid*, p. 221
[56] *Ibid*, p. 221
[57] *Ibid*, p. 222
[58] Anonymous, 'Mary Hamilton A Woman who was imprisoned and whipped for marrying Fourteen Women, 1746,' *The Newgate Calendar,* <https://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng217.htm> [accessed 29 March 2023]
[59] Baker, 'Fact and Fiction,' p. 222
[60] *Ibid*, p. 221
[61] *Ibid*, p. 224
[62] For example, Terry Castle, 'Matters Not Fit to Be Mentioned: Fielding's *The Female Husband', ELH,* 49 (1982) pp. 602-622 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2872757>; Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: 18th-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 1-20, 67-81

look at this pamphlet with an aim to see how gender was performed and understood, the pamphlet has great significance as a primary source. Its repeated advertising, its low price of sixpence and its popularity – 1000 copies were sold in the first month - tells us that there were popular contemporary concerns about gender stability.[63] Furthermore, the fact that Fielding wrote this pamphlet so swiftly for a quick profit shows that contemporaries were fascinated with gender-non-conformity.[64] The topic was easily sensationalized for widespread appeal, pandering to popular anxieties around gender stability. These gendered anxieties are reflected within the piece itself, as Fielding makes sure to tell the reader that this is a moral tale, not to be repeated; the judgement of immorality is a constant trope throughout the pamphlet.[65] His concern over ensuring Hamilton's gender transgressions are not repeated demonstrates that contemporaries thought gender could be successfully performed, regardless of biology. Anyone could follow in Hamilton's footsteps; emphasizing the immorality of Hamilton's actions was crucial for maintaining gender stability within society. Fielding's comments on gender presentation are useful for understanding how contemporaries perceived gender-non-conformity.

Sheridan Baker suggests that Fielding was likely to have seen a reprinted article from the *Bath Journal* in the *Daily Advertiser*. Whether Fielding saw this specific article or not does not matter especially; the case was reprinted in multiple different London newspapers, proving that '[n]ews of this kind seldom wants wings'.[66] The prolific spread of Hamilton's case shows that contemporaries were deeply concerned with how gender was portrayed. Someone crossing gender boundaries was evidently notable enough to be reprintable news. Although all of the articles reference 'vile and deceitful Practices; not fit to be mention'd' undertaken by Hamilton (referring to their sexual activity), the consistent theme throughout is Hamilton's assumed masculinity.[67] The reaction of contemporaries show that 'female husbands' should be studied without assuming they are in same-sex relationships.

Whilst Fielding continually reminds the reader that Hamilton is biologically female and does not look like a cisgender man – characters repeatedly comment on Hamilton not having 'the least bit of beard'

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[63] Manion, *Female Husbands*, p. 32
[64] Baker, 'Fact and Fiction,' p. 223
[65] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 23; Hannah Barker, '4: England, 1760-1815' in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 105-124, p. 108
[66] See Sylvanus Urban, 'For November 1746', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 16 (1746) p. 612 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018389430&view=1up&seq=680&q1=Mary+Hamilton> [accessed February 11 2023]; Anonymous, 'News', *Penny London Post or The Morning Advertiser*, 552 (1746) p. 2 <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/Z2001059063/BBCN?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=2621763a> [accessed February 11 2023]; Anonymous, 'News', *Westminster Journal or New Weekly Miscellany*, 258 (1746) p. 7 <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/Z2001609003/BBCN?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=e85b664c> [accessed February 11 2023]. Quote from Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 20
[67] 'News', *Penny London Post*, p. 2

– their actions successfully legitimise their gender.[68] Their continued masculine dress is an example of day-to-day gender repetition. Butlery's theory that gender is performative, consolidated by repeated acts, is applicable to Hamilton's conscious, gendered choice of clothing. Each day, and each new façade Hamilton puts on, is inherently masculine; the longer they continue with this, the stronger their masculinity becomes. Fielding repeatedly undercuts this by reminding the reader of Hamilton's sexed body, but a transgender approach to *The Female Husband* shows how Hamilton can be read as a transgender subject.

Fielding's use of letter inserts in the pamphlet demonstrates how he assumed Hamilton's transmasculinity would be received by contemporaries. In a letter from a woman who Hamilton fails to seduce, they are compared to 'Farinelli'.[69] Farinelli was an opera singer from the eighteenth century, known as a 'castro'; he had been castrated in youth to give him a singing range of soprano-alto. The castration meant Farinelli's voice could not drop, and he appeared effeminate. This comparison suggests that Hamilton is unable to successfully disguise their voice to appear masculine. However, even in this slight towards Hamilton's masculinity, they are still compared to a male figure and their biological sex is not referenced. This suggests that contemporaries were accepting of a degree of femininity in a man when he was seen as biologically male, a theory suggested by Greta Lafleur.[70] Contemporaries evidently understood gender as presented in many ways, with one's sex as well as their actions constructing their gender. Even the less successful aspects of Hamilton's masculinity, such as their voice, are brushed aside by contemporaries because their actions legitimise their masculinity.

For Fielding, the decisive incidences where Hamilton's masculinity is legitimized are to do with sexual performance. Fielding sees Hamilton's most successful masculine performance as the times that Hamilton mimicked biological masculinity, through action and through use of a dildo.[71] Whilst some scholars, such as Ula Lukszo Klein, have seen the sexual focus as indicative of a lesbian identity, when using a transgender lens we can see how this is just another comment on gender performance in the eighteenth century.[72] Contemporaries saw the terms 'gender' and 'sex' as synonymous, as evidenced in the newspapers this study has explored prior. This was due to fears about an unstable gendered society, where men ranked above women in the social hierarchy. Gender performativity threatened this hierarchy, and so contemporaries associated gender with genitalia to prevent easy gender and

[68] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 14
[69] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 8
[70] Greta Lafleur, 'Sex and "Unsex": Histories of Gender Trouble in Eighteenth-Century North America', *Early American Studies*, 12, (2014), pp. 469-499
[71] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 21
[72] Klein, 'Eighteenth-Century Female Cross-Dressers', pp. 119-143

power transgressions.[73] Thus, comments on sexual performance are inherently gendered. Hamilton's sexual activity further legitimized their gender and thus made them a threat to the patriarchal social order. The negativity associated with Hamilton's sexual performance is due to their gender deviance being perceived as a social threat.

Previously, scholars have focused on the sexed body of Hamilton and their relationships. Terry Castle, for example, 'connected transvestism with active homosexuality', assuming that Fielding was talking exclusively about same-sex relations in his text.[74] This approach neglects to consider Fielding's commentary on gender, which is an unavoidable theme throughout the text. Castle's claim is repeated in multiple pieces, published across a decade, that deal with *The Female Husband*.[75] Castle describes Hamilton's gender presentation as 'sexual impersonation', a troubling interpretation of gender that heavily assumes that one's sexed body creates their gender identity.[76] Castle firmly links AFAB people transing gender to ideas of the masquerade, suggesting them to be doing so for play or performance. Whilst Castle's earlier work could be excused as being uninformed about transgender lives and gender theory (with Butler's *Gender Trouble* published at least three years after Castle's first two commentaries on Fielding), Castle's pivotal work, *The Female Thermometer*, was published in 1995. By this time both gender and women's history had expanded its criticism of the gender binary, yet Castle does not re-evaluate her arguments in light of these new theories. A superficial reading of the concept of the transgender individual as a performer or masquerader may appear to align with Butler's argument about gender performativity, however, this reading displays a limited understanding of gender performativity in locating transing as inauthentic. As Butler highlights, the performance of gender is what makes gender exist.[77] Castle inadvertently reinforces normative gender notions. Discourses that associate 'trans' with masquerading reinforce gender as a clearly defined binary, opposed to a performative making of gender. This approach erases the agency and autonomy of the individual by downplaying the significance of their gender identity, making work such as Castle's problematic.

A lack of engagement with transgender approaches results in scholars conflating sexual identity with gender identity. Transgender studies, like this dissertation, are necessary to respectfully approach the gender presentation of gender-non-conforming individuals. While this methodological approach is relatively recent, this study works to reshape the scholarship on transgender individuals, moving

[73] Laqueur, '1. Of Language and the Flesh',pp. 8-11
[74] Castle, 'The culture of travesty,' p. 170
[75] See Castle, 'Matters Not Fit to Be Mentioned'; Castle, 'The culture of travesty'; and Castle, *The Female Thermometer*
[76] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 67
[77] Butler, *Gender Trouble*

beyond the limited assumptions of lesbianism. By engaging with primary sources through a transgender lens, we give individuals like Hamilton agency and respect.

Chapter 3: Responses to transmasculinity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Charles Hamilton is not the only example of an AFAB individual being labelled as a lesbian by historians. This chapter takes two other case studies and focuses on the gender presentation and reception of the individuals. By doing so, we can learn how contemporaries understood gender to be constructed, and where and why they might legitimise or delegitimise a transgender identity. The nineteenth century republished edition of *The Female Husband* will also be examined, poignant for its differences to the 1746 version examined previously. Throughout these case studies, the sexed bodies of these individuals appear secondary to their gender presentation. This contributes to the field of transgender studies as the primary sources are used to examine how individuals presented themselves when they were alive, answering Halberstam's plea that transgender subjects be remembered for themselves, not for their genitalia.[78]

The example of James Howe is poignant for exploring how the reception of a gender-non-conforming individual could legitimise or destroy their gender identity. In 1766, after almost two decades of being blackmailed, James Howe outed themselves as AFAB in order to escape extortion. Unlike Hamilton, Howe was not demonized or punished by their community once exposed, despite appearing in court and admitting to gender transgressions. Manion argues this is because of Howe's moral standing as a 'pillar of the community', however it is evident from contemporary responses that their acceptance was due to their eventual conformity, returning to presenting as a woman.[79] The begrudging acceptance afforded to Howe once they presented as their assigned gender demonstrates contemporary attitudes to gender-non-conformity.[80] Through conforming, Howe's gender deviance could be explained away as a jest, undertaken for a reason. This concurs with other eighteenth century understandings of transmasculinity, which paint the transmasculine person as a trickster.

[78] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, p. 48
[79] Manion, *Female Husbands*, p. 44
[80] Lynne Friedli, '9: 'Passing women' - A study of gender boundaries in the eighteenth century' in *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, ed. by G. S Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) pp. 234-260

Problematically, Howe's conformity has given scholars more of a reason to assume them to be a lesbian as they seemingly accept their sexed body. What was a 'punishment' for other female husbands in dismissed by scholars looking at Howe.[81] Fraser Easton argues that transmasculine identities were adopted by Howe and Hamilton in order to 'normalize both gender and sexual deviance', attempting to make the sapphic look heterosexual.[82] Easton's work, written in 2006, is out-dated; it draws on theories from Biddy Martin in the 1990s that cross-dressing was a method of conforming, of mock heterosexuality.[83] Removing the agency from transgender figures, and attempting to explain away their gender presentation, is exactly the critique that Halberstam has of gender studies more broadly; the autonomy of a transgender life is erased.[84] In order to give Howe, Hamilton and other 'female husbands' this agency back, one must study them through a transgender lens that rejects the focus on their sexed body.

The focus on sexuality is strange, as gender presentation was at the core of Howe's case; they were blackmailed for passing as a man and because doing so had gained them wealth, not blackmailed because they dared to marry a woman. Contemporary reports on their case emphasise this gendered aspect. *The Gentleman's Magazine* claims that Howe presented male because they and their wife were simply two women who had been 'met with many crosses in love' and so decided to live together, remaining chaste.[85] The article immediately establishing that the two were not in a sexual relationship signifies how gender is the focal concern of Howe's story; scholars should thus approach it in the same light. A transgender lens is easily used to examine how contemporaries received Howe.

The style in which *The Gentleman's Magazine* article is written is similar to how Fielding wrote about Hamilton. Pronouns are used interchangeably, and Howe's 'effeminacy…was remarked by most'.[86] Both comments on Howe's physical appearance and the use of female pronouns reminds the reader of Howe's sex throughout. It is clear that contemporaries were unwilling to legitimise a transgender identity. However, despite the contradictory way in which Howe is described, there is no judgement of their gender identity within the piece. The story is simply reported on. This is due to the periodical that it was in; *The Gentleman's Magazine* was a general interest, monthly paper. Its stories were

[81] Manion, *Female Husbands*, pp. 2-3
[82] Fraser Easton, 'Covering Sexual Disguise: Passing Women and Generic Constraint,' *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 35 (2006) pp. 95-125, p. 114
[83] Biddy Martin, 'Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary,' *differences*, 6 (1994) pp. 100-125 <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-6-2-3-100>. See also Lisa Moore, '"Something More Tender Still than Friendship": Romantic Friendship in Early-Nineteenth-Century England,' *Feminist Studies*, 18 (1992) pp. 499-520 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178079>
[84] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, p. 48
[85] Sylvanus Urban, 'Remarkable Connection of two Womens,' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 16 (1766) pp. 359-360. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018395353&view=1up&seq=8> [accessed February 11 2023] p. 359
[86] *Ibid*, p. 359

reported for entertainment reasons rather than morality ones. This differs remarkably from Fielding's 1746 sensationalised account of Hamilton, which is a dramatised, theatrical moral tale. The changing attitude to transmasculine figures reflects how overall approaches to gender and sexuality were changing. The acceptance of Howe stemmed from the 'resolution' that their tale appears to present.[87] When they no longer appear as a social threat or to be exhibiting deviance, their case becomes one of curiosity rather than judgement and fear.[88]

Contrasting the reception of transmasculine figures from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrates how understandings of gender changed. The nineteenth century saw more willingness for people to talk about sexual matters without the need for euphemism. This was due to growing social concerns about regulating sexual and gendered behaviours, exacerbated by an increasingly political society.[89] Jeffrey Weeks argues that the nineteenth century political crisis was reflected in the sexual and social hierarchy of the era, a claim similarly argued by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.[90] Sexuality and gender deviance were intricately tied up with hierarchy and social order, thus transmasculine individuals such as Hamilton became increasingly criminalised for their deeds. Whilst this has some similarities to how Hamilton was received in the eighteenth century, fears about gender transgression were further exacerbated by the developing 'separate spheres' concept of the nineteenth century, in which gender was strictly viewed as binary. Any deviance thus contributed to the growing 'crisis in gender relations'.[91] Although in his 1813 edition, Fielding presents Hamilton's transgender personage as secondary to their exaggerated, 'diabolical' nature, we can see that the criminal persona was born out of increasing concerns about gender deviance.[92]

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[87] Oram, *Her Husband Was a Woman!*, p. 42
[88] Friedli, 'Passing women', pp. 249-250
[89] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 48; Julia Grant, 'A "Real Boy" and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940,' *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2004) pp. 829-852, p. 830; Claudia Nelson, 'Sex and the Single Boy: Ideals of Manliness and Sexuality in Victorian Literature for Boys,' *Victorian Studies*, 32 (1989) pp. 525-550, p. 526
[90] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, (London: Routledge, 2017) pp. 24-40; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) pp. 1-20
[91] Michael Kimmel, '5: The Contemporary "Crisis" of Masculinity in Historical Perspective,' in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* ed. by Harry Brod (Massachusetts: Allen and Unwin, Inc, 1987) pp. 121-153, p. 137
[92] Henry Fielding, *The Surprising Adventures of a Female Husband! Containing The whimsical Amours, curious incidents, and Diabolical Tricks, of Miss M. Hamilton, alias Mr. G. Hamilton, alias Minister Bentley, Mr. O'Keefe, alias Mrs. Knight, the Midwife, &c. who Married Three Wives, And lived with each some time undiscovered; For Which Acts She was tried at the Summer Sessions, In the County of Somerset, in the Year 1752, Found Guilty, And whipped four several Times, in four Market Towns, And afterwards Imprisoned Six Months' Notwithstanding which, On the Evening of the first Day of her Exposure, She attempted to bribe the Goaler to procure her a fine young Girl to gratify her most monstrous and Unnatural Propensity!*, (London: J. Bailey, 1813) p. 2. Held at the Bristol Central Library, reference GC 8444/BL17B; Friedli, 'Passing women', p. 237

Fielding makes it clear from the first page that this is a tale about gender transgression. The adjectives 'whimsical', 'curious', and 'diabolical' all paint Hamilton as a devious creature simply playing 'tricks'.[93] Most of these adjectives come before Hamilton's crime of marrying 'three wives' is mentioned, suggesting that contemporaries were more intrigued by gender deviance than sexual criminality.[94] This shows a shift from the eighteenth century, where articles on Hamilton (such as those in the *Bath Journal*) ensured their sexed body and sexual crime were immediately established. Despite the evidently gendered focus, scholars continue to interpret transmasculine figures such as Hamilton as lesbians, purely because of the knowledge of their sexed body. A close engagement with texts such as *The Female Husband* reveals that gender presentation was a dominant concern for contemporaries.

This is further revealed in the added wedding song in the 1813 text. The lines 'Never were marriage joys divine,/But when two did in one combine' are full of references to bisexuality, embodied in Hamilton through their transmasculinity.[95] Bisexuality does not refer to Hamilton's sexual orientation, but their status occupying two genders; their sexed body as female, and their social gender as male. This fluid position threatened the stability of gendered society. Fielding emphasises the threat that bisexuality posed to contemporary society in this couplet. Rather than it being the happy couple who are 'divine', Hamilton, who embodies 'two in one', has gained joy as their con has succeeded and they have married widow Rushford. By emphasizing Hamilton's bisexuality as integral to their successful con of deceiving Rushford, Fielding reflects contemporary anxieties around gender fluidity threatening the social order.

The last two lines of the wedding song further remind the reader of Hamilton's performed masculinity as Fielding refers to them as 'false', a 'cheat', and comparable to 'sick men'.[96] Specifically, the lines 'himself doth cheat,/As sick men taste but cannot eat' are a clear comment on Hamilton's masculinity.[97] Fielding sees Hamilton's transmasculinity as them cheating themself, and the line 'As sick men taste but cannot eat' refers to sexual impotence. Hamilton, as someone who is biologically female, is a 'sick' man; their lack of male genitalia suggests that they 'cannot eat' when it comes to intercourse, lacking the means to have penetrative sex. This idea was also present in the 1746 publication, but in the 1813 edition it is Hamilton who subtly admits this rather than the narrator.[98] Their boldness knows no bounds, delivering discursive news in this theatrical, grandiose wedding song.

[93] Fielding, *The Surprising Adventures of a Female Husband!*, p. 2
[94] *Ibid*, p. 2
[95] *Ibid*, p. 13
[96] *Ibid*, p. 13
[97] *Ibid*, p. 13
[98] Fielding, *The Female Husband*, p. 11

The song serves to increase cisgender resentment at Hamilton transing gender, as they laud the fact publicly.

These lines on sexual impotence are damning of Hamilton's masculinity, yet Fielding notes earlier on the page that they were 'always prepared with suitable machinery, which she alternately used for deception or pleasure'.[99] The connection between 'machinery' and 'pleasure' is a clear reference to a dildo. The use of a dildo was referenced by Fielding later in the work, in both the 1746 edition and the 1813 publication; the reveal of a sexual device was used during Hamilton's trial to damn them further for fraud.[100] They were not just presenting as male through their dress, but through their sexual actions too. Even though Hamilton does not have the genitals required for penetrative intercourse, their 'machinery' still allows them to 'eat'. Through imitation of male biology Hamilton was able to obtain further masculine status in society and thus was viewed as a threat by contemporaries, having the potential to destabilise the patriarchal system. Whilst this wedding song may have been meant as a piece of humorous dramatic irony, the implications of the lines are telling of contemporary concerns about gender.

Over a decade after the republished *Female Husband,* another transmasculine individual took the national spotlight. The third case study that examines how gender-non-conformity was received is the case of James Allen. This case has previously been studied in regard to the sexuality of Allen; even Manion focuses on their wife and their sexuality, rather than examining their gender identity.[101] By interrogating the contemporary response to Allen's gender presentation this study both returns agency to them, and rectifies the work of prior studies that continued to see transmasculine individuals as lesbians.

Allen was outed after their accidental death in 1829, and the subsequent revelation was reported in newspapers across the country, reaching a far greater audience than stories of Hamilton or Howe.[102] The expanded curiosity around Allen came from the fact that they had successfully passed as cisgender throughout their life. Despite having some incongruent traits, such as a lack of facial hair and a 'weakly voice', Allen compensated for these through their behaviour.[103] They took on male employment to consolidate their masculinity, particularly because the employment consisted of tough physical labour that could change their physique through the building of muscle. Despite physical discrepancies being

[99] Fielding, *The Surprising Adventures of a Female Husband!*, p. 13
[100] Baker, 'Fact and Fiction,' p. 220; Manion, *Female Husbands*, p. 27
[101] Manion, *Female Husbands*, pp. 104-120
[102] The newspaper articles I have examined range from Exeter, to Sussex, to Leeds, and Lancaster.
[103] Anonymous, 'Extraordinary Investigation; Or, the Female Husband,' *Leicester Journal*, 78 (1829) p. 4, <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/CL3241147424/GDCS?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=a5a2f8d2> [accessed 8 April 2023]

noted, contemporaries 'never for a moment suspected her of belonging to the other sex.'[104] It is evident that despite their sex, Allen's gender performativity was enough to legitimise their transmasculine identity, suggesting that contemporaries in the nineteenth century understood gender as largely legitimised by one's actions and lifestyle. This perspective on gender reinforces Butler's assertions that gender is based on cultural norms of performed, and learned, daily practices.

The style of the articles on Allen reflects typical attitudes to other transmasculine individuals, such as Hamilton and Howe, through the use of changing pronouns. The authors of the articles I have examined are reluctant to legitimise Allen's masculinity once their sexed body was known. Examples of this can be seen in *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*; whenever Allen's masculinity is complimented, such as their 'excellent' work as a groom, female pronouns are immediately used in the same sentence or the following sentence.[105] When Allen was alive, they were just another one of the guys; once their sex was outed, they became a spectacle. This approach, coupled with the consistent use of adjectives such as 'extraordinary' and 'mysterious', demonstrate how contemporaries were unwilling to legitimise gender-non-conformity in the nineteenth century, instead viewing it as a dramatic performance.[106] This fascination was exacerbated by contemporary ideas of binary gender and systems of power. To successfully assume a male role without causing all of society to collapse was something truly impressive indeed.

Whilst the overall attitude to gender deviance as an astounding event may seem concurrent across the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the reports that surrounded Allen we see how attitudes to gender deviance were further changing, beginning to be medicalised. Joseph Bristow argues that sexology debates influenced how gender-non-conforming individuals were responded to, something we see reflected in the newspaper reports on Allen.[107] The papers are obsessed with attempting to find a reason for Allen transing gender. How and why would someone choose to reject society in such a way? What could inspire them to endeavour down a path of such unnaturalness? One of the earliest articles on Allen, from the 23rd of January 1829, reports that the reasons 'will probably never be discovered', yet in a paper only two days later an alleged explanation was printed.[108] *Bell's*

[104] *Ibid,* p. 4
[105] Anonymous, 'Extraordinary Investigation; or, the Female Husband,' *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* 38 (1829) p. 4 <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/GW3219126861/GDCS?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=f32b52d7> [accessed 8 April 2023]
[106] Anonymous, 'Female Husband,' *Lancaster Gazetter,* 28 (1829) <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/R3213614379/GDCS?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=a26c787c> [accessed 8 April 2023]
[107] Joseph Bristow, 'Remapping the Sites of Modern Gay History: Legal Reform, Medico-Legal Thought, Homosexual Scandal, Erotic Geography,' *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (2007) pp. 116-142 <https://doi.org/10.1086/508401>
[108] *Leicester Journal*, p. 4

Life in London and Sporting Chronicle claimed that Allen presented themselves as male due to being 'violated when a child', the impact of this causing their mind to explore the path of gender deviance.[109] This explanation for Allen's gender-non-conformity reflects contemporary, medicalised concerns about sexuality and gender; sexual deviance equated to gender deviance.[110] A need to concoct an explanation for why Allen had transed gender reflects contemporary anxieties about understanding sexuality and gender, a desire that stemmed from a need to regulate and control a socially and politically turbulent society.[111]

The responses to Hamilton, Howe and Allen have a consistent theme: attempting to explain away gender-non-conformity. Transmasculine presentation is not enough to legitimize their gender identity; scholars and contemporaries have always sought something deeper, an economic, social or psychological reason for transing gender. Throughout *The Female Husband*, Fielding attempts to find motivations for Hamilton's transgender life, concocting their criminal legacy by doing so. Howe is dismissed as living a chaste life with a friend, transing gender for that lifestyle to appear more socially acceptable. Allen was allegedly sexually abused into becoming a gender deviant. To impose a motivation, such as economy or lust, erases transgender identities and ignores the importance of gender presentation throughout the lives of transgender individuals. The 'female husband' has had their autonomy erased by scholars attempting to explain away or label a gender-non-conforming life. This issue can only be rectified by works such as this study that engage with transgender methodology.

Conclusion

Gender presentation is an essential element to consider in studies of transgender figures. This study has demonstrated the need for a transgender lens in historical studies, particularly those concerning gender-non-conforming individuals. This section draws together the threads of analysis throughout this study and suggests some future avenues that histories of gender could take if they embrace a transgender lens.

By comparing Hamilton to other transgender figures such as James Howe and James Allen, this study has shown how individual 'female husbands' can be explored for their gender presentation, regardless

[109] Anonymous, 'The Female Husband,' *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, VIII (1829) <link-gale-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/DX1900078314/GDCS?u=univbri&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=310e9755> [accessed 8/4/2023]
[110] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 43
[111] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, pp. 24-40

of the circumstances surrounding their lives. This exploration of gender presentation, rather than seeing a commonality between the three figures based on their sex, gives them autonomy that prior scholarship has erased. A focus on presentation and performance of historical figures pertains to Halberstam's argument that gender-non-conforming individuals should be examined 'according to the narratives they meticulously circulated about themselves when they were alive'.[112] Retrospective erasure of identities based purely on genitalia is problematic, and something this study has shown to be redundant.

Through an engagement with primary and secondary literature that alternately used pronouns, this study has shown how reception was important for constructing gender, and revealing how contemporaries understood gender. An individual's gender presentation was almost enough to legitimise their gender; for Allen this was true throughout their life. Posthumous use of female pronouns erases the autonomy and agency of these transgender figures. The significance of reception and language throughout this study subsequently informs gender scholarship about the necessity of the 'transgender lens'.

As the literature review demonstrated, histories of gender and sexuality are fraught with outdated assumptions that are constantly being built upon. The field of queer studies alone is a relatively recent area, with transgender studies still in its infancy. Future examinations of transgender subjects must use a delicate approach, with a constant awareness of how presentism robs a gender-non-conforming figure of their agency and autonomy. Whilst reviews of Manion's *Female Husbands* suggest that gender studies are embracing the transgender lens, many reviewers continued to misgender Manion in their commentary on their work.[113] Whilst scholars praise gender-neutral pronouns, their continued engagement with outdated gender expectations conforms to normative cultural assumptions. Unfortunately, this approach is exemplary of the current state of gender studies.

The literature review also explored how gender history has changed over time, continuously influenced by social and cultural contexts. Present-day scholars, like Moulton and Manion, confidently and correctly using transgender terminology reflects the changing cultural climate that these academics work in. Language is simultaneously made by and makes society, thus as transgender studies continues to develop, it will continue to queer terminology and move beyond historic presumptions of language and normativity. I am optimistic that more studies like this dissertation will assist in improving the study of gender-non-conforming figures. By engaging with an evolving society, and using the

[112] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, p. 48
[113] Van den Bossche, 'Manion, J.', p. 110; Peter Boag, 'Female Husbands: A Trans History,' *HISTORY: Reviews of New Books*, 49 (2021) pp. 10-12 < 10.1080/03612759.2021.1857147>

transgender toolkit outlined by scholars like Manion, Halberstam, Butler and Stryker, the future of gender studies is bright.

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