Playing Queer and Performing Gender at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century:

The Unconventional Life, Voice, and Body of Julie D'Aubigny Maupin

by

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Abstract

The late seventeenth century in Western Europe is an intriguing period for queer historians: the imagined boundaries between genders, sexual orientations, and even biological sexes were considered far more permeable than we might expect of such a patriarchal society. In this study, I look to this era not to find a perfect reflection of my own queer non-binary identity, but to explore the culturally-contingent nature of all understandings of gender. At the centre of my research is seventeenth-century opera singer Julie d'Aubigny Maupin. Maupin was gender-non-conforming in her outward appearance, openly involved with lovers of all genders, and was an expert fencer and duellist. Simultaneously an outstanding exception to the conventions of gender in her day, and an example of the fluid possibilities of gender at the turn of the eighteenth century, Maupin serves as the case study through which I explore the ever-shifting perceptions of queer and gender-non-conforming people in this era. Through careful review of the few available sources, I reconstruct, as far as possible, an outline of Maupin's life—and, due to the variable reliability of these sources, I note the many vagaries, contradictions, and impossibilities along the

way. As I navigate this "speculative biography," I rely on Valerie Traub's concept of the unknowability of history, and am therefore careful to hold space for ambiguity, uncertainty, and all too often, an unsatisfiable curiosity.

In subsequent chapters, I bring several aspects of Maupin's life story, including her gender expression, sexuality, and status as a performer, into conversation with the surrounding social context of late seventeenth-century France, allowing me to offer insight into how Maupin's contemporaries might have viewed her, as well as how her life relates to twenty-first century perspectives on gender. I then explore the many links between identity, character, and voice through an analysis of Maupin as a singer and performer, choosing four of Maupin's most iconic roles and investigating them using interrelated lenses of historical context, performance practice, and my own embodied experience of singing excerpts from these operas. Lastly, I reflect on my personal connection with Maupin, and explore the philosophical implications of trying to retell a story as strange and unknowable as hers. Drawing on the Brechtian-inspired tradition of feminist theatre criticism set out by Elaine Aston, Sue-Ellen Case, and Gay Gibson Cima, I discuss the process of developing and writing the text for *La Maupin*, a solo cantata about Maupin's life which I commissioned and premiered as a way to share her story with a wider audience. Throughout the dissertation, I also bring my research into dialogue with current views on gender-non-conforming people, including the latest research on the voice as a gendered phenomenon.

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Chapter 1
"Anticipatory illuminations": Introducing the Principal Players

It's spring of 2019 and I'm interviewing for a professional doctorate program at an extremely prestigious music institution in the UK, over video call: me in a classroom, dressed in a way I hope makes me look just queer enough, and on their end several panel members crowded into one video frame. I'm too nervous to count how many there are, but all except one are white men, middle-aged or older, with just one woman. I'm trying my best to explain my research proposal, which I've refined over the last few months of auditions and interviews—this is my last. I want to explore how I, as a queer non-binary person, can bring a new perspective to the old, tired pieces which today still make up the bread and butter of the opera industry. In particular, I want to see what happens when I allow myself to let go of the untouchability of the musical score as masterwork.[1] Why can't I chop up, rearrange, use, and throw out pieces as I see fit in order to make something new out of something old? I want to be able to *play*, not just regurgitate.

They seem to be mostly on board as I walk them through my project idea. I even offer them my best trans anecdote: I sing a lot of trouser roles (male roles meant for female performers), and I'm often complimented on how convincing I am as a young man. This always makes me want to laugh because, actually, I'm even better at pretending to be a girl—in fact, *I'll bet you've been fooled this whole time!* They eat it up, as cisgender[2] people usually do. We hit a snag, however, when they ask me how I'm going to connect my research to my performing practice and technical singing work. One points out that in theatrical contexts, seeing a "cross-gender" performance is no longer particularly shocking. How do I explain that every performance is cross-gender for me? That I actually want to concentrate more on my experience of playing feminine characters than masculine ones? That I don't want to shock audiences but to nudge them, to invite them to play a little with me? That I want so much more than to be a token cross-dressed queer on the stage?

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[1] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 224-236.
[2] Cisgender refers to people who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

Another starts talking about how exciting it can be to hear "cross-gender" vocal sounds, like a woman singing powerfully in an extremely low range. At this point I start to lose hope. Again, I'm not sure how to describe to them the crux of my project: I want to be able to be queer on stage without having to perform "cross-gender" queerness in any recognizable way. How do I explain that I can't "sound like a man" (whatever that might mean), nor do I want to? I have a light, fairly high-pitched, "female"-sounding voice, and I want to explore what that means in *my* body: a body that is overwhelmingly perceived as female but *does not have to be*. Alec MacIntyre writes, "it is the fluidity of becoming, as well as the uncoupling of identity from anatomy, that is disruptive to hegemonic ideologies that create fixity as reality and fluidity as madness."[3] In other words, I want to reclaim my voice and body from restrictive binaries in a way that allows me to play freely with gender and meaning.

Play as a Methodology

Later, as I was in the midst of my doctoral research at the University of Toronto, I realized that this sense of play, as both a methodology and a practice, is fundamental to many of my activities as a musician: performing, teaching, creating, and producing. Particularly as a teacher, I always want to create a space where failure is not only an option, but something to be celebrated as an opportunity for experimentation, discovery, and growth. My voice students are very used to me saying phrases like: "let's try it, just as an experiment, and we can throw it away if we don't like it." And yet, in the past I've rarely brought the same spirit of playfulness to my scholarly writing. Throughout this dissertation I want to intentionally highlight the curiosity, creativity, and ambiguity made possible by what paediatrician and psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott calls the "third space" of play.[4]

According to Winnicott, "the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute."[5] Winnicott offers this third space as the location of play and creativity, where

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[3] Alec MacIntyre, "Singing is a Drag: Gender, Voice, and Body in Drag Performance," (PhD Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2017), 98.
[4] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3.
[5] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 3.

identity is formed and re-formed through perpetual negotiations between a person's inner and outer worlds. Although Winnicott writes about play through the lens of early childhood development, many of his ideas are applicable to aspects of adult life, particularly artistic practice. Within Winnicott's theory of the human psyche, play—and thus creativity—requires a balance of safety and excitement.[6] In the context of infancy, Winnicott argues:

> The baby's confidence in the [parent's] reliability, and therefore in that of other people and things, makes possible a separating-out of the not-me from the me. At the same time . . . separation is avoided by the filling in of the potential space with creative playing, with the use of symbols, and with all that eventually adds up to cultural life.[7]

In other words, play is a crucial medium for human beings to experiment with relationships between self and other, interior and exterior, and the known and unknown.

How am I to translate this sense of play to my musicological research? With the greatest respect to the scholars who have come before me, I have encountered few models of such methodological freedom. It wasn't until I read Elisabeth Le Guin's book *Boccherini's Body* that I felt reassured it would be possible for me to meld the playfulness of my artistic practice with the rigours traditionally required of an academic study. In her work on Boccherini's string quartets, Le Guin turns to a remarkably embodied practice of musicology, which she describes as "carnal" because it "bears witness to a genuinely reciprocal relationship between performer and composer" and pays close attention to "the sensations and experiences" of music-making.[8] For Le Guin, the body is the primary medium of research rather than a mere vessel.

Giving myself permission to focus on the intimate relationship between the music and the musician's body (including my own body) opens up a whole host of methodological possibilities. It allows for ambiguity, contradiction, and ineffability to be included in the core of my research, rather than be excluded as potential weaknesses. It gives me the opportunity to study topics and people which otherwise might be missing from academic scholarship due to a lack of concrete, reliable source material. It allows me to ask questions to which the answers are fundamentally

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[6] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 69.
[7] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 147.
[8] Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology,* 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

unknowable. Perhaps most importantly, it lets me integrate my personal experience as a transgender[9] singer in the Western European classical tradition into my research on historical performance practice and the development of related ideologies of gender and sexuality.

Trans Voices

The trans[10] voice has recently become a ubiquitous metaphor, used by activists to call for conversations about trans rights to centre the stories and words of those with lived trans experience. However, this is not the only way of thinking about the trans voice. Amanda Weidman argues that "as both sonic/material phenomenon and culturally elaborated metaphor, voice lives a life in two registers."[11] Weidman differentiates between voices as metaphors for personal or communal agency, and voices as "material in the sense that they are produced through bodily actions and the training of bodies."[12]

The trans voice therefore exists not only as an abstract representation of authentic identity, but also as a corporeal entity intimately intertwined with each individual trans body. Unfortunately, very little has been written about the trans voice as an embodied phenomenon, and the majority of scholarly literature available has been conducted by cisgender academics and practitioners.[13] The bulk of existing research focuses on binary trans people, which without additional nuance tends to reinforce the gender binary and erase the existence, experiences, and bodies of non-binary and other gender-diverse people.

Academic Research on Trans Voices

Research on the embodied trans voice has largely been concentrated in the fields of speech pathology and linguistics. In the context of speech pathology, the literature generally

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[9] Transgender refers to people who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.
[10] For ease of writing, I use the shortened form "trans" as an an umbrella term encompassing trans men and women, non-binary people, and gender-diverse individuals more broadly. However, I want to acknowledge that there are many gender-diverse people who, for a variety of reasons, do not identify with or claim the label "trans."
[11] Amanda Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2014): 38.
[12] Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," 41.
[13] This is not to say that cisgender researchers cannot or should not engage with members of the trans community, nor that any such research is inherently invalid. However, an overall lack of trans authorial voices in the ongoing scholarly conversation about the corporeal trans voice means that the questions being investigated are limited to those of interest to cisgender researchers.

focuses on transfeminine[14] people who seek to alter their voices through voice therapy, only occasionally investigating the physical voice changes experienced by transmasculine people taking testosterone (a process generally assumed to result in an "unproblematic" vocal transition).[15] Further, speech pathology—like the Western medical system overall—has a tendency to pathologize trans bodies.[16]

Much of this literature is based on the assumption that, like other secondary sex characteristics, the human voice is completely sexually dimorphic[17]—despite mounting biological evidence to the contrary. Melanie Blackless et al. show that human characteristics linked with sex are not *absolutely* but rather *incompletely* dimorphic, meaning there is significant overlap between the two categories as traditionally assigned.[18] Blackless et al. generously suggest that "biologists and medical scientists recognize, of course, that absolute dimorphism is a Platonic ideal not actually achieved in the natural world."[19] Yet, they also acknowledge that medicine as a field operates from the assumption "that for each sex there is a single, correct developmental pathway. Medical scientists, therefore, define as abnormal any deviation from bimodally distributed genitalia or chromosomal composition."[20]

This tendency to take for granted the existence of both *normally* and *abnormally* sexed bodies is especially dangerous when paired with a general ignorance of the distinction between biological characteristics, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. Such assumptions—especially within medical professions—continue to be harmful to many populations, including

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[14] Transmasculine and transfeminine are terms used by trans people to indicate solidarity and shared experience among AFAB (assigned female at birth) people who are taking steps to masculinize their presentation, and AMAB (assigned male at birth) people who are taking steps to feminize their presentation. This can include binary trans people as well as non-binary people, agender people, and many other gender identities. These are not rigidly defined terms, and not all trans people identify with them, for many reasons.
[15] David Azul et al., "Transmasculine People's Voice Function: A Review of the Currently Available Evidence," *Journal of Voice* 31, no. 2 (2017): 261.e9-10; Lal Zimman, "Transgender Voices: Insights on Identity, Embodiment, and the Gender of the Voice," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 12, no. 8 (2018): 6-7.
[16] Zimman, "Transgender Voices," 6.
[17] Dimorphic refers to species in which a specific set of traits is distributed unequally between two population sub-categories.
[18] Melanie Blackless et al., "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We? Review and Synthesis," *American Journal of Human Biology* 12, no. 2 (2000): 162.
[19] Blackess et al., "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?" 151.
[20] Blackess et al., "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?" 151.

trans people, intersex[21] people, and indeed anyone who does not perfectly conform with ideal dimorphic standards of gender and sex.[22]

New Perspectives from Voice Science and Voice Pedagogy

These often-unnamed beliefs—that there are *normal* and *abnormal* ways to exist in a gendered and sexed body—underpin the determinist view of gender in voice science. David Azul writes:

> Both speakers and listeners are positioned as uninvolved in the gendering of the voice. For irrespective of the speaker's vocal behavior and irrespective of the outcome of listeners' perception and interpretation of what they hear, the fixed anatomical dimensions of larynx and vocal tract are taken to have already determined the voice's gender.[23]

Lal Zimman identifies fundamental pitch and vowel formant[24] frequencies as the gendered vocal characteristics most often explained with determinist arguments, largely based on differences between the average sizes of larynxes and vocal tracts.[25] And yet, as common-sense as these dimorphic size differences may seem, Azul argues that body measurements themselves are based on the determinist assumption that the human voice is primarily "shaped by fixed anatomical dimensions of the larynx and vocal tract."[26] Azul points out that many staunchly determinist researchers fail to acknowledge that such measurements are quite obviously affected by "the way the speaker or singer moves and shapes [their] voice organ."[27] Stephan Pennington expands on this, noting that, not only is the gap between cis men's and cis women's speaking pitch wider

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[21] Intersex people are individuals whose bodies do not fit neatly into the medically-defined categories of "male" and "female."
[22] Because most Western gender norms assume a white, thin, non-disabled subject, this affects many marginalized communities, including those marginalized due to race, body size, and disability.
[23] David Azul, "How Do Voices Become Gendered? A Critical Examination of Everyday and Medical Constructions of the Relationship Between Voice, Sex, and Gender Identity," in *Challenging Popular Myths of Sex, Gender and Biology*, ed. Malin Ah-King, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2013), 79.
[24] Formants refer to certain resonant qualities of a vocal tract which determine perceived vowel and tone colour by amplifying specific frequencies within a given sound.
[25] Zimman, "Transgender Voices," 3-4.
[26] Azul, "How Do Voices Become Gendered?" 80.
[27] Azul, "How Do Voices Become Gendered?" 80.

than can be explained by measured differences in average larynx size, but there is about an octave of overlap between cis men's and cis women's average speaking ranges.[28]

Specifically, Pennington writes that the "pitch zone perceived as gender neutral [is] most generously defined as between 155Hz (D♯3) and 180Hz (F♯3).[29] In this zone, absent other gender markers, listeners have a difficult time gendering the voices they hear."[30] Thus, when assumptions are stripped away, there is little evidence to support the fantasy of an uncomplicated causal relationship between assigned sex, larynx and pharynx size, and gendered vocal characteristics. As David Azul and Lisa Quoresimo write: "when we are speaking and singing, we are limited to a certain extent by the physiological and anatomical frame of our vocal mechanism, but with training we can keep this frame, the entire vocal instrument, very flexible."[31]

The burgeoning field of transgender singing pedagogy also often falls into the familiar trap of oversimplifying the trans experience and, in particular, erasing non-binary and other gender-diverse identities. Publications are predominantly straightforward guides advising (presumed-cis) teachers on how to interact with and teach trans students, the vast majority written by cis voice teachers or choir directors. The existence of these simple, introductory resources has likely made it easier and safer for an increasing number of trans people to openly participate in choirs, voice lessons, and other singing activities. However, these guides, if divorced from an ongoing and nuanced conversation about the lived experiences of actual trans singers and voice teachers, may collapse the trans voice into an easily digestible reflection of the kind of one-dimensional trans identity that is most intelligible to cis people.

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[28] Stephan Pennington, "Transgender Passing Guides and the Vocal Performance of Gender and Sexuality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*, ed. Fred Everett Maus and Sheila Whiteley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 245.
[29] D♯3 refers to the D♯ below middle C on the piano keyboard. See Appendix III for an explanatory diagram.
[30] Pennington, "Transgender Passing Guides," 245.
[31] David Azul and Lisa Quoresimo, "Best Practices for Vocal Pedagogy with Gender Diverse People," *Voice and Speech Review* 16, no. 2 (May 4, 2022): 136.

Voice and Gender Through the Lens of History

How can we free everyone, cis and trans alike, from assumptions that voice, body and gender must align in expected ways? In *Cruising Utopia*, José Muñoz suggests that by looking back in time we may find "anticipatory illuminations": sparks of possibility which, despite being located in the past, can show us a productive way forward.[32] Rather than accept a progressivist view of human history, moving unproblematically from repression to liberation and ignorance to enlightenment, Muñoz finds these moments of queer potential sprinkled throughout the past—in glances, whispers, unsaid words, and hidden connections. And when it comes to gender, bodies, and sexualities, the illuminations of the past can be surprisingly brilliant. You don't have to dig particularly far through time and space to discover that the concept of gender is remarkably contingent on its surrounding culture: the symbols and characteristics humans have associated with various genders and sexualities at various times in various places can mean very different things in different contexts.

Valerie Traub writes that in queer studies, historicist scholarship has largely been overshadowed by theory- and philosophy-focused approaches.[33] Often, Traub argues, history is seen as too particular to be useful to the sweeping aims of queer theory as a discipline: "historical explanation tends to be grounded in the material details of experience. Theory, in contrast, tends to value the results of scaling up, of extrapolating away from context and extending the object's import into the largest possible explanatory domain."[34] However, as Traub argues in *Thinking Sex With the Early Moderns*, there is as much to learn from our own assumptions about past eras as from history itself. In particular, she suggests that "our epistemology of early modern sex is not nearly as supple, nuanced, or complex as its representations warrant. Eroticism in this period was more 'wanton' in its forms and more 'strange' in its effects than we tend to recognize."[35]

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[32] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), 15.
[33] Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 272.
[34] Traub, *Thinking Sex*, 277.
[35] Traub, *Thinking Sex*, 117.

As a performer, one of my specializations is music of the Baroque period—meaning Western European art music written between approximately 1600 and 1750. These one and a half centuries saw not only extreme changes in musical aesthetics, but also a huge shift in gender ideology, spurred by social developments including the Scientific Revolution, economies increasingly built on capitalist colonialism, the rise of Enlightenment rationalism and individualism, and the growing dominance of bourgeois values of "respectability." The late seventeenth century is a particularly intriguing period, during which ideas about bodies and biology differed greatly from those of today. The imagined boundaries between genders, sexual orientations, and even biological sexes were considered far more permeable than we might expect of a strictly patriarchal society. And so, I look to the past not to find a perfect reflection of my own queer identity, but to explore the contingent nature of all understandings of gender and identity. As Traub writes:

> I believe there remain ample reasons to practice a queer historicism dedicated to showing how categories, however mythic, phantasmic, and incoherent, came to be. To understand the chance nature of coincidence and convergence, of sequence and consequence, and to follow them through to the entirely contingent outcomes to which they gave rise: this is not a historicism that creates categories of identity or presumes their inevitability; it is one that seeks to explain such categories' constitutive, pervasive, and persistent force.[36]

Julie D'Aubigny Maupin

At the centre of my research is seventeenth-century opera singer Julie d'Aubigny, more commonly known by her stage name Mademoiselle Maupin.[37] Maupin was gender-non-conforming in her outward appearance, openly involved with lovers of all genders, and was an expert fencer and duellist. Simultaneously an outstanding exception to the conventions of gender in her day, and an example of the fluid possibilities of gender in the seventeenth century, Maupin serves as a fascinating case study through which to explore ever-shifting perceptions of queer

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[36] Traub, *Thinking Sex*, 81.

[37] Throughout this study, I use she/her pronouns to refer to Maupin. Although it is possible that if she had lived today, she may have identified as non-binary and may have used gender neutral pronouns, we cannot know her preferences. So, I use she/her as the most direct translation of the pronoun that she seems to have used during her own lifetime and in her own language: "elle."

and gender-non-conforming people in this era. Her career at the Paris Opéra (then also known as the Académie Royale de Musique) offers intriguing opportunities as well: while she wore masculine clothing in her everyday life, she played exclusively female roles on stage—often, exceptionally strong and transgressive women.

Further, Maupin was the first singer at the Opéra to be specifically labelled a contralto.[38] How might her uncommon vocal colour as well as her notorious off-stage persona have affected audiences' perceptions of her performances? How might she have experienced the relationship between her lived identity and the roles she played? And what might that reveal about the transgressive potential of performance for gender-non-conforming people today? Can my tenuous connection with Maupin across time, space, and a vast chasm of cultural difference, lead to something approaching fruitful scholarly inquiry?

Again I turn to Elisabeth Le Guin, who in *Boccherini's Body* focuses on her own physical experiences while rehearsing and recording repertoire written by Boccherini for himself:

> As I educate myself physically about the highly characterized work of this composer, these changes occur in . . . the feel of *someone else*. They delineate him with an uncanny and entirely un-visual clarity, and it is this vivid experience of being pierced and pervaded by Boccherini, I maintain, that constitutes the reciprocity of our relationship.[39]

Although I don't have the luxury of a score written in Maupin's own hand, nor do I have access to the reassuring physicality of a period instrument (my instrument being my own twenty-first-century body), in this dissertation I set out to explore how I can find a similarly reciprocal relationship between performer and performer: impersonating the same character, singing the same words and melodies, centuries apart. To support these many translations—from score to stage, mediated through the bodies of different performers—I look to Linda Hutcheon's work on intertextuality and adaptation for guidance.[40] I am also indebted to a growing body of performer-

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[38] Contralto refers to the lowest voice type typically associated with cis women.
[39] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 25.
[40] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

focused musicology (Davies 2014; Smart 2004; Wilbourne 2009, 2010),[41] including many in-depth studies of specific historical singers (Campbell 2104; Freitas 2009; Henson 2015; Kerr 2015, 2018; Wilbourne 2007, 2016).[42]

Literature Review

Since my research seeks to apply dense theoretical questions in a practical—and most importantly, embodied—setting, I necessarily draw from a wide variety of fields, including feminist history, queer theory, feminist theatre studies, queer and feminist musicology, historically informed performance, philosophy, performance studies, and drag scholarship.[43] Below, I have organized my sources into five general topics: gender and sexuality in the early modern period, gender and performance in French Baroque opera and spoken theatre, the performance of gender in historical works of theatre, intentional gender performance in modern contexts, and philosophical writings on identity. As in many other disciplines, the discourse presented below has been dominated by white, male, and cisgender voices. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge the trans people, racialized people, and other marginalized people whose voices are missing, to the great detriment of our collective body of knowledge.

First, almost every scholarly discussion of gender is hugely indebted to Judith Butler, whose 1990 *Gender Trouble* arguably sparked the queer theory movement. Building on the work of Michel Foucault and other French post-structuralists, Butler contends that gender, rather than

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[41] J. Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Emily Wilbourne, "Amor Nello Specchio (1622): Mirroring, Masturbation, and Same-Sex Love," *Women & Music (Washington, D.C.)* 13, no. 1 (2009): 54–65; Emily Wilbourne, "Lo Schiavetto (1612): Travestied Sound, Ethnic Performance, and the Eloquence of the Body," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63, no. 1 (2010): 1–43.

[42] Julie D. Campbell, "Marie de Beaulieu and Isabella Andreini: Cross-Cultural Patronage at the French Court," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 45, no. 4 (2014): 851–874; Roger Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Karen Henson, *Opera Acts: Singers and Performance in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Rosalind Kerr, "The Fame Monster: Diva Worship from Isabella Andreini to Lady Gaga," *Italian Studies* 70, no. 3 (2015): 402–415; Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Emily Wilbourne, "'Isabella Ringiovinita': Virginia Ramponi Andreini before 'Arianna,'" *Recercare (Lucca)* 19, no. 1/2 (2007): 47–71; Emily Wilbourne, "A Question of Character: Artemisia Gentileschi and Virginia Ramponi Andreini," *Italian Studies* 71, no. 3 (2016): 335–355.

[43] Note that in this literature review I do not include biographies of Maupin, as those sources will be discussed separately in the second chapter, which is dedicated to her life story.

a social consequence of biological sex, is the prism through which we project sex categories onto others and ourselves.[44] Through performativity—the often-unconscious repetition of actions, patterns of cognition, and modes of discourse—each individual is, at every moment, in the process of constructing their own gender. These repeated actions are modelled after a stylized ideal which has no original or essential source. Rather than something you are, gender (and by extension sex) is something you do—or is done *to* you.[45] Butler's ideas remain fundamental to queer theory as a discipline and are cited by many of the sources discussed below.

Gender and Sexuality in the Seventeenth Century

My first general topic explores perceptions of gender and sexuality in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although today these concepts might be grouped independently, during the early modern period in Europe gender and sexuality were not clearly separated. I begin with the most foundational of my sources, which address the history of gender in the context of biology and medicine: Thomas Laqueur's 1992 *Making Sex* and Anne Fausto-Sterling's 2000 *Sexing the Body.*[46] Both offer convincing evidence that before the Enlightenment, Western European subjects thought about gender and sexuality in very different terms than we do today.

By applying social constructionism to the history of biological sex, Laqueur builds on Foucault's and Butler's analyses of the gender/sex binary. Laqueur proposes a gradual shift in European interpretations of gender during the Enlightenment, from what he calls a "one-sex" model to a "two-sex" model still ubiquitous in Western cultures today. Laqueur argues that, pre-Enlightenment, anatomical differences between bodies were viewed as symptoms of differences in position within a larger cosmic hierarchy, one in which men occupied the highest place. Under this model, "woman" was not a separate category, but rather an underdeveloped version of

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[44] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 182-185; Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss, (New York: Routledge, 1991); Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[45] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 185-189.
[46] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

"man," lacking in the physical and spiritual heat which were prerequisites for men's higher degree of perfection. Laqueur posits that early modern medical illustrations support his claim that female reproductive organs were considered an inverted, less perfect form of male genital structures, and that this model prevailed for over a century, even beyond the scientific revolution of the Renaissance.[47]

While Laqueur's book remains an important touchstone in the scholarly conversation on the history of sex and sexual difference, many medical historians have offered comprehensive and convincing critiques of his main arguments. First, since most of its evidence is drawn from medical and philosophical writings, *Making Sex* offers a necessarily elitist perspective, excluding the lived experiences of the less privileged. Second, Laqueur's timeline is extremely vague, failing to identify exactly when and why his proposed shift between models of sex occurred.[48] Finally, the most biting critiques of Laqueur's work point out that his model grossly over-simplifies the culture and ideas of vast swaths of history and geography, failing to acknowledge the contested nature of ideas about sex and bodies at any given cultural moment (Gordon 2023; King 2013; Park 2010).[49] As Helen King writes: "This model reduces the historical and geographical variety of pre-modern Europe into a single image, imposing on it a misleading uniformity, while privileging 'modernity' and giving us, as its representatives, a sense of intellectual superiority."[50] So, while I will reference Laqueur in my third chapter in particular, I will not do so without critique and complication.

Anne Fausto-Sterling's *Sexing the Body* is also important as a continuation of Laqueur's innovative work, in particular because—unlike Laqueur—Fausto-Sterling is a biologist, holding the interdisciplinary post of Professor of Biology and Gender Studies at Brown University. Taking as an extended case study the treatment of intersex individuals throughout history, the author shows how medicine has participated in patriarchal suppression of gender and sexual difference. Intersex people, a small but significant percentage of the population who do not

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[47] Laqueur, *Making Sex*.
[48] Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 3.
[49] Bonnie Gordon, *Voice Machines: The Castrato, the Cat Piano, and Other Strange Sounds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023); King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*; Katharine Park, "Cadden, Laqueur, and the 'One-Sex Body,'" *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46, no. 1 (2010): 96-100.
[50] King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, 31.

easily fit into the medical system's physical or genetic categories of male and female, have for the past century been erased by Western societies invested in making the biological distinctions between men and women more obvious. However, Fausto-Sterling argues that throughout the majority of history, intersexuality was—while certainly not embraced or celebrated—at least acknowledged by a culture which considered sex and gender more of a continuum than a strict binary.[51]

Several other authors have also gleaned useful information about early modern gender through studies of the history of intersex people, although from a social rather than a scientific perspective (Daston and Park 1995; Donoghue 1993; Long 2006; Rothstein 2015).[52] Other scholars have concentrated on various aspects of the social context surrounding gender and sexuality in the seventeenth century, including the persecution of women as witches (Davies and de Blécourt 2004; Roper 1994),[53] gender and violence (Billacois 1990; DeJean 2003; Frevert 1995; Sokalski 1993),[54] practices of cross-dressing (Dekker and Van de Pol 1989; Harris 2005, 2006),[55] and portrayals of racialized women in literary sources (Douthwaite 1992).[56] Most of the works in this category focus on Western Europe more broadly (Hufton 1995; Turner 1993),[57] but

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[51] Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*.
[52] Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, "The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 4 (1995): 419-438; Emma Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women: Lesbians as Hermaphrodites, 1671-1766," *Women's History Review* 2, no. 2 (1993): 199-216; Kathleen P. Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006); Marian Rothstein, *The Androgyne in Early Modern France: Contextualizing the Power of Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Note that "hermaphrodite" is an outdated term and no longer acceptable to describe intersex people.
[53] Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester University Press, 2004); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[54] François Billacois, *The Duel: Its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, trans. Trista Selous (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Joan DeJean, "Violent Women and Violence Against Women: Representing the 'Strong' Woman in Early Modern France," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (2003): 117-147; Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995); Alex Sokalski, "'Choose Your Weapon': Duelling French Women in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Nottingham French Studies* 41, no. 2 (2002): 1-19.
[55] Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. Van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Houndmills, UK: MacMillan Press, 1989); Joseph Harris, *Hidden Agendas: Cross-dressing in 17th Century France* (Tübingen, DE: Narr, 2005); Joseph Harris, "What Butler Saw: Cross-Dressing and Spectatorship in Seventeenth-Century France," *Paragraph* 29, no. 1 (2006): 67-79.
[56] Julia V. Douthwaite, *Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).
[57] Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995); James Turner, *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

a few are situated in France specifically (Gibson 1989; Moore 2012; Oresko 1989; Rivers 1995; Somerset 2003; Stanton 2014; Van der Cruysse 1988).[58]

Finally, there are several historical studies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which, from various angles, respond to and build upon Laqueur and Fausto-Sterling's work by investigating how people of that era experienced their bodies as gendered and sexual entities (Dinshaw 1999; Faderman 1981; Finucci 2003; Greenburg 2002; Harvey 2002; Johnston 2001; Long 2012; Muravyeva and Toivo 2013; Rosser 2008; Traub 2013, 2016; Wahrman 2008).[59] Carolyn Dinshaw in particular raises some important points about the study of queer history, suggesting that since queer lives were often actively suppressed by those writing about them, historians may need to engage in reconstructive reading, probing cultural anxieties to reveal the underlying but often unspoken or unprovable realities hidden beneath.[60]

French Baroque Theatre

Having established a background in gender and sexuality studies in the early modern period, I move more specifically to the topic of gender and sexuality in French Baroque opera and theatre. First, I must acknowledge the foundational work of Susan McClary, whose 1991

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[58] Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989); Alison M. Moore, ed., *Sexing Political Culture in the History of France* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012); Robert Oresko, "Homosexuality and the Court Elites of Early Modern France: Some Problems, Some Suggestions, and an Example," in *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe,* eds. Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma, (New York: Routledge, 1989); Christopher Rivers, "Inintelligibles Pour Une Femme Honnête: Sexuality, Textuality and Knowledge in Diderot's *La Religieuse* and Gautier's *Mademoiselle De Maupin*," *Romantic Review* 86, no. 1 (1995); Anne Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003); Domna C. Stanton, *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014); Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Madame Palatine, princesse européenne* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).

[59] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women, from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981); Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Mitchell Greenburg, "Molière's Body Politic," in *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France*, ed. Kathleen P. Long (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2002); Karen Harvey, "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 899-916; Belinda Johnston, "Renaissance Body Matters: Judith Butler and the Sex That Is One," *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 1-2 (2001): 77-94; Kathleen P. Long, ed., *Gender and Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Culture* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Marianna G. Muravyeva and Raisa Maria Toivo, eds., *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Sue Vilhauer Rosser, *Women, Science and Myth: Gender Beliefs from Antiquity to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008); Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128, no. 1 (2013): 21-39; Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[60] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 5, 14.

Feminine Endings is widely considered to mark the birth of feminist musicology, as well as, more broadly, a (relatively late) turn to social constructionism in musicology.[61] Subsequently, several authors have offered insights on mainstream opera and gender, providing a helpful scholarly precedent for my research (Abbate 1991; Abel 1996; Blackmer and Smith 1995; Clément 1988; Cook and Tsou 1994; Dunbar 2016; Purvis 2013; Robinson 2002).[62]

Other works have explored some aspect of early modern spoken theatre in relation to gender as a social phenomenon (Bloemendal, Eversmann, and Strietman 2016; Bloemendal and Smith 2013; Higa 2015; Pullen 2005; Shepherd 1981; Tasker 2007; Zimmerman 1992),[63] including some which focus specifically on the French Baroque (Clarke 1999; Gibson 1975).[64] These can be helpful, as French Baroque opera of the time was influenced heavily by contemporary spoken tragedy; however, not all details are transferable. Thus I turn to social context-focused studies which address French Baroque opera and theatre generally, without necessarily engaging with gender directly (Bloechl 2017; Coeyman 1990; De La Gorce 1979, 1992; Hoxby 2007; Lough 1957; Philip 1980; Prest 2017; Sadler and Wood 2000; Stefanovic

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[61] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

[62] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Sam Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith, eds., *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou, eds., *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Julie C. Dunbar, *Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016); Philip Purvis, *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[63] Jan Bloemendal and Nigel Smith, eds., *Politics and Aesthetics in European Baroque and Classicist Tragedy* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Jan Bloemendal, Peter G. F. Eversmann, and Elsa Strietman, eds., *Drama, Performance, and Debate: Theatre and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2013); Jade Higa, "'A Stranger to the World': Women, Bisexuality, and Performance in Eighteenth-Century England" (PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2015); Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1981); Elizabeth Tasker, "Low Brows and High Profiles: Rhetoric and Gender in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century Theater" (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2007); Susan Zimmerman, ed., *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[64] Jan Clarke, "Female Cross-dressing on the Paris Stage, 1673-1715," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 35, no. 3 (1999): 238-250; Wendy Gibson, "Women and the Notion of Propriety in the French Theatre (1628-1643)," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 1975): 1-14.

2006; Van Orden 2005; Wood 1996).[65] Collectively, these sources offer a comprehensive background on the audience demographics, casting conventions, company dynamics, economic conditions, literary critiques, political complexities, and religious controversies surrounding the Paris Opéra in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Within the field of early music and gender, the discourse is often dominated by discussions of castrati: men who were castrated before puberty in order to preserve their treble voices. Many authors have explored the phenomenon of the castrati from various social, economic, and artistic angles (Berry 2012; Dame 2006; Feldman 2009, 2015; Freitas 2003, 2009; Gilman 1997; Gordon 2015; Kowaleski-Wallace 1992; Rosselli 1988).[66] However, other scholars

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[65] Olivia Bloechl, *Opera and the Political Imaginary in Old Regime France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Sylvie Bouissou, Pascal Denécheau, and France Marchal-Ninosque, eds., *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime (1669-1791)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019); Barbara Coeyman, "Theatres for Opera and Ballet During the Reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV," *Early Music* 18, no. 1 (February 1990): 22-37; Jérôme de La Gorce, "L'Académie Royale de Musique en 1704, d'après des documents inédits conservés dans les archives notariales," *Revue De Musicologie* 65, no. 2 (1979): 160-91; Jérôme de La Gorce, *L'Opéra à Paris au temps de Louis XIV: Histoire d'un théâtre* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 1992); Blair Hoxby, "All Passion Spent: The Means and Ends of a 'Tragédie en musique'," *Comparative Literature* 59, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 33-62; John Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences in the Seventeenth & Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); Henry Philips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth-century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Julia Prest, "The Politics of Opera under Louis XIV: Dissident Descendants in the Third Reign," in *The Third Reign of Louis XIV, c. 1682-1715,* ed. Julia Prest and Guy Rowlands (London: Routledge, 2017); Graham Sadler and Caroline Wood, eds., *French Baroque Opera: A Reader* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000); Ana Stefanovic, *La musique comme métaphore: La relation de la musique et du texte dans l'opéra baroque français: De Lully à Rameau* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006); Kate Van Orden, *Music, Discipline, and Arms in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Caroline Wood, *Music and Drama in the tragédie en musique, 1673-1715: Jean-Baptiste Lully and His Successors* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).

[66] Helen Berry, "Queering the History of Marriage: The Social Recognition of a Castrato Husband in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop Journal* 74 (Autumn 2012): 27-50; Joke Dame, "Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato," in *Queering the Pitch: the New Gay and Lesbian Musicology,* ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Woods, and Gary C. Thomas, 2nd edn. (New York and London: Routledge, 2006); Martha Feldman, "Strange Births and Surprising Kin: the Castrato's Tale," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Martha Feldman, *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Roger Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato," *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 196-249; Roger Freitas, "Sex Without Sex: An Erotic Image of the Castrato Singer," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Todd S. Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," in *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference*, ed. Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Bonnie Gordon, "It's Not About the Cut: The Castrato's Instrumentalized Song," *New Literary History* 46, no. 4 (Autumn 2015): 647-667; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, "Shunning the Bearded Kiss: Castrati and the Definition of Female Sexuality," *Prose Studies* 15, no. 2 (1992): 153–170; John Rosselli, "The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850," *Acta Musicological* 60, no. 2 (1988): 143-179.

have investigated early modern music and gender extensively from different perspectives (Heller, W. 2003; Lamay 2005; Smart 2000).[67]

While fascinating, works investigating the castrati are not particularly relevant to French Baroque opera: the French were notoriously xenophobic and preferred *haute-contres* (high tenors) to Italian castrati. Thankfully, there are quite a few studies which not only address French opera specifically, but also deal with gender in some depth, sometimes in conversation with other topics such as race or exoticism (Browne 1994; Cowart 1994; Duggan 2004, 2005; Franko 1994, 2007, 2015; Howard 1994; Locke 2015; McClary 2012; Ndiaye 2022; Newman 1979; Norman 2001; Prest 2006; Ray 2020; Thomas 2002).[68] These sources are particularly useful when exploring the intricacies of how audiences in seventeenth-century France interacted with musical and theatrical depictions of gender.

Significantly, several of these sources rely on the example of perhaps the most notorious female character in all of French Baroque opera: the titular sorceress from Jean-Baptiste Lully's 1686 opera *Armide*.[69] Patricia Howard argues that in *Armide*, the ideal of romantic love is

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[67] Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Thomasin Lamay, *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies* (Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2005); Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[68] Marilyn Kay Browne, "Opera and the *Galant Homme*: Quinault and Lully's *Tragedie En Musique*, 'ATYS,' in the Context of Seventeenth-Century Modernism" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1994); Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV & the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Anne E. Duggan, "Women and Absolutism in French Opera and Fairy Tale," *The French Review* 78, no. 2 (December 2004): 302-315; Anne E. Duggan, *Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies: The Politics of Gender and Cultural Change in Absolutist France* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2005); Mark Franko, "Double Bodies: Androgyny and Power in the Performances of Louis XIV," *The Drama Review* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 71-82; Mark Franko, "Fragment of the Sovereign as Hermaphrodite: Time, History, and the Exception in Le Ballet de Madame," *Dance Research* 25, no. 2 (2007): 119-133; Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Patricia Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the *Précieuses:* Images of Women in Seventeenth-Century France," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music,* ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Ralph P. Locke, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Susan McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012); Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022); Joyce Newman, *Jean-Baptiste de Lully and his Tragédies Lyriques* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979); Buford Norman, *Touched by the Graces: The Libretti of Philippe Quinault in the Context of French Classicism* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publication, Inc., 2001); Julia Prest, *Theatre Under Louis XIV: Cross-Casting and the Performance of Gender in Drama, Ballet and Opera* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Marcie Ray, *Coquettes, Wives, and Widows: Gender Politics in French Baroque Opera and Theater* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2020); Downing A. Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancient Régime, 1647-1785* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[69] This is especially advantageous to my particular study, as Julie d'Aubigny likely played Armide in a 1703 revival production at the Paris Opéra.

shattered, with love itself "portrayed as an illusion."[70] Buford Norman agrees, suggesting that in some ways Armide and her enemy/unwilling lover Renaud are mirror images of each other, both valuing freedom and military glory over love.[71] Further, Downing A. Thomas argues that Renaud's eventual victory over Armide's attempts to entrance him teaches men to prioritize military duty over love, associating romance with the shameful weakness of women.[72] However, Thomas also uses contemporary writings to argue that seventeenth-century audiences left *Armide* identifying more with the defeated sorceress than with the triumphant hero.[73] Finally, Susan McClary illuminates the peculiar cultural gymnastics which allow Armide to escape punishment by the karmic conventions common in other operatic traditions of tragedy.[74]

Very little of the scholarship on Baroque music and gender is in any sense practical or performance-based. Some works on Baroque acting and performance practice touch on gender to various extents, but none address it directly or with any real critique (Barnett and Westropp 1987; Benedetti 2005; Burns 1990; Chaouche 2005; Cyr 2016; Leichman 2016; Ranum 2001; Waeber 2009; Wentz 2009, 2013).[75] Studies of historical vocal technique are likewise generally lacking in gender critique, although some explore the social context of vocal ideals (Fisher 1988; Hiller 2001; Lindley and Uberti 1981; Lorimer 2002; Lubarsky 2017; Potter 1998; Ravens 2014;

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[70] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the *Précieuses*," 84.
[71] Norman, *Touched by the Graces*, 335.
[72] Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancient Régime*, 119.
[73] Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancient Régime*, 121.
[74] McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, 270.
[75] Dene Barnett and Jeanette Massy Westropp, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of Eighteenth-Century Acting* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987); Jean Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor: The Essential History of Acting, from Classical Times to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990); Sabine Chaouche, ed., *La scène contrechamp: Anecdotes françaises et traditions de jeu au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005); Mary Cyr, *Performing Baroque Music* (London: Routledge, 2016); Jeffrey M. Leichman, *Acting Up: Staging the Subject in Enlightenment France* (London: Bucknell University Press, 2016); Patricia Ranum, *The Harmonic Orator: The Phrasing and Rhetoric of the Melody in French Baroque Airs* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2001); Jacqueline Waeber, *Musique et geste en France de Lully à la révolution: Études sur la musique, le théâtre et la danse* (Bern, CH: Peter Lang AG, 2009); Jed Wentz, "Gaps, Pauses and Expressive Arms: Reconstructing the Link between Stage Gesture and Musical Timing at the Académie royale de musique," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (2009): 607-623; Jed Wentz, "An Annotated livret of Lully's Roland as a Source for Seventeenth-Century Declamation," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. 1 (2013): 1-36.

Stark 1999).[76] There are a few texts from musicologists and theatre historians which offer insight into how singers and actors of the seventeenth century approached an embodied practice of performing, with varying levels of engagement with issues of gender (Bryant 2009; Larlham 2012; Larson 2019; Nancy 2013; Scott 2010).[77] Scott's in-depth study of the early modern French actress is especially illuminating, but unfortunately addresses only actresses of spoken theatre, therefore requiring some extrapolation.

Theatre Historiography

This brings me to my third broad topic: sources which deal with the practical reality of performing gender in historical works of theatre. First, it is helpful to acknowledge a few important collections on general theatre historiography spanning several decades (Canning and Postlewait 2010; Franko and Richards 2000; Postlewait and McConachie 1989).[78] Also highly relevant is Philip Tomlinson's exploration of different approaches to French classical theatre (Tomlinson 2001).[79]

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[76] Gary Fisher, "Renaissance Vocal Technique for the Choral Conductor," *The Choral Journal* 29, no. 1 August 1988): 15-19, 22-23; Johann Adam Hiller, *Treatise on Vocal Performance and Ornamentation*, trans. and ed. Suzanne J. Beicken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Mark Lindley and Mauro Uberti, "Vocal Techniques in Italy in the Second Half of the 16th Century," *Early Music* 9, no. 4 (October 1981): 486-495; Elena Madeleine Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)" (PhD diss., University of London, 2002); Eric M. Lubarsky, "Reviving Early Music: Metaphors and Modalities of Life and Living in Historically Informed Performance" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2017); John Potter, *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Simon Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice: A History of High Male Singing* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press) 2014; James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[77] Brooke A. Bryant, "The Seventeenth-Century Singer's Body: An Instrument of Action" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2009); Daniel Larlham, "The Felt Truth of Mimetic Experience: Motions of the Soul and the Kinetics of Passion in the Eighteenth-Century Theatre," *The Eighteenth Century* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 432-454; Katherine Rebecca Larson, *The Matter of Song in Early Modern England: Texts in and of the Air* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sarah Nancy, "The Singing Body in the *Tragédie Lyrique* of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century France: Voice, Theatre, Speech, Pleasure," in *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013); Virginia Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France: 1540-1750* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[78] Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010); Mark Franko and Annette Richards, *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000); Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, eds., *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989).

[79] Philip Tomlinson, *French "Classical" Theatre Today: Teaching, Research, Performance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).

Most of this work is drawn from spoken theatre studies, which tends to move faster than musicology in terms of socially-informed scholarly trends. Feminist theatre criticism rose to prominence in the 1980s, and many authors who contributed to the beginning of the movement have continued writing and updating their approaches (Aston 1995, 1999, 2000; Case 1990, 2008, 2009; Cima 1993a, 1993b; Dolan 1985, 1988, 2010; Ferris 1993; Goodman and De Gay 1998).[80] In the field of critical theatre studies there is currently much more scholarship from a feminist perspective than from a queer or trans perspective; however, Jill Dolan has in her recent work included queer feminist viewpoints.[81]

Elaine Aston offers the most practical suggestions for exploring re-imaginings of historical works, using Shakespeare's *King Lear* as an extended case study.[82] Also of special interest to the practical side of my research is the widespread 1990s trend of applying Brechtian theatre techniques to feminist contexts, explored at length by Elin Diamond (Diamond 1988, 1997).[83] In "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism," Diamond explains how Brecht's insistence on historicism and "the character as a function of particular sociohistorical relations" allows for resistant readings of misogynist classics by feminist performers and audience members.[84] Several authors have subsequently applied these concepts to spoken historical classics, Shakespeare in particular (Bulman 2008; Friedman 2009; Novy

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[80] Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995); Elaine Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1999); Elaine Aston, "The 'Trouble' with Gender," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 20, no. 1 (2000): 24-30; Sue-Ellen Case, ed., *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Gay Gibson Cima, *Performing Women: Female Characters, Male Playwrights, and the Modern Stage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993a); Gay Gibson Cima, "Strategies for Subverting the Canon," in *Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theater as if Gender and Race Matter*, eds. Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993b); Jill Dolan, "Gender Impersonation Onstage: Destroying or Maintaining the Mirror of Gender Roles?" *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 2, no. 2 (January 1985): 5-11; Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988); Jill Dolan, *Theatre & Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Lesley Ferris, ed., *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing* (London: Routledge, 1993); Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay, eds., *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1998);

[81] Dolan, *Theatre & Sexuality.*

[82] Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice*, 82-167.

[83] Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism," *TDR (1988-)* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 82-94; Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[84] Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory," 87.

1999; Power 2016; Rabinowitz and Richlin 1993; Solomon 1997).[85] While music adds a complicating layer, these studies may serve to inspire techniques suitable for musical drama. Therefore, along with Brecht's own writings on theatre, I have also reviewed a few of the many guides and handbooks to Brecht's methods (Barnett 2015; Brecht 2014, 2019; Martin and Bial 2000; Morely 1977; Mumford 2009; Needle and Thomson 1981; Unwin 2014).[86]

Gender in Performance

Having investigated various approaches to performing gender in historical works, I turn to the growing literature exploring gender performance in modern contexts, the vast majority of which is deeply rooted in Butler's work on performativity (Bullogh and Bullough 1993; Parker and Sedgwick 1995),[87] while also including a few critiques of Butler's use of performance as a metaphor for performativity (Lloyd 1999; Morris 1995).[88] Most research in this vein focuses on

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[85] James C. Bulman, *Shakespeare Re-Dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance* (Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008); Sharon Friedman, ed., *Feminist Theatrical Revisions of Classic Works: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009); Marianne Novy, ed., *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Terri Power, *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin, ed., *Feminist Theory and the Classics* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Alisa Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[86] David Barnett, *Brecht in Practice: Theatre, Theory and Performance* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015); Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks*, ed. Tom Kuhn, Steve Giles, and Marc Silberman, trans. Charlotte Ryland, Romy Fursland, Steve Giles, Tom Kuhn, and John Willett (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014); Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn, trans. Jack Davis, Romy Fursland, Steve Giles, Victoria Hill, Kristopher Imbrigotta, Marc Silberman, and John Willett (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Carol Martin and Henry Bial, eds., *Brecht Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2000); Michael Morley, *Brecht: A Study* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977); Meg Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht* (London: Routledge, 2009); Jan Needle and Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Stephen Unwin, *The Complete Brecht Toolkit* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2014).

[87] Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Andrew Parker and Eve K. Sedgwick, eds., *Performativity and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[88] Moya Lloyd, "Performativity, Parody, Politics," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 195-213; Rosalind C. Morris, "All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (1995): 567-592.

drag performance or radical performance art (Allegranti 2011; Chatzipapatheodoridis 2017; Christian 2010; Cleto 1999; Greer 2019; Schwartz 2019; Senelick 1992; Shoemaker 2004).[89]

The writing most relevant to my project is that which focuses on the performance of femininity. While much drag scholarship concentrates on gay, male-identified, AMAB[90] drag queens (Brennan and Gudelunas 2017; Claycomb 2007; Daems 2014; Davy 1994; Edgar 2011; González and Cavazos 2016; Guarracino 2007; Gudelunas 2016; Meyer 2010; Moore 2013; Newton 1972; Schottmiller 2017; Tyler 1999),[91] some work has also been done on AFAB queens (Devitt 2006, 2013; Heller, M. 2013, 2015; Horowitz 2013),[92] as well as on queens who identify

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[89] Beatrice Allegranti, *Embodied Performances: Sexuality, Gender, Bodies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Constantine Chatzipapatheodoridis, "Strike a Pose, Forever: The Legacy of Vogue and its Re-contextualization in Contemporary Camp Performances," *European Journal of American Studies* 11, no. 3 (2017): 1-15; Aymar Jean Christian, "Camp 2.0: A Queer Performance of the Personal," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3 (2010): 352-376; Fabio Cleto, ed., *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Stephen Greer, *Queer Exceptions: Solo Performance in Neoliberal Times* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019); Selby Wynn Schwartz, *The Bodies of Others: Drag Dances and Their Afterlives* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2019); Laurence Senelick, *Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992); Deanna Beth Shoemaker, "Queers, Monsters, Drag Queens, and Whiteness: Unruly Femininities in Women's Staged Performances" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2004).

[90] AMAB and AFAB stand for "assigned male at birth" and "assigned female at birth."

[91] Niall Brennan and David Gudelunas, eds., *RuPaul's Drag Race and the Shifting Visibility of Drag Culture: The Boundaries of Reality TV* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Ryan Claycomb, "Staging Psychic Excess: Parodic Narrative and Transgressive Performance," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 1 (2007): 104-27; Jim Daems, ed., *The Makeup of RuPaul's Drag Race: Essays on the Queen of Reality Shows* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014); Kate Davy, "Fe/Male Impersonation: The Discourse of Camp," in *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, ed. Moe Meyer (New York: Routledge, 1994); Eir-Anne Edgar, "'Xtravaganza!': Drag Representation and Articulation in 'RuPaul's Drag Race'," *Studies in Popular Culture* 34, no. 1 (2011): 133-46; Jorge C. González and Kameron C. Cavazos, "Serving Fishy Realness: Representations of Gender Equity on RuPaul's Drag Race," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 30, no. 6 (2016): 659-669; Serena Guarracino, "Sonic Drags: Fe-Male Impersonators in *Farinelli* and *M. Butterfly,*" *ecloga* 6 (2007): 41-61; David Gudelunas, "Culture Jamming (and Tucking): RuPaul's Drag Race and Unconventional Reality," *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture* 1, no. 2 (2016): 231-249; Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* (Madison: Macater Press, 2010); Ramey Moore, "Everything Else is Drag: Linguistic Drag and Gender Parody on RuPaul's Drag Race," *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 15-26; Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972); Carl Schottmiller, "'Excuse My Beauty!': Camp Referencing and Memory Activation on RuPaul's Drag Race," in *Sontag and the Camp Aesthetic: Advancing New Perspectives*, ed. Bruce E. Drushel and Brian M. Peters (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017); Carole-Anne Tyler, "Boys Will Be Girls: Drag and Transvestic Fetishism," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999).

[92] Rachel Devitt, "Girl on Girl: Fat Femmes, Bio-Queens, and Redefining Drag," in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. Sheila Whiteley, and Jennifer Rycenga (New York and London: Routledge, 2006); Rachel Devitt, "'Keep the Best of You, "do" the Rest of You': Passing, Ambivalence and Keeping Queer Time in Gender Performative Negotiations of Popular Music," *Popular Music* 32, no. 3 (2013): 427-49; Meredith Lorraine Heller, "What a Drag: (Re)Defining Sex, Bodies, and Identification in Gender-Bending Performance Practices" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013); Meredith Heller, "Female-Femmeing: A Gender-Bent Performance Practice," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 2, no. 3 (2015): 1-23; Katie R. Horowitz, "The Trouble with 'Queerness': Drag and the Making of Two Cultures," *Signs* 38, no. 2 (2013): 303-26.

as trans women (Na, 2017; Norris, 2014).[93] I found little on non-binary or what is colloquially known as "gender-fuck" drag (MacIntyre 2017, 2018).[94]

Alec MacIntyre's work is particularly useful to my project, investigating the use of the human voice (both live and recorded) in drag performances. Both MacIntyre and I are indebted to the ever-expanding field of queer musicology (Brett, Wood, and Thomas, 2006; Hagen, 2011),[95] along with the developing body of work on musicology and difference (Bloechl, Lowe, and Kallberg 2014; Ingraham, So, and Moodley 2016; Solie 1993; Walser 1993).[96] A few authors figure significantly in the field, theorizing ways in which today's classical music performances uphold or subvert heterosexual gender norms (Cusick 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2006; Koestenbaum 1993; Wood 2006).[97] Among these works there is a strong focus on audience experiences, with only Suzanne Cusick specifically writing from a performer's perspective.

Although written in 1994, Cusick's article "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance" remains provocative, posing a difficult question: how can musicians and listeners enjoy pieces of classical music they know to be mired in misogynist, racist, and homophobic rhetoric? Cusick probes one of the deepest assumptions of hegemonic classical music culture: that a performance of a work must strive as much as possible to recreate the original intentions of the composer, no matter how objectionable (Cusick calls this an "ideology

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[93] Ali Na, "Trans Affects: Performance, Technology, and the Racialization of Femininity" (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017); Laurie Norris, "Of Fish and Feminists: Homonormative Misogyny and the Trans* Queen," in *The Makeup of* RuPaul's Drag Race: *Essays on the Queen of Reality Shows*, ed. Jim Daems (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).

[94] MacIntyre, "Singing is a Drag;" Alec MacIntyre, "Drag Becomes Them: Voices and Identities Beyond the Stage," *Liminalities* 14, no. 4 (2018): 1-24.

[95] Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Darrin Hagen, ed., *Queering the Way: The Loud and Queer Anthology* (Victoria, BC: Brindle & Glass, 2011).

[96] Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg, eds., *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Mary I. Ingraham, Joseph K. So, and Roy Moodley, eds., *Opera in a Multicultural World: Coloniality, Culture, Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Masculinity in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

[97] Suzanne G. Cusick, "Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem," *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994a): 8-27; Suzanne G. Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," *Repercussions* 3, no. 1 (1994b): 77-110; Suzanne G. Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity and Music*, ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley (Zürich: Carciofoli Verlagshaus, 1999); Suzanne G. Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Cary C. Thomas (New York and London: Routledge, 2006); Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993); Elizabeth Wood, "Sapphonics," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Cary C. Thomas (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

of faithful performance").[98] While the questions posed by Cusick are now mainstays of musicology, Cusick's article is still one of few to go beyond strategies of the resisting *listener* and investigate the processes through which a *performer* might resist a composer's problematic message.

MacIntyre critiques Cusick's theorizing on the human voice, arguing that she falls into the trap of simplistically conflating the female with "the natural" and the male with "the artificial."[99] MacIntyre suggests that this binary is unnecessarily limiting to conceptions of voice and identity, and yet has been repeated by countless authors for decades (Barthes 1977; Dunn and Jones 1994; Jarman-Ivens 2011; Ortner 1974).[100] Instead, MacIntyre proposes a theory of voice and identity which does away entirely with the mind/body split, one based on alternative philosophies mostly borrowed from sound studies (Cimini 2011; Dolar 2006; Duncan 2004; Eidsheim 2014; Fuller and Whitesell 2002; Helmreich 2012; Sterne 2003; Stiegler 1998).[101]

In a similar vein, there are several authors—both within the field of musicology and without—who suggest that Baroque aesthetics, like queer aesthetics, can serve to fundamentally break down the constructed category of "the natural" by celebrating artificiality and artifice (Egginton 2010; Kaup 2005; Lahiji 2016; Sontag 1999; Van de Port 2012).[102] While these arguments are seductive, the danger of rejecting the nature half of the nature/culture binary is an

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[98] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 80.
[99] MacIntyre, "Drag Becomes Them," 19, 73.
[100] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Collins, 1977); Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974).
[101] Amy Cimini, "Baruch Spinoza and the Matter of Music: Toward a New Practice of Theorizing Musical Bodies" (PhD Diss., New York University, 2011); Mladen Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Michelle Duncan, "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 283-306; Stefan Helmreich, "An Anthropologist Underwater," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012); Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Bernard Stiegler, *Technics And Time: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).
[102] William Egginton, *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)Baroque Aesthetics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Monika Kaup, "Becoming-Baroque: Folding European Forms into the New World Baroque with Alejo Carpentier," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 2 (2005): 107-149; Nadir Lahiji, *Adventures with the Theory of the Baroque and French Philosophy* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject,* ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Mattijs van de Port, "Genuinely Made Up: Camp, Baroque, and Other Denaturalizing Aesthetics in the Cultural Production of the Real," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. 4 (2012): 864-883.

unintentional re-inscription of the very same binary. I am more inclined to engage with Melanie L. Marshall's thoughtful critique of one particular facet of this trend (Marshall 2015).[103] In "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality," Marshall discusses how racial purity politics resulted in the almost ubiquitous adoption of an ideal "natural"-coded vocal colour in the early music industry. Ayana O. Smith likewise offers insightful commentary on how critical race theory can be applied to the field of Baroque music studies (Smith 2021).[104]

Philosophies of Identity

Marshall and Smith's thoughtful explorations of early music and gendered racial identity can also serve as pivots to my last topic: philosophy, including music-centric philosophy, on identity in general. In the field of queer theory, much of this type of writing is once again based on Butler. I am particularly interested in authors who themselves identify as transgender, genderqueer, or gender-non-conforming (Bornstein 1994; Halberstam 1998, 2005, 2011; Serano 2007).[105] I look as well to scholars of queer theory's so-called "affective" turn, whose works explore the transmission of emotion between people and bodies (Ahmed 2004, 2010, 2014, 2018; Sedgwick 1990, 2003).[106] Some scholars have applied these philosophies to historical contexts, exploring the transmission of affect over time and even between generations (Muñoz 1999, 2009; Snorton 2017).[107]

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[103] Melanie L. Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19, no. 1 (2015): 36-44.
[104] Ayana O. Smith, "Editorial," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 18, no. 2 (2021): 245-251.
[105] Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005); Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2007).
[106] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Sara Ahmed, *Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2018); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
[107] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009); C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Most important to my project are those philosophies which are theatre- or music-specific (Abbate 2004; James 2010; Kun 2005; Rancière 2009; von der Horst 2017).[108] Although very different in their approaches, each of these authors have figured strongly in the development of my arguments. Carolyn Abbate examines tensions between the intangible, theoretical aspects of musicianship and the more practical, embodied side. Robin James deepens the often-cited metaphor of "intersectionality" (a term which she replaces with "coincidence" in the sense of simultaneous—yet intimately connected and inseparable—phenomena), arguing that "music, race, and gender *begin* fused together . . . and only become disarticulated in the course of post-experiential reflection."[109] Josh Kun builds on José Esteban Muñoz's concept of queer futurity, suggesting that performances can create aural utopias: musical spaces in which we can imagine a future more welcoming to difference.[110] Jacques Rancière explores the agency of the spectator, framing the phenomenon of art not as a simple conduit of information and feeling from artist to audience, but rather as an inherently dialectic space with room for interpretation and creation on both sides. Finally, Dirk von der Horst's *Jonathan's Loves, David's Laments* investigates the biblical text of David and Jonathan, which throughout history has led to interpretations of the relationship between the two men as erotic rather than platonic. Seeking to establish music as a bridge between contemporary queer theologies and the radically different cultural realities of biblical times, von der Horst argues that "aesthetics are a powerful tool with which to investigate historicity because . . . they make the mediation of perception by social and linguistic parameters clear."[111]

A Playful Conclusion

Foregrounding elements of human experience which are clearly products of cultural construction (such as musical style) can illuminate the constructed nature of other concepts (such

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[108] Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004); Robin James, *The Conjectural Body: Gender, Race, and the Philosophy of Music* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009); Dirk von der Horst, *Jonathan's Loves, David's Laments: Gay Theology, Musical Desires, and Historical Difference* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017).
[109] James, *The Conjectural Body*, 3, 12.
[110] Kun, *Audiotopia*, 13.
[111] Von der Horst, *Jonathan's Loves, David's Laments*, 94.

as sexuality). When paired with Lacqueur and Fausto-Sterling's vivid descriptions of historical difference relating to understandings of biological sex and sexuality, early modern opera—especially through the lens of Julie d'Aubigny Maupin's extraordinary life—seems ripe with opportunities for the exploration of intentional queer performance. Yet at the same time, I also return to Valerie Traub's exploration of the unknowability of history. Traub argues that although the past is not "only interesting or worth pursuing when it is different from the present," it can remind us "of the irreducible, intransigent quality of any given other's experience, including experiences lodged in the past."[112] So as I navigate my research into the circumstances and context of Maupin's life, I am careful to hold space for ambiguity, uncertainty, and all too often, an unsatisfiable curiosity. I intentionally invoke the spirit of playfulness which underpins my practice as a performer and integrate it into my scholarly work.

D. W. Winnicott says of play that "the significant moment is that at which *the child surprises* [themself]. . . . *This playing has to be spontaneous, and not compliant or acquiescent*."[113] Similarly, when I am in the midst of a live performance, I strive to be present enough to allow my body to respond organically to mistakes, memory slips, or unplanned moments as they arise. The trust that I have in my body and its wisdom, like the trust of a child for their parent, allows me to treat such moments as opportunities for play and discovery, rather than insurmountable obstacles. As Winnicott writes, "where there is trust and reliability is a potential space, one that can become an infinite area of separation, which the baby, child, adolescent, adult may creatively fill with playing."[114]

Will you, reader, afford me that same trust as I play with history, both knowable and unknowable? Will you let me take you on a journey with no certainty of a definitive arrival—only the promise that through the journey, much will be discovered? Le Guin writes:

> I might seem to be asserting . . . that scholarship is an act of fiction. And in a sense, that is what I mean to assert. In everyday speech, Fiction is often juxtaposed with Truth; and so, perhaps inevitably, we tend to think of fiction as another word for falsehood. . . . In the sense in which I use it here, fiction is what happens after the assemblage of data is

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[112] Traub, *Thinking Sex*, 136.
[113] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 68.
[114] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 146.

> complete; it is the drawing of even the most cautious inferences, the root of any original idea at all.[115]

Shall we then proceed with our own imaginative inferences, as subjective as they must be? Will you join me as I search for truth through the speculative lens of fiction? *Will you play with me?*

[115] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 12.

Chapter 2
“A fierce and resplendent amazon”: The Unconventional Life of Mlle Maupin

The year is 1689, or thereabouts. A quiet, starless night hangs over the stone-walled city of Avignon. If you were to take a midnight stroll through the grounds of a certain convent, you might think all was as it should be, every nun and novice sound asleep in their beds. That is, until you came across the convent cemetery: a pile of dirt, a shovel hastily flung away as soon as the distasteful task was complete—a grave profoundly disturbed. You might hear the sound of the convent beginning to wake, shouts from the distance, screams even. The sight of flames licking out of a dormitory window would catch your eye, red hot against the black of the sky.

Later, as the sleep-tousled heads of the novices were being counted, one would be found missing—and all that was left of another was a burned, blackened body. However, if you were to follow the footsteps of two young women—through the back gate in the noise and confusion of the fire, down side-streets and alleyways to lose the scent, and then off into the countryside to freedom—you might hear the remnants of their laughter as they ran, giddy, from the scene of their crime. The name of one of these two girls has been lost to history, but the other—the one who engineered the escape, digging up the body of a recently deceased nun, placing it in her lover’s bed, and setting the dormitory ablaze as a distraction—is Julie d’Aubigny, more often known by her stage name, Mademoiselle Maupin.

Methodology and Sources

Unfortunately, very few of Maupin’s adventures can be supported by hard historical evidence. From the scant archival sources surviving from her lifetime, we can conclusively confirm her employment at the Paris Opéra as a soloist, her performances of several—but not all

—of her operatic roles, and very little else.[1] Records of her birth, marriage, and death are all missing; even her widely-accepted first name, Julie, is recorded only by one letter of dubious origins.[2] Many of the most informative sources available about her life were written decades after her death, and even more problematically, these sources often contradict each other, making it difficult to sort the fact from the fiction. Undoubtedly, some of the stories about Maupin were sensationalized or even fabricated over the years, evolving as their heroine gained almost legendary status. However, there is also a distinct possibility that some stories were affected by censorship: scandalized authors may have felt the need to shield sensitive readers from the most shocking of Maupin's exploits.

Once again, in the face of an impossibly muddy history, I propose a playful, reconstructive approach. There has yet to be written an academic, English-language study which explores Maupin's story in-depth and gathers together the various sources (scholarly, historical, and otherwise) available on her life: my purpose in the next two chapters is to provide just such a resource. In this first chapter I trace, as far as possible, an outline of Maupin's life. Due to the variable reliability of the sources available, this is not a particularly easy task—so I note the many vagaries, contradictions, and impossibilities along the way. After piecing together this speculative biography, the following chapter contextualizes Maupin's story within the culture of late seventeenth-century France.

In *Boccherini's Body*, Elisabeth Le Guin writes: "a precise documentation of any life is at best problematic, and there are some heartbreaking holes in the documentation of Boccherini's. By focusing on the fabric around these holes, I choose the suggestive over the demonstrative."[3] Similarly, in reconstructing Maupin's life, I have allowed myself the pleasure of conjecture, bringing my primary methodology of play to the forefront. For theoretical support I turn to

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[1] Sylvie Bouissou, Pascal Denécheau, and France Marchal-Ninosque, eds., *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime (1669-1791)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 3: 732-733; Jérôme de La Gorce, "L'Académie Royale de Musique en 1704, d'après des documents inédits conservés dans les archives notariales," *Revue de musicologie* 65, no. 2 (1979): 175; Carl B. Schmidt, *The Livrets of Jean-Baptiste Lully's Tragédies Lyriques: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Performers' Editions, 1995), 18, 423. These sources rely primarily on legal documents concerning the financial management of the Paris Opéra, and printed libretti, which often (but not always) list the cast.

[2] "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)," *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, Encyclopedia.com, https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/maupin-daubigny-c-1670-1707.

[3] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 4.

Dinshaw, who argues that the "unspeakability" of queer history necessitates a certain amount of engagement with ambiguity, absence, and silence.[4] If Le Guin begins by "focusing on the fabric around [the] holes," I want to go further, and weave the threads of my own knowledge and experience together with the frayed edges of Maupin's story.[5] After all, when a life is already defined at least as much by legend as by fact, is there any harm in a little transparent speculation?

I can sort my materials for this fantastical tapestry into four broad categories. The first consists of biographical sources from the decades either during or following Maupin's life. These are generally brief, mostly taking the form of short encyclopedic entries[6] or appearing as scandalous anecdotes in larger works and memoirs.[7] Unfortunately, no written source remains that can be conclusively attributed to Maupin herself—instead, much is filtered through dubious second-hand narratives and tabloid-esque publications.

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[4] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 5.
[5] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 4.
[6] Nicolas Boindin, *Lettres historiques sur tous les spectacles de Paris* (Paris: Chez Pierre Prault, 1719); Marcel Brunet, "Concert for Monseigneur and Duc d'Orleans," *Mercure galant* (Paris), July, 1702; Marcel Brunet, "Feste donnée à Mr le Duc de Montoüe par Mr le Baron de Breteuil," *Mercure galant* (Paris), June, 1704; Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. 3 (London: 1789); J. M. B. Clément and J. de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques* (Paris: Duchesne, 1775); Benjamin La Borde, *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne*, vol. 3 (Paris: 1780); Jean François de Lacroix,"La Maupin," in *Dictionnaire historique portatif des femmes célebres* (Paris: L. Cellot, 1769); *L'Année littéraire ou Suite des Lettres sur quelques ecrits de ce temps* (Amsterdam: 1758); Joseph de Laporte, *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou, Suite du Calendrier historique et chronologique des theatres* (Paris: Chez Duchesne, 1784); Claude Parfaict and François Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Lambert, 1756); Claude Parfaict and François Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique depuis son établissement jusqu'à présent," (unpublished manuscript, 1741, Département des manuscrits, Bibliothèque nationale de France, copy, 1835); "Singular Account of La Maupin," in *The New annual register, or General repository of history, politics, and literature, for the year, 1789* (London: G. G. J., and J. Robinson, 1790).
[7] Marquis de Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 8 (Paris: 1856); Pierre-Louis d'Aquin de Chateau-Lyon, *Lettres sur les hommes celebres, dans les sciences, la littérature & les beaux arts, sous le regne de Louis XV: Premiere partie* (Paris: Duschesne, 1752); Anne Marguerite Petit Du Noyer, *Lettres Historiques et Galantes de Deux Dames de Condition, Dont L'une Étoit à Paris, & L'autre en Province* (Cologne: P. Marteau, 1733); Anne Marguerite Petit Du Noyer, *Mémoires et lettres galantes de madame Du Noyer (1663-1720)*, ed. Arnelle (Paris: L. Michaud, 1910); Guillaume Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois: A Complete Unabridged Translation from the French,* trans. Ernest Dowson (New York: Priv. print, 1929); Jean Laurent, sieur de Freneuse Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: François Fippens, 1705); *L'Histoire de madame de Mucy* (Amsterdam: Chez Jean Frederic Bernard, 1731); Louis de Rouvroy duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Saint-Simon: Nouvelle édition collationnée sur le manuscrit autographe, augmentée des additions de Saint-Simon au Journal de Dangeau* (Paris: Hachette, 1879-1931).

The second category includes sources from the nineteenth century, mostly encyclopedic entries of varying lengths.[8] In general, these are more extensive than the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources. They are also by far the most numerous category, and are valuable as their authors may have had access to primary sources no longer extant. Further, these nineteenth-century writings are a fascinating testament to changing attitudes about gender and sexuality, and routinely include extensive moralizing on the part of their authors.

Third is a group of longer, book-length biographies from the early twentieth century—admirably comprehensive but often highly romanticized, and not particularly scholarly in their spotty citation of earlier sources.[9] It is likely these more extensive re-tellings were inspired by the ongoing popularity of—and controversy surrounding—Théophile Gautier's influential 1835 novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, which was (very) loosely based on the real Maupin's life.[10] Finally, from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries come many shorter sources:

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[8] Babault, *Annales dramatiques: ou, Dictionnaire général des théâtres*, vol. 6 (Paris: 1810); Édouard de Beaumont, *The Sword and Womankind: Being an Informative History of Indiscreet Revelations*, adapted by Alfred Allinson from *L'Épée et les femmes*, 1882 (NY: Panurge Press, 1929); Blaze Castil, *L'Académie impériale de musique: histoire, littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galant de ce theatre, de 1645 a 1855* (Paris: Castil-Blaze, 1855); Ellen Creathorne Clayton, "Early French Singers—Marthe Le Rochois—La Maupin," in *Queens of Song: Being Memoirs of Some of the Most Celebrated Female Vocalists*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1863); Émile Colombey, *Histoire Anecdotique du Duel* (Brussels: Meline, Cans et Cie, 1861); Émile Deschanel, *La vie des comédiens: romans, comédies, satires, biographies, mémoires, anecdotes* (Leipzig: Collection Hetzel, 1875-1885); Albert Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France: Théâtre français, Opéra, Opéra-comique, Théâtre-italien, Vaudeville, théâtres forains, etc.,* vol. 1 (Paris: E. Dentu, 1864); Henry Sutherland Edwards, *The Prima Donna: Her History and Surroundings from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (London: Remington and Co. Publishers, 1888); Marie Escudier and Léon Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres: précédées des Musiciens de l'Empire; et suivies de La vie anecdotique de Paganini* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1856); Willey Francis Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians* (London: Weekes & Co., 1896); Arsène Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra: Portraits, camées, profils, silhouettes*, vol. 5 of *Oeuvres de Arsène Houssaye* (Paris: H. Plon, 1860); Adolphe Julien, "L'Opéra sous l'ancien régime," in *Les Lettres et les arts*, vol. 3 (Paris: 1888); "Maupin, La," in *A Dictionary of Musicians: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time*, vol. 7 (London: Sainsbury and Co., 1824); Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," in *Le monde dramatique: revue des spectacles anciens et modernes*, vol. 1 (Paris; Grégoire, 1835); Georges Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," in *Chroniques secrètes et galantes de l'Opéra, 1667-1844* (Paris: Gabriel Roux et Cassanet, Éditeurs, 1846); Jean-Nicolas de Tralage, *Notes et documents sur l'histoire des théâtres de Paris au XVIIe siècle, extraits, mis en ordre et publiés d'après le manuscrit original*, ed. Paul Lacroix (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1880).

[9] Oscar Paul Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin: Swashbuckler and Operatic Star," in *Women in Men's Guise*, trans. J. Lewis May (London: John Lane, 1932); Gabriel Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin (1670-1707): Sa Vie, Ses Duels, Ses Aventures* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1904); Cameron Rogers, "La Maupin," in *Gallant Ladies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928); Bram Stoker, *Famous Imposters* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1910).

[10] Janet Sadoff, "Ambivalence, Ambiguity and Androgyny in Theophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle De Maupin*" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1987), 1-9.

biographical sketches,[11] brief passages within larger works on related subjects,[12] and popular retellings of Maupin's most exciting escapades.[13] These are generally more transparent about their sources than earlier writings, yet often lack any type of critical engagement with these historical texts. For example, they largely fail to acknowledge the vast differences between our own century's views on gender and sexuality and those of Maupin's day. One notable exception is Kelly Gardiner's article "Fictions of Love: Writing about Seventeenth Century Ideas of Love

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[11] Roger Blanchard and Roland de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*; Jean Gourret and Jean Giraudeau, "La Maupin," in *Encyclopédie des cantatrices de l'Opéra de Paris* (Paris: Mengès, 1981); "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)"; Jessica Amanda Salmonson, *The Encyclopaedia of Amazons: Women Warriors from Antiquity to the Modern Era* (New York: Paragon House, 1991); Richard Somerset-Ward, *Angels and Monsters: Male and Female Sopranos in the Story of Opera, 1600-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989); Benjamin Mather Woodbridge, "La genèse de Mademoiselle de Maupin," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 33, no. 3 (1926): 427–30.

[12] Antonia L. Banducci, "*Tancrède* by Antoine Danchet and André Campra: Performance History and Reception (1702-1764)" (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 1990); Richard Cohen, *By the Sword: A History of Gladiators, Musketeers, Samurai, Swashbucklers, and Olympic Champions* (New York: Random House, 2002); Charles Neilson Gattey, *Queens of Song* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1979); Neil Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria: Louis-Joseph d'Albert de Luynes, Prince de Grimberghen," *Court Historian (London, England)* 17, no. 1 (2012): 61–85).

[13] Jim Burrows, "The Adventures of La Maupin," Mlle. Maupin, http://www.eldacur.com/~brons/Maupin/LaMaupin.html; Cartoons for Kids, "The Sword-Fighting Opera Singer Julie d'Aubigny | Corpse Talk," YouTube, May 24, 2022, video, 7:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxWiNC3lvSw; Ciaran Conliffe, "Julie 'La Maupin' D'Aubigny, Swashbuckling Opera Singer," Headstuff, February 2, 2016, https://headstuff.org/culture/history/julie-la-maupin-daubigny-swashbuckling-opera-singer/; Danny, "Julie D'Aubigny: Duellist, Opera Singer, Agitator," Exploring History, July 17, 2020, https://medium.com/exploring-history/julie-daubigny-duellist-opera-singer-and-agitator-1e44d219dd1e; Mo B. Dick, "1690-1705 Mademoiselle de Maupin," Drag King History, https://dragkinghistory.com/1690-1705-mademoiselle-de-maupin/; Extra History, "Julie d'Aubigny - Duelist, Singer, Radical - Extra History," YouTube, October 13, 2018, video, 9:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=6QaBYLAOaSY; Forgotten Lives, "The Scandalous Life of the Lady Deullist | Julie d'Aubigny," YouTube, December 22, 2020, video, 17:09, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeWEpa5inbA; Kelly Gardiner, "The Real Life of Julie d'Aubigny," KellyGardiner.com, https://kellygardiner.com/fiction/books/goddess/the-real-life-of-julie-daubigny/; Geffen Playhouse, "Five French Facts: Julie d'Aubigny," YouTube, January 6, 2020, video, 2:18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsemFQxGqyw; Aurora von Goeth, "Julie d'Aubigny, Mademoiselle Maupin," Party Like 1660, https://partylike1660.com/julie-daubigny-mademoiselle-maupin/; "Julie de Maupin, Operatic Sword Fighter," Interesting People in History, https://whatisarchaeo.wixsite.com/whatisarchaeology/la-maupin; Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, "The Sword-fighting, Bisexual Badass La Maupin // Julie d'Aubigny," YouTube, January 29, 2021, video, 13:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbmf8D1qqcc; Jason Porath, "Julie d'Aubigny: Princess of the Opera," Rejected Princesses, https://www.rejectedprincesses.com/princesses/julie-daubigny; Georg Predota, "The Lesbian Diva and Swordswoman! Julie d'Aubigny aka Mademoiselle Maupin," Interlude, October 29, 2016, https://interlude.hk/lesbian-diva-swordswoman-julie-daubigny-aka-mademoiselle-maupin/; Aja Romano, "This 17th-century sword-swinging opera star will rule the internet in 2013," The Daily Dot, updated February 25, 2017, http://www.dailydot.com/culture/julie-daubigny-swordswoman-opera-singer-meme/; Ben Thompson, "Julie D'Aubigny," Badass of the Week, http://www.badassoftheweek.com/lamaupin.html; Watcher Entertainment, "The Scandalous Life of France's Bisexual Opera Icon - Puppet History," YouTube, July 28, 2023, video, 46:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0XFug0yc2A&list=TLPQMDQwODIwMjOyIQ84mttOSg&index=2; Alan Westby, "Julie d'Aubigny: La Maupin and Early French Opera," Los Angeles Public Library, June 28, 2017, https://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/blogs/lapl/julie-daubigny-la-maupin-and-early-french-opera.

and Gender," which explicitly uses Maupin as an example to explore early modern culture.[14] Other more nuanced sources have been released recently, including Kaz Rowe's 2022 YouTube video essay evaluating the often-dubious historical sources which first recorded Maupin's convent escapade, and an episode of the BBC podcast "You're Dead To Me," researched by Bethan Davies and Kelly Gardiner.[15]

An Attempted Biography

We begin with a list of uncertainties: the person history has come to know as Julie d'Aubigny was born around the year 1673, likely in Paris.[16] Her father Gaston d'Aubigny was employed as secretary of the prominent courtier the Comte d'Armagnac, and was by all accounts equally addicted to alcohol, adventure, and women.[17] As d'Armagnac was King Louis XIV's Grand Equerry, her father's post allowed the young Julie to receive an unusually comprehensive education, similar to that of the pages trained for the King's stables, and even as a child she showed a particular talent for fencing.[18] In his 1928 book *Gallant Ladies*, Cameron Rogers claims that Julie's father taught her to wield a sword himself, while Oscar Paul Gilbert writes that her instructors were Jean and François Rousseau and André Versesson de Liancourt.[19]

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[14] Kelly Gardiner, "Fictions of Love: Writing about Seventeenth Century Ideas of Love and Gender," in *Past and Present: Perspectives on Gender and Love*, eds. Kelly Gardiner and Sina V. Pfister (Oxford, England: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2015). In 2014 Gardiner also wrote a fictional retelling of Maupin's life, a novel titled *Goddess*. Kelly Gardiner, *Goddess*, (London: 4th Estate: HarperCollins, 2014).

[15] Kaz Rowe, "Examining the Chaotic Legend of Julie D'Aubigny: the Sapphic Swordfighting Opera Singer," YouTube, August 24, 2022, video, 47:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOM_ohW6FQc; Greg Jenner, host, "Julie d'Aubigny," You're Dead To Me (podcast), researched by Bethan Davies and Kelly Gardiner, July 22, 2022, accessed December 30, 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0cncgq8.

[16] Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 168; Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 328; Deschanel, *La vie des comédiens*, 256; Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France*, 257; *L'Année littéraire*, 84. A few later sources record a 1670 birthdate: Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 174; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 15-16; Rogers, "La Maupin," 179. Letainturier-Fradin may have started the trend of contesting the 1673 birthdate, as he acknowledges it yet writes: "We would tend to advance this date and bring it to 1670; no text confirms this opinion, but the date of the debut of Mademoiselle Maupin at the Opera being 1690, she would have been only seventeen at the time of this event, and would already have accomplished a number of feats, impossible for such a young woman. Moreover, the biographers have her marrying at seventeen and debuting in 1693, or even in 1695, whereas the date of her first appearance at the Opera is really December 1690." [Nous pencherions pour avancer cette date et la porter à 1670; aucun texte ne confirme cette opinion, mais la date du début de Mademoiselle Maupin à l'Opéra étant de 1690, elle n'aurait eu que dix-sept ans lors de cet évènement, et déjà aurait accompli nombre de prouesses, impossible à une aussi jeune fille. D'ailleurs, les biographes la font se marier à dix-sept ans et débuter en 1693, et même en 1695, alors que la date de sa première apparition à l'Opéra est réellement du mois de décembre 1690.] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 15-16. All translations mine, unless otherwise noted.

[17] *L'Année littéraire*, 84-85; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 14.

[18] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 15.

[19] Rogers, "La Maupin," 180; Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 174.

Author Kelly Gardiner believes that Julie and her father likely moved from Paris to Versailles in 1682, along with the rest of the royal court.

Julie became the Comte d'Armagnac's lover in her teens.[20] Gilbert casts a fourteen-year-old Julie as the instigator of the affair: the "tall, strong, strapping girl, as skilled in seduction as in the art of attack and defence, conquered the affections of Monsieur d'Armagnac, to whom her father could scarcely refuse her."[21] Rogers, on the other hand, addresses the power dynamic inherent in this relationship: "D'Armagnac commanded her presence as an appetizer to his dinner one summer evening, examined her with pleasurable surprise, pinched her ear and nodded to her father. Not precisely an example of the operation of the 'droit de cuissage,' but a custom to which D'Aubigny and far less his daughter might take no exception."[22] Possibly in an attempt to gloss over her other less appropriate dalliances, Julie was quickly married off to a reassuringly boring young man named Maupin who hailed from Saint-Germain-en-Laye.[23] Georges Touchard-Lafosse documents the marriage as taking place around 1691, which—if we accept the 1673 birthdate—would make Julie about eighteen years of age.[24] However, this marriage date contradicts the date of her debut at the Opéra, listed in the Parfaiçt brothers' 1741 "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique" as December of 1690.[25] Since she was already known under her married name "La Maupin" at the time of her Paris debut, it is more likely that Julie was married a few years earlier, perhaps even as early as 1687.[26] Depending on the accuracy of her birthdate, she could have been as young as fifteen or sixteen.

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[20] Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 103; Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 35; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 17. Rogers claims Julie was sixteen at the time. Rogers, "La Maupin," 180-181.
[21] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 175.
[22] Rogers, "La Maupin," 181.
[23] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 328. Drag King History and *Women in World History* give the husband a first name, Jean Maupin. Dick,"1690-1705 Mademoiselle de Maupin;" "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)."
[24] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 216.
[25] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315, 232-233. See also Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:5. However, *L'Année littéraire* records the debut in 1695. *L'Année littéraire*, 86-87. In fact, in *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, the Parfaict brothers contradict themselves by listing Maupin's debut as 1695 in their entry on the singer herself, while the entry for *Cadmus & Hermione* clearly marks the 1690 production as Maupin's debut. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 3:351. The Parfaicts' 1741 manuscript "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," clearly gives Maupin's debut as the 1690 revival of Cadmus, as well as listing the same date in an entry on *Énée et Lavinie*, explaining that the revival of *Cadmus* took over the theatre after *Énée* closed in December 1690, after just a month of performances. Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315, 232-233. Based on this evidence, I suspect the incorrect 1695 debut date comes from a copying error between the 1741 manuscript and the 1756 *Dictionnaire*.
[26] "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)."

Shortly after the marriage was performed, the groom was shipped off to a post collecting the king's taxes in the provinces.[27] It is unclear whether this exile was organized by d'Armagnac in order to keep his child-mistress close and available, or if Julie herself engineered it as a way to loosen the restrictions of matrimony.[28] A few sources accept the latter premise, claiming that d'Armagnac was furious with Julie upon discovering that she had effectively banished her husband.[29] I am more inclined to believe that d'Armagnac—the only person in Julie's life at the time with enough power to arrange such an appointment—had a hand in the affair. However it was managed, this marriage of separation afforded Julie enough independence to set out on her first series of adventures: she promptly ran off with a young fencing master named Séranne.[30]

From Paris to Marseille

Some sources claim that Julie first began to wear men's clothing at this point, in order to travel safely, and subsequently developed a taste for it.[31] To me it seems unlikely that a budding fencer educated among page boys had never previously managed to wrangle her way into a pair of breeches—but in any case, it was in male costume that both Julie and Séranne made their way to Marseille.[32] The two travellers paid their way by singing and giving exhibition fights in taverns.[33] (In an isolated variation, Gilbert claims that the two began giving these shows in Paris, but were forced to flee under pressure from the lieutenant of police, M. de la Reynie, who was pursuing Séranne for the crime of duelling.[34]) It appears that at least on the way to Marseille,

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[27] Beaumont, *The Sword and Womankind*, 356; Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 103; Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," 282.
[28] Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 35.
[29] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 175; Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 176. Rogers presents a convincing compromise: that d'Armagnac sent M. Maupin to the provinces once he (d'Armagnac) tired of Julie, and was subsequently angry that she stayed in Paris rather than accompanying her husband. Rogers, "La Maupin," 181.
[30] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 176; *L'Année littéraire*, 85; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 22. Blanchard and de Candé give Séranne a first name, Jacques. Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 103.
[31] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 22; Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 168.
[32] Rogers agrees, claiming that Julie dressed habitually as a boy even in her childhood. Rogers, "La Maupin," 180.
[33] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 25.
[34] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 176.

Julie did not attempt to pass[35] as a man, despite wearing men's clothing.[36] Several sources relate how, when audience members refused to believe that she was a woman, she responded by tearing open her shirt and offering them visible proof.[37] Likely, the two lovers capitalized on the sensational spectacle of a woman duelling against a man and winning.

Eventually the pair found work singing at the Marseille Academy of Music, auditioning for director and founder Pierre Gaultier.[38] Julie, performing under the name Mlle d'Aubigny, found success in both comic and serious roles.[39] Gates, in his 1896 *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, claims she sang male roles, and Ellen Creathorne Clayton even goes so far as to say that Julie sang under the name M. d'Aubigny, suggesting that she had begun passing as a man.[40] Conversely, Gilbert writes that "her contralto impressed them very considerably. At that time contralto parts were taken exclusively by castrated males. It was a revolution to find that a real woman could fulfil [the role]."[41] What to do with such contradictory evidence? Gilbert's claim seems particularly unlikely, as French audiences of this period famously and vehemently disliked castrati, and composers instead wrote heroic parts for high tenors known as *haute-contres*.[42] While the *haute-contre* range is similar to a very low contralto, would the timbre have been different enough to cause some speculation? Could Julie truly have been mistaken for an *haute-contre* onstage?

Gilbert might argue that the rarity of the contralto voice, and its unfamiliarity to French audiences, could have facilitated this interesting slippage between categories of gender and sex. Additionally, there are records from other writers of this time who claim to have encountered women singing professionally as castrati. In his memoir, the notorious Casanova tells the story of

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[35] "Passing" is a term used to describe a person of one social group generally being perceived as a member of a different social group or identity. Historically, "passing" was most often used to refer to a racialized person being perceived as white, but the word has now been adopted by many marginalized groups, including trans people as a way to describe the experience of being perceived as a particular (cis) gender.
[36] "La Maupin . . . dressed as a Cavalier though her audiences were informed of her sex." Rogers, "La Maupin," 182.
[37] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 177.
[38] *L'Année littéraire*, 85-86; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 27-28; Rogers, "La Maupin," 183. Rogers writes: "M. Gaultier gave her an audition, marked the notable volume and rich timbre of her voice, and despite its obvious uncultivation, engaged her at once. Her début proved a brilliant success, her notes entrancing critics to whom the 'bas-dessus' was a new tone in French opera." Rogers, "La Maupin," 183.
[39] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 27-28; Rogers, "La Maupin," 183.
[40] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 54; Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, 252.
[41] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 177.
[42] Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 237.

a young woman who disguised herself in order to pass for a castrato. Rather unbelievably, Casanova was the only one able to divine her true sex, ostensibly because he was an expert in the forms of beautiful women. The ease with which he claims to have seen through her disguise on the occasion of their first meeting suggests that Casanova has embellished an unlikely tale in order to present a sensational story—or perhaps to excuse himself of any whiff of homosexual attraction.[43] In the end, no source other than Clayton definitively claims that Maupin lived as a man in Marseille, and numerous sources indicate that she sang under the name Mlle d'Aubigny.[44] So, while it may be true that she sang male roles, it seems highly unlikely that Maupin was presenting publicly as a man.

The First Sapphic Affair

Clayton is particularly squeamish when it comes to Julie's sexuality, and her claims about the singer passing as male may in fact be an attempt to explain away the next chapter in her adventures. One night while she was performing at the Marseille Academy of Music, a young lady in the boxes attracted Julie's eye.[45] Various authors give their own version of events: some say the young girl foolishly fell in love with Julie, and she "for a whim, encouraged this predilection."[46] Others assert that Julie was the one instantly smitten, and that she pursued the girl relentlessly. Arsène Houssaye's 1860 *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra* gives a particularly evocative description of the attraction:

> One evening the actress suddenly stopped in her soliloquy, full of admiration before a young girl of marvellous beauty, who appeared to her radiant. . . . During the whole performance she played only for this young girl; the next day she wrote to her the most passionate letter; two days later she met her and managed to tell her, in front of her mother, that she felt as if she was her sister and that she did not want to live without seeing her. The girl let herself be caught up in this powerful magnetism. She answered

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[43] Jacques Casanova, *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt: The Prince of Adventurers*, abridged ed., vol. 1 of 2 (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1902), 45-47.
[44] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 177.
[45] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 328; *L'Année littéraire*, 86. Drag King History and *Women in World History* give the girl a name, Cécilia Bortigali; however, I have found no corroborating sources. Dick, "1690-1705 Mademoiselle de Maupin;" "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)."
[46] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 54.

> the actress's letters; she allowed her . . . to talk to her for an hour at church; she promised to attend all her performances. It was a scandal in the city.[47]

Gabriel Letainturier-Fradin describes the seduction in the pathological terms typical of early twentieth-century views on homosexuality: "through intrigue she [Julie] managed to see her, and took advantage of this circumstance to deliver such disturbing and tender speeches that unhealthy curiosity entered the pure soul of the girl. The actress, with her strong will, by persuasion, by suggestion, convinced the girl to share her desires."[48] Both Houssaye and Letainturier-Fradin attempt to excuse the affair by citing Julie's irresistibly magnetic personality, reflecting the harmful trope of casting the active partner in a sapphic relationship as the "true" deviant, with the seduced girl as an innocent, passive victim.[49]

Meanwhile, in his 1896 *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, Willey Francis Gates neatly sidesteps the entire issue by claiming that the young lady believed Julie to be a man.[50] Similarly, Albert Du Casse insists in his 1864 *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France* that Julie deliberately deceived the girl into believing she was male.[51] In another nineteenth-century source, however, Touchard-Lafosse openly ponders the ambiguity of the situation: "did the little Marseillaise think she was loved by a pretty horseman, or did she also indulge in lesbian illusions? That is what we cannot say . . ."[52] Gilbert adds a rather absurd level of detail into his explanation, claiming that Maupin felt a little blond girl would set off her taller frame and dark hair very well: "what a piquant contrast it would be if a virile woman like herself were to show

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[47] Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 177. [. . . un soir la comédienne s'arrête tout à coup dans son monologue, toute saisie d'admiration devant une jeune fille d'une merveilleuse beauté, qui lui apparaît toute rayonnante à l'avant-scène. Durant toute la représentation elle ne joua que pour cette jeune fille; le lendemain elle lui écrivit la lettre la plus passionnée; le surlendemain elle la rencontra et parvint à lui dire, en face de sa mère, qu'elle sentait bien qu'elle était sa soeur et qu'elle ne voulait plus vivre sans le voir. La jeune fille se laissa prendre à ce magnétisme de la force. Elle répondit aux lettres de la comédienne, elle lui permit un jour de lui parler toute une heure à l'église, elle lui promit d'être à toutes ses représentations. Ce fut un scandale par la ville.]
[48] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 29-30. [Elle intrigua autour d'elle parvint à la voir, et profita de cette circonstance pour lui tenir des discours si troublants, si tendres, que la curiosité malsaine entra dans l'âme pure de la jeune fille. La comédienne, avec sa forte volonté, arriva par persuasion, par suggestion, à faire partager ses désirs.]
[49] Hanne Blank, *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 17.
[50] Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, 252.
[51] Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France*, 257.
[52] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 217-218. [Le petite Marseillaise se croyait-elle aimée par un joli cavalier, ou se livrait-elle aussi aux illusions lesbiennes? c'est ce que nous ne pouvons. . .]

herself about town in company with some blonde-tressed maiden. How it would show up her dark-hued charms."[53]

The Convent Escape

Despite varying levels of voyeurism and pearl-clutching, all of the sources which include this episode agree that the young woman's parents were very concerned about their daughter's reputation—whether they believed Maupin to be a man or a woman, they promptly shut the girl away in a convent in Avignon.[54] Again, Touchard-Lafosse sums up the ambiguity of the situation: "either the parents of the girl feared a real danger for their daughter, learning upon researching of an individual who, still wearing the clothes of a rider, had been able to deceive them on her sex, or, they only wanted to guard this young person against the stirring of a ridiculous scandal."[55] Regardless of the parents' motives, Julie followed her lover's trail to Avignon and was able to locate the convent where she was being kept under lock and key.[56] Gilbert is the only source to name the institution as the Convent of the Visitandines; however, he also claims the incident took place in March of 1691, which would place it after Maupin's debut at the Paris Opéra in 1690.[57] This contradicts the generally accepted timeline that the convent adventure occurred earlier, during Maupin's tenure at the Marseille Opera.

Ever the pragmatist, Julie entered the convent under the pretence of becoming a novice.[58] Letainturier-Fradin specifically writes that she called upon her refined acting skills to convince the Mother Superior she was a poor innocent girl in need of a safe place to stay in order to guard her virtue.[59] Once Julie was admitted to the convent, the two lovers were able to live together in close proximity. Gates claims that the young woman continued to believe Julie to be a man throughout the whole adventure, interpreting her noviciate dress as a convenient disguise.[60]

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[53] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 178.
[54] *L'Année littéraire*, 86.
[55] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 217. [Soit que les parents de la demoiselle craignissent un danger réel pour leur fille, en apprenant la recherche d'un individu qui, portant toujours des habits de cavalier, avait pu les tromper sur son sexe, soit qu'ils voulussent seulement dérober cette jeune personne au retentissement d'un scandale ridicule, ils la firent entrer dans un couvent à Avignon.]
[56] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 179.
[57] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 171.
[58] *L'Année littéraire*, 86.
[59] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 32.
[60] Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, 252.

Strangely, in their 1856 *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, Marie and Léon Escudier leave out the affair with the young woman altogether, simply asserting that Julie entered a convent on a whim, and was then compelled to escape by her own restlessness.[61]

When a young nun died of an illness, Julie seized upon the chance to escape.[62] After exhuming the recently buried corpse, Julie placed it in her lover's bed as a decoy and, after setting the convent dormitory on fire as a distraction, fled with her beloved.[63] After this the story becomes particularly muddy. Most sources agree that Julie was condemned to be burned, but that the sentence was never carried out for various reasons: either because the young girl returned to her parents soon after;[64] because the sentence was applied to an ostensibly male personage by the name of "sieur d'Aubigny;"[65] or because when Julie later ended up in Paris she had d'Armagnac plead her case to King Louis XIV, who pardoned her.[66] Cardinal Dubois—who admittedly heard the story second-hand from a hostile witness (the tenor Dumenil, who later worked with Julie at the Paris Opéra and was on at least one occasion the victim of her violent vengeance)—writes that the pair "took refuge in Germany, and let themselves be tried and found guilty in default. Maupin was condemned to be burned . . . she owed her impunity to the forgetfulness of justice and the protection of her lovers."[67]

Gilbert, on the other hand, suggests that Julie quickly grew bored of the girl and abandoned her.[68] Gates tells a similar story: "tiring of the part she was playing, she discovered her sex to her admirer and sent her home to her mother, sadder, and perhaps wiser."[69] Although he provides no hard proof, Cameron Rogers definitively claims that three months passed between the escape from the convent and the return of the girl to her parents.[70] Bram Stoker's 1910

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[61] Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, 97.
[62] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 33.
[63] *L'Année littéraire*, 86; Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," 282.
[64] *L'Année littéraire*, 86; Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," 282.
[65] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 36. Rogers, "La Maupin," 185. Rogers addresses this theory at length: "The erroneous prefix was a tactful and delicate denial of the more shocking circumstance of the proceeding. . . . Apprehension was a danger hardly worthy to be reckoned with since the pathological peculiarities of thousands of thousands of handsome young adventurers answering more or less to her description would occupy the whole attention of the law for years."
[66] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 52. Rogers, "La Maupin," 187-188.
[67] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 183. While Dubois lived through the events he describes in his memoirs, scholars generally agree that as a source of historical fact his writings are unreliable at best. Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, xvi.
[68] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 181; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 37.
[69] Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, 252.
[70] Rogers, "La Maupin," 184.

Famous Imposters paints a particularly negative picture of the entire episode: Stoker claims that the girl believed Julie to be a man during the entire escapade, and that Julie took her against her will from the convent, holding her as a hostage until she finally escaped. Although captured by police after a fierce sword fight, Julie managed to escape justice due to the influence of her noble friends and her popularity at the Paris Opéra.[71] This last detail casts doubt on Stoker's trustworthiness, since most other sources agree that the convent incident occurred when Julie was quite young, before she gained a place at the Opéra.

Back on the Road to Paris

While it is difficult to know exactly what happened immediately after the convent incident, it is at least certain that Julie was not executed. Most likely she lay low for a while, eking out a living singing in taverns—possibly, as Clayton suggests, performing songs which she herself had written, although none have survived.[72] At this point in the story, several sources quote what they claim are Julie's own words describing her encounter with a gentleman by the name of Maréchal.[73] In the passage, Julie relates how she was struck by the appearance of a retired actor who attended one of her performances. This man, Maréchal, promised her that under his tutelage she could be a star at the Paris Opéra within a few years. Julie accepted and Maréchal became her teacher for a time, until his addiction to alcohol became too debilitating.[74]

With this rather meagre training, Julie set off for Paris in search of fame and fortune. Around this time she quite dramatically made the acquaintance of Louis-Joseph d'Albert de Luynes, a young nobleman and an on-again-off-again lover with whom she maintained a close relationship throughout her life.[75] Most stories agree their first encounter began with the young Comte d'Albert offering Julie some sort of insult, causing her to draw her sword.[76] The two fought; she wounded him badly and stalked away satisfied while his friends carried him off to a

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[71] Stoker, *Famous Imposters*, 237-238.
[72] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 55.
[73] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 44-46.
[74] Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 36.
[75] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 46, 80. Gilbert writes that this first meeting took place "at the New Crown at Villeperdue, not far from Tours." Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 184.
[76] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 184.

surgeon.[77] Gilbert describes Julie being wracked with guilt over this incident: "she could not sleep . . . a sort of remorse tortured her all night long. She was continually conjuring up her adversary's visage, his soft blue eyes, his youth, his noble bearing. . . . She even went to inquire of the barber of the village whether his wounds were grave or not."[78] Other less romantic authors describe her being summoned quite reluctantly to d'Albert's bedside. Letainturier-Fradin writes that d'Albert was shocked when he found out he had been beaten by a woman, and going over her features in his mind, in his sickbed decided he was in love with her: "d'Albert persisted in his idea, regularly tearing the bandages on his wound, worrying his friends about his illness, which soon worsened. Faced with this attitude, the relentless actress faltered and could not resist this act of courage."[79]

Whether d'Albert begged her to visit or she came of her own volition, Julie ended up nursing him back to health, and the two became lovers.[80] This particular chapter of their romance did not last long, however. Soon, d'Albert was recalled to his military duties and Julie was back on the road, continuing her journey to Paris.[81] On the way, she picked up a travelling companion —and possibly another lover—in the form of Gabriel-Vincent Thévenard, a bass singer also dreaming of success at the Opéra.[82] Gilbert claims that Julie was twenty-one at this point, and that Thévenard was twenty-five (although since this estimate is based on a 1670 birthdate, she may still have been as young as seventeen).[83] Once the two reached Paris, Thévenard immediately found employment in the opera chorus—but Julie was after a higher goal.[84] Many sources assert that she used the influence of various acquaintances to her advantage, from d'Armagnac to d'Albert to François Bouvard, a former singer and a favourite of the then-current music director Jean Nicolas Francine.[85] According to Letainturier-Fradin, Roger Blanchard, and

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[77] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 47.
[78] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 184-185.
[79] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 48. [. . . d'Albert persistait dans son idée, arrachait régulièrement les appareils posés sur sa blessure, inquiétait ses amis sur son mal, qui ne tarda pas à empirer. Devant cette attitude, l'implacable comédienne fléchit et ne put résister à cet acte de courage.]
[80] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 48.
[81] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 186. For more on d'Albert's life at this time, see Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria," 63-74.
[82] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 50-51. Gilbert specifies that the two singers met in Rouen. Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 186.
[83] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 186.
[84] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 59.
[85] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 187, 189; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 55.

Roland de Candé, it was finally through Bouvard that Julie obtained an audition, and subsequently a place among the soloists of the Opéra (then also known as the Académie Royale de Musique, and at that time housed in a wing of the Palais-Royal).[86]

Fig. 1. Two engravings depicting Maupin onstage at the Opéra.[87]

Professional Career

Gilbert adds that Julie faced the additional challenge of winning over the existing performers—in particular the women of the Opéra, whom he portrays as jealous rivals.[88] Thankfully the Paris audience proved an easier conquest: Julie's 1690 debut as Pallas Athena in a

[86] Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 107; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 61.
[87] Mademoiselle Maupin de l'Opéra (Paris: Trouvain, n.d., ca. 1700), Collection Michel Hennin, Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France, Tome 74, Pièce 6548, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Mademoiselle Maupin dansant à l'Opéra (Paris: J. Mariette, n.d., ca. 1700), Collection Michel Hennin, Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France, Tome 74, Pièce 6528, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
[88] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 188.

revival of Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* was enthusiastically received.[89] She appeared under her married name, and from then on became known as "Mlle Maupin" or simply "La Maupin."[90] Almost every source relates the story of her first entrance: having been lowered from the flies as Pallas Athena in her chariot, after her solo the applause was so great that she was forced to acknowledge it by taking off her helmet and bowing to the crowd.[91] Cardinal Dubois, fixating on the singer's great beauty, seems to call into question whether the audience applauded her due to her skills as a performer, or based on her looks alone.[92] Regardless, Maupin continued to find success at the Opéra for several years, and—unsurprisingly—had several adventures there as well.

Vengeance on Dumenil

One of her most famous escapades from this period was her revenge on the tenor Dumenil, a well-known singer who had a beautiful voice but was described by Rogers as "a vulgar, mannerless capon, snatched by Lully from a scullery for the sake of a voice undeniably glorious."[93] Not only did he make a habit of drinking heavily during rehearsals and performances, but he would also steal from and harass the actresses and dancers.[94] Early in their acquaintance, Dumenil apparently said something offensive to Maupin—possibly making

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[89] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315; Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:5; Somerset-Ward, *Angels and Monsters*, 27.
[90] *L'Année littéraire*, 86.
[91] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315; Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 329; *L'Année littéraire*, 87. "The public applauded her in transports. To mark her gratitude, she got up in her carriage, took off her helmet, and saluted the assembly, which responded with renewed applause." [Le Public l'applaudit avec transport. Pour lui en marquer sa reconnoissance [*sic*], elle se leva dans sa machine, ôta son casque, & salua l'assemblée qui répondit par de nouveaux battemens [*sic*] de mains.]
[92] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 181. "Maupin . . . had a siren's voice and knew not a note of music. I admired, however, as the public did; a proud and masculine face, an imposing figure, are qualities as useful at the theatre as elsewhere."
[93] Rogers, "La Maupin," 188.
[94] Henry Sutherland Edwards, *History of Opera from its Origin in Italy to the Present Time With Anecdotes of the Most Celebrated Composers and Vocalists of Europe* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1862), 24; Julien, "La Maupin," 137, 139.

unwanted advances towards her—and she took it as a grave insult.[95] She was soon able to enact her revenge.

Disguised in male attire, Maupin lay in wait for her colleague at the Place des Victoires.[96] Taking him by surprise, she challenged him to a duel, which he refused. Her response was to insult him and beat him with the flat of her sword, saying: "since you slander women and have not the courage to defend yourself against men, I am going to give myself the satisfaction of castigating a ruffian and humiliating a coward!"[97] Not content with this revenge, she demanded his watch and snuff-box for good measure, which he gave up without resistance.[98] The next day, Dumenil arrived to rehearsal bruised and spouting stories about having been attacked by three bandits who had—after a lengthy scuffle—stolen his watch and snuff-box.[99] Maupin's rebuttal was to laugh and throw the stolen trinkets at him, at the same time informing their colleagues of the true version of events.[100]

Dubois claims the quarrel happened when Dumenil let slip the story of the convent escape to Maupin's then-current lover, the Duc de Chartres. According to Dubois, Dumenil,

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[95] I suspect this incident took place during the rehearsals for the 1693 production of *Didon*, which is the only recorded instance of Dumenil and Maupin sharing the stage. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:306-307. *Women in World History* places it during rehearsals for *Cadmus et Hermione*, but I can find no corroborating sources, and Parfaict does not list Dumenil among the cast. "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)"; Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:4-5. Gilbert suggests that Dumenil's insult was motivated by jealousy of Maupin's admiration of soprano Marie Le Rochois, who had once been his lover. Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 190.

[96] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 314; Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 169. According to Babault, wearing men's clothing had by this time become a general habit for Maupin: "This dress, which she had begun to take in Marseille, suited her best; she wore it in Paris when she wanted to entertain, or she wanted to take revenge on someone who had insulted her." [Cet habillement, qu'elle avait commencé de prendre à Marseille, lui allait au mieux; elle le portait à Paris, lorsqu'elle voulait de divertir, ou qu'elle avait envie de se venger de quelqu'un qui l'avait insulté.] Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 169.

[97] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315; Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 191; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 68-69. ["Puisque tu insultes les femmes et que tu n'as pas le courage de te défendre contre les hommes, je vais me donner la satisfaction de corriger un insolent et d'humilier un lâche!"]

[98] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 69.

[99] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 70.

[100] The earliest recorded version of this entire incident is found in Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 314. Letainturier-Fradin records what he claims are Maupin's exact words: "Tu en as menti . . . tu n'es qu'un lâche et un poltron. . . . Tout ce que vient de vous raconter Duméni est un insigne mensonge: ce qu'il y a de vrai, c'est qu'il a été réellement attaqué . . . par moi seule. Ce fanfaron abject et vil, qui outrage si facilement les femmes, pâlit devant la pointe d'une épée. Après l'avoir au préalable souffleté, je lui ai demandé réparation; il tremblait comme une poule. Sur son refus de croiser le fer, je l'ai rossé d'importance, et pour témoigner de sa couardise, voici sa montre et sa tabatière. . . . Voilà, mesdemoiselles, comment il faut se conduire avec les hommes grossiers et insolents." Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 71. He seems to be extrapolating from the much shorter speech recorded by the Parfaict brothers: "Tu en as menti, lui dit la Maupin qui parut dans l'instant. C'est moi que t'ai donné des coups de plat de mon epée et voila ta montre et ta tabatière!" Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 314.

having been spurned by Maupin himself, was jealous of Maupin's affair with the Duc. Wanting to cause a quarrel between the two lovers, Dumenil told Dubois the story of the convent fire in Avignon, and Dubois passed it on to the Duc.[101] When Maupin discovered Dubois's involvement in the incident, she reportedly threatened him as well:

> She addressed me a note, in which she promised to kill me outright; I knew she was capable of keeping her word, and replied to her that abbés, like women, did not fight. This answer given, I kept on the alert, and her anger was spent in insults which I scorned; for prudence's sake, however, I refrained from going abroad for a fortnight.[102]

Bram Stoker offers an interesting variation of this story, claiming that the beating took place at the Opéra during a performance.[103] Strangely, he also paints Dumenil as a sympathetic character, rather than the usual boor: "the actor, M. Dumenil, an accomplished and favourite performer but a man of peaceful disposition, submitted to the affront."[104] As I find it highly unlikely that such a fight would be permitted inside the Opéra, I tend to disregard this particular version—and even more so because the Stoker source is generally an outlier. Further, the widely accepted version of the Dumenil story appears to originate from the 1741 manuscript written by the Parfaict brothers, who were career historians and therefore (potentially) a more trustworthy source.

The Royal Ball

This era in Maupin's life ended with another scandalous duel. The incident occurred while she was attending a masked ball at the Palais-Royal—to which she was not invited—hosted by Philippe d'Orléans, King Louis XIV's brother (then often known simply as

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[101] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 182-183.
[102] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 183.
[103] Stoker, *Famous Imposters*, 239.
[104] Stoker, *Famous Imposters*, 239.

"Monsieur").[105] Dubois speculates that she may have been admitted by her lover the Duc de Chartres, who was the son of Philippe d'Orléans.[106] She wore the costume of a cavalier, and apparently most of the guests took her for a man.[107] The real trouble began not because of her unsolicited attendance but because of her conduct: according to the 1758 *L'Année littéraire*, she "made very indecent remarks to a young lady."[108] The offence seems to have been inflated in subsequent retellings: while the 1775 *Anecdotes dramatiques* simply states that she insulted a woman, in 1860 Houssaye goes further, claiming that she physically restrained the lady or possibly grabbed her by the arm.[109] Still other sources say that she danced with the lady so many times it caused a stir,[110] or that she went so far as to kiss her.[111]

Cardinal Dubois, who claims to have been present at the ball that night, describes the encounter rather ambiguously: "the impudent creature [Maupin] did not confine herself to words, and a cry from Mademoiselle de Sery, simultaneous with a gesture of the Maupin, angered a certain Laboëssière, a cousin of the insulted lady, whose cause he espoused."[112] Whatever the nature of the indiscretion, Maupin was almost immediately challenged by three of the lady's friends and admirers.[113] Unfazed, she told the three men to meet her outside the palace, where she promptly defeated them all at once.[114] Legend has it that she pierced all three of them right through with one thrust of her sword, then coolly went back inside to beg the pardon of her host.[115] Dubois writes:

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[105] *Women in World History* claims this ball took place in February of 1696, while Rogers asserts it was held shortly after the 1693 production of *Didon*. "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707);" Rogers, "La Maupin," 193. Gilbert sets the ball in 1692, but this contradicts the timing of Maupin's appearances in *Didon*. Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 194; Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:306-307. Meanwhile, Blanchard and de Candé explain this by having Maupin's exile to Paris lasting only one year, from 1692 to 1693. I tend towards the 1696 date as it is supported by evidence that Maupin was still in Paris in 1695, at which time she reunited with d'Albert. Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria," 66. The writers of *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime* agree, dating Maupin's time in Brussels to between November of 1697 and July of 1698. Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 3:733.
[106] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 184.
[107] Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 169.
[108] *L'Année littéraire*, 88.
[109] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 330; Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 181.
[110] Salmonson, *The Encyclopaedia of Amazons*, 177.
[111] Porath, "Julie d'Aubigny: Princess of the Opera;" Rogers, "La Maupin," 194.
[112] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 185. Touchard-Lafosse supports this version of events, writing that the lady's loud protests caused the gentlemen to appear in her defence. Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 231.
[113] *L'Année littéraire*, 88-89.
[114] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 185.
[115] Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 97.

> Monsieur, being informed that the pretty dancer he had noticed so particularly was a woman in disguise, prevented her arrest; on the contrary, she returned to the ball in the midst of the general admiration, and Mademoiselle de Sery withdrew in despair; but the Duc de Chartres, to please his titular mistress [Sery], never saw the Amazon again.[116]

Sources disagree as to whether King Louis XIV was amused or enraged upon hearing of these events. While Gilbert asserts the latter, Letainturier-Fradin claims the former, explaining that the king was particularly lenient since the laws against duelling didn't officially apply to women.[117] Touchard-Lafosse, on the other hand, records that the king—while amused—issued a gentle warning, reminding Maupin that the duelling law *did* in fact apply to women.[118] Whether the danger of punishment was more or less serious, Maupin felt it prudent to leave Paris for Brussels until the scandal calmed down. In a fleeting echo of her youthful exploits, Houssaye has her disguised as a nun, fleeing the capital as a fugitive.[119]

Exile in Brussels and Spain

According to Gilbert, once Maupin reached Brussels she worked in the performing troupe belonging to the court.[120] This was not a dedicated opera company, but rather a more haphazard collection of actors, dancers, and musicians.[121] Soon after arriving in Brussels, she attracted the attention of the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Marie Emmanuel, and became his lover.[122] Letainturier-Fradin suggests that the Elector, who was notorious for his many affairs, was attracted to Maupin's androgyny in particular: "Accustomed to fat and indolent flesh, he found a prodigious aphrodisiac in the actress's sensual excesses, in her passionate and almost masculine

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[116] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 185.
[117] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 196; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 100.
[118] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 234.
[119] Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 181.
[120] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 196. Gilbert claims that Maupin reached Brussels in 1698 and subsequently joined the "Théatre de la Cour." However, this seems not to line up with Paris Opera performance records, which show that Maupin's hiatus from her work there lasted from 1693 to November of 1698. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:306-307; 5:413.
[121] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 196.
[122] *L'Année littéraire*, 89.

violence."[123] However, the Elector apparently found Maupin a bit too much for his tastes, and eventually sought solace in the arms of the gentler Comtesse d'Arcos.[124]

Adding insult to injury, the Elector tasked his new lover's husband, the Comte d'Arcos, with delivering the news of Maupin's replacement. The Elector attempted to soften the blow with a gift of forty thousand livres, but his scorned former lover was not in the least mollified.[125] Maupin reportedly threw the money at the poor messenger's head, following it with a few choice words.[126] Stoker—as usual, emphasizing Maupin's violent temper—adds that she kicked the Comte down the stairs for good measure.[127] Gilbert, Letainturier-Fradin, and Rogers all assert that Maupin reacted to the Elector's abandonment by stabbing herself with a real knife (rather than a rigged prop) while onstage as Dido in the opera *Énée* by Jean Wolfgang-Franck.[128] If this is true, she apparently survived without any grievous wounds, and eventually left Brussels with a comfortable pension of two thousand livres per year.[129]

Next on her grand tour, Maupin reportedly travelled to Spain, where her plans of becoming a theatrical success sadly fell far short of her expectations. Instead, she was forced to find employment as a lady's maid to the Countess Marino, by all accounts a particularly difficult and demanding mistress.[130] Once Maupin had finally saved up enough money to fund her travel back to France, she took her revenge. Dressing her employer's hair before a fancy ball, Maupin hid a few small radishes in the back of the coiffure—where the Countess couldn't see them, but the rest of the guests certainly would. By the time the Countess returned from the ball, fuming, her mercurial servant was long gone.[131]

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[123] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 106, 108. [Habitué aux chairs grasses et indolentes, il trouvait un prodigieux aphrodisiaque dans les emportements sensuels de l'actrice, dans ses violences passionnées et presque masculines.]
[124] Delightfully, Rogers writes that Maupin "proved too furious a bed-mate" for the Elector. Rogers, "La Maupin," 199.
[125] *L'Année littéraire*, 89.
[126] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 330.
[127] Stoker, *Famous Imposters*, 240.
[128] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 196; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 109; Rogers, "La Maupin," 199. This part of the story appears to originate from a letter by Madame du Noyer. Du Noyer, *Mémoires et lettres galantes de madame Du Noyer (1663-1720)*, 221. The incident does not appear in any of the other eighteenth-century sources, but it does have an interesting resonance with another story involving instead the Parisian opera singer Fanchon Moreau: "One day she [Maupin] stabbed herself with a knife in the breast, in despair at not having been able to win over an Actress of the Opera; it was the famous Moreau." [Un jour elle se donna un coup de canif dans le sein, de désespoir de n'avoir pû rien gagner sur une Actrice de l'Opéra; c'était la fameuse *Moreau*.] *L'Année littéraire*, 89.
[129] *L'Année littéraire*, 89; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 114.
[130] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 125.
[131] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 59.

Return to Paris

Maupin returned to the Paris stage in 1698, which Gilbert records as another huge success for the singer.[132] By 1702, she was taking on leading roles in her own right, as well as continuing to occasionally fill in as an understudy for leading lady Mlle Desmatins. Interestingly, Maupin seems to have been cast against expected type: the roles which were written for her as a first soloist were softer romantic leads, while Mlle Desmatins took over after Marie Le Rochois's retirement in 1698 as the *première* performer for more powerful, transgressive female characters. Strangely, some writers (most notably Stoker and Clayton) contradict this version of events, claiming that Maupin struggled to find the same success she had enjoyed previously.[133] I find it telling that the two authors most disapproving of Maupin's sexual non-conformity are similarly negative about her skills as a performer. However, it is possible that these accounts reflect critical responses which occurred when Maupin took on roles which the public considered outside of her natural vocal and theatrical proclivities.[134] Rogers supports this theory:

> Paris, which had always yielded her a large and vociferous following, gave her a clamorous welcome home, even though in one or two of the parts she later sang, a soprano and not a contralto was called for by the score. Of the 29 parts . . . only one failed to find favour with the public, that of Armide in the piece by that name. . . . La Maupin insisted on singing a soprano's part [in] a contralto's register and the result called forth a long and popular ballad of reproof. This was in November 1703, two years before her retirement.[135]

At this point, Gilbert and Touchard-Lafosse have Maupin summoning her husband back from the provinces to live with her in Paris.[136] This is accompanied by a general change of heart, with Maupin returning all the pensions given to her by former lovers—except, apparently, that of

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[132] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 201. While Gilbert claims Maupin returned to Paris in 1699, in fact she was recorded playing the role of Minerve in a revival of Lully's *Thésée* in November of 1698. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 5:413.
[133] Stoker, *Famous Imposters*, 240; Clayton, "Early French Singers," 60.
[134] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 214.
[135] Rogers, "La Maupin," 201. Rogers is not quite correct, as none of the other leading roles Maupin sang—including those written for her—are significantly lower in range or tessitura than the generic soprano type used at the Opéra at the time. In fact, all treble parts were written in a relatively restricted vocal range to ensure that almost any singer could fill the role in the case of a last-minute illness or other substitution. However, if Maupin did indeed transpose down the part of Armide, that would certainly have been unusual enough to be notable to the public.
[136] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 206; Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 239.

the Elector of Bavaria.[137] Clément and de la Porte's 1775 *Anecdotes dramatiques* agrees, adding that Monsieur Maupin died soon after in 1701.[138] In contrast, Houssaye dates the reunion much earlier, before the singer's travels to Brussels and Spain. He also claims that Maupin's motivations were more mercenary than moral: "tired of giving out blows to keep public opinion in check, she recalled her husband and no longer went to the Opéra without being accompanied by this foolproof saint."[139] In yet another version of events, Rochefort and Rogers relate that Maupin reunited not with her husband, but with her former lover d'Albert.[140] Apparently she even went as far as to threaten a rival for his attentions:

> La Maupin, who likes to think she is deeply in love with the Comte d'Albert, has got a bee in her bonnet about it all. One day, when the Duchesse [de Luxembourg] was attending Mass at St. Roch, she [Maupin] went up to her . . . and said in a threatening tone that if she continued carrying on with the Comte d'Albert, she might count on having her brains blown out with a pistol. Everybody who knows la Maupin are quite convinced that she would do as she said.[141]

Whether or not the story of her violent rivalry is true, the date of Maupin's reunion with d'Albert is verifiable: he was released from prison in Paris in November of 1702, after having been arrested for participating in a public duel.[142]

More Violence

Maupin had many other scandalous adventures during this time. Some claim she attempted to take her own life due to her unrequited love for fellow opera singer Fanchon Moreau.[143] In another incident at the Opéra, the Baron de Servan, a nobleman from Périgord, found himself sorely chastised for some lewd remarks he made about an opera dancer while

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[137] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 239.
[138] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 331. This death date is reproduced by Babault, *Annales dramatiques*, 171; and Deschanel, *La vie des comédiens*, 259.
[139] Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 180-181.
[140] Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," 283; Rogers, "La Maupin," 202.
[141] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 208. Saint-Simon corroborates, citing a letter by Madame du Noyer. Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Saint-Simon*, 7:186. The letter can be found in Du Noyer, *Mémoires et lettres galantes de madame Du Noyer (1663-1720)*, 221.
[142] Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria," 68-69.
[143] *L'Année littéraire*, 89.

loitering backstage in the greenroom.[144] Maupin, who had been lounging unnoticed in masculine costume, challenged him to a duel under the pseudonym of the Chevalier de Raincy.[145] The baron escaped with a broken arm—which subsequently had to be amputated—and his pride severely wounded. Clayton writes that "his agony of rage when he discovered that the hand of a woman had vanquished him, is not to be described; and he retired from Paris to his estates."[146]

Even a long-standing friendship was apparently not enough to ensure protection from Maupin's fiery temper: according to legend, the singer Thévenard only escaped a beating because, after insulting Maupin, he hid at the Opéra for three weeks, refusing to leave out of fear that she would lie in wait for him as she had Dumenil.[147] The quarrel became so heated that the two singers reportedly whispered threats at each other onstage between verses.[148] Thévenard's besiegement ended only when he made a public apology to Maupin in response to her demands. Several sources reproduce Thévenard's rather amusing plea for mercy:

> My dear Julie . . . everyone in this world has his good points and his bad. I am quite ready to admit that you handle a sword a great deal better than I do. And you must agree that I sing better than you do. Well, then, that being so, you must please recognize that if you only ran me through the breast three times, my voice, supposing I did not die, might be very seriously impaired, and I am bound to think of what my voice means to me, not to mention the bliss of gazing into your eyes when we play together and you don't fire off those ferocious retorts which rob your expression so completely of its sweetness. So let us make peace. I come to you bound hand and foot (in writing however, for an interview with you might be dangerous). Forgive me for a jest for which I am unfeignedly contrite, and be merciful.[149]

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[144] Rogers, "La Maupin," 203.

[145] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 57. "One evening he was going over his list of the fair ones who had fallen victims to a passion for him, when he chanced to speak lightly of a young ballet-girl, Mdlle. Pérignon, whose irreproachable conduct had constantly defied calumny. A universal murmur of disapprobation at such a piece of ungenerosity ran round the green-room; but the baron persisted in his fatuity. Mdme. la Maupin, who was lounging on a cushion in a distant corner of the room, listening in silence to this scene, allowed the baron to speak as long as he pleased; then she suddenly rose, advanced, and addressed him haughtily: being dressed in her favourite doublet and hose, she looked a tall, imposing young cavalier. 'Truly,' she cried, 'I admire the patience of these gentlemen. Your insolent and stupid falsehoods demand not only refutation, but prompt and exemplary chastisement. You are an infamous liar. . .'"

[146] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 57.

[147] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 330; *L'Année littéraire*, 88. *Women in World History* claims the insult was related to an affair between Maupin and Frédéric-Jules de La Tour, Chevalier de Bouillon, who was reportedly also a lover of Thévenard's. Letainturier-Fradin echoes this rumour regarding the Chevalier's liaisons. "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)"; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 159.

[148] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 228.

[149] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 202-203. According to *Women in World History*, this letter is the only primary source which confirms Maupin's first name was Julie. "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)."

And Maupin's reply:

> Since Monsieur Thévenard admits with so good a grace his disinclination for a duel even with a woman, nothing remains for me but to compliment him on his prudence and agree to forgive him his offence; but I desire that since I have promised him my pardon, he should ask me for it in the presence of those who were witnesses of the insult to which it refers. Let him assemble those witnesses together and I will keep my word.[150]

Letainturier-Fradin records another violent incident, this time involving Maupin's landlord. Upon returning home in the evening to find no supper prepared, Maupin proceeded to beat the landlord as well as other servants who attempted to intervene.[151] Gilbert offers the most complete retelling, with support from a magistrate's report:

> [A maidservant] did lodge with us a complaint against a woman named Maupin, a singer at the Opera, and deposed that the said Maupin had come down from her bedroom into the said kitchen and demanded supper, whereupon the Sieur Langlois, the deponent's employer, told her, the said Maupin, that he was no longer obliged to supply her with food, inasmuch as the arrangements made between them had now terminated. Then the said Maupin, in a state of great violence, and transported with fury, is said to have seized a sheep's pluck which the complainant was taking from the spit and to have belaboured the face of the said Sieur Langlois therewith. Then taking God's name in vain she took the great key of the door and with that key struck a blow at the complainant's head, inflicting upon her a wound above the right eye. Then she rushed upon her and felled her to the stone floor of the said kitchen, kicked her and punched her, tore her cap . . .[152]

Gilbert asserts that Maupin turned to her "protector" to once again get her out of legal trouble, presumably referring to the Comte d'Armagnac.[153] In an intriguing aside, Letainturier-Fradin reveals that some of the official documents surrounding the case mention she was living with a "sister," whom he speculates was likely a female lover.[154]

This incident reveals a less savoury side of Maupin's violent tendencies. It is one thing to cheer when her vengeance is directed at a boorish and entitled nobleman, but when her temper

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[150] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 202-203.
[151] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 147. *Women in World History* dates this incident to September 6, 1700. "Maupin, D'Aubigny (C. 1670–1707)."
[152] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 205.
[153] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 206.
[154] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 149.

leads her to assault a female servant, I find myself questioning the extent of her supposed chivalry. It would be tempting to write this off as slander on the part of the authors, but the existence of an official report makes the account more credible.

The Triumph of *Tancrède*

During this period Maupin enjoyed some of her greatest triumphs on the stage of the Paris Opéra. The role of Clorinde in *Tancrède* (1702), written for her by the composer André Campra, exploited all of her talents to great success:

> The fate of the play was decided in the first act when Mademoiselle Maupin appeared as a warrior, wearing a helmet and a breastplate, a fierce and resplendent amazon. . . . The beautiful voice of La Maupin appeared in all its splendour: Campra had, with the knowledge of voices he had acquired while directing music at the cathedrals, used the low notes of the actress.[155]

In fact, this was the first leading role at the Paris Opéra written expressly for a contralto singer, and audiences appreciated the novel effect.[156] The part of the titular hero was also given to a lower voice than usual, with Maupin appearing opposite her old friend, the bass Thévenard, as Tancrède. (This was likely the production in which the pair, as mentioned above, whispered violent insults at each other between verses of a love duet.)[157] The opera as a whole was widely applauded, as was Maupin's portrayal of the warrior princess in particular, and the production ran for three months under the direction of Campra himself.[158]

As her star rose, demand quickly grew for Maupin to perform at parties and concerts among the elite: "from then on, the great lords aspired to have her at their musical soirées.

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[155] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 170. [. . . le sort de la pièce fut décidé au premier acte quand on vit paraitre Mademoiselle Maupin en guerrière, revêtue du casque et de la cuirasse, amazone resplendissante et farouche. . . . La belle voix de la Maupin parut alors dans tout son éclat: Campra avait su, avec cette intelligence des voix qu'il avait acquise dans les maîtrises de cathédrales, utiliser les notes graves de l'actrice.]
[156] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 180.
[157] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 228.
[158] Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France*, 257; Banducci, "*Tancrède* by Antoine Danchet and André Campra," 28. According to Julien, the success of *Tancrède* was instrumental in solidifying Campra's acceptance as Lully's unofficial heir. Julien, "La Maupin," 136.

Requested for these private performances, she attended all the royal and state festivals."[159] Gilbert records specifically that she sang for the royal court on February 23rd, 1702, in a production of Destouches's *Omphale*.[160] After this performance at Trianon, the Marquis de Dangeau described Maupin's voice as "the most beautiful in the world."[161]

Retirement and Death

Almost all sources agree that Maupin retired from the stage in 1705.[162] Confusingly, several claim that she returned to her husband[163]—who, according to other records, was by then deceased[164]—or, in direct contradiction, that the death of her husband motivated her retirement.[165] Several authors include at this point a reproduction of a lengthy letter written to her by her old friend and lover the Comte d'Albert: in response to a request for advice from Maupin, d'Albert discourages her from retiring from her theatrical life of pleasure.[166] Many sources then have her retreat to a convent, or in the case of Houssaye, found her own hospice.[167] What might have inspired this sudden turn to, if not a genuinely religious life, at least a sequestered one?

Many authors attribute Maupin's abrupt retirement from the stage to the death of the Marquise de Florensac.[168] Letainturier-Fradin cites the only surviving written evidence of this, the manuscript by the Parfaict brothers found at the Bibliothèque Nationale: "her retirement was occasioned by the death of the Countess de Florensac, who honoured Mademoiselle Maupin with

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[159] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 180. [Dès lors, les grands seigneurs aspirèrent à l'avoir dans leurs soirées pour la partie de concert. Demandée pour ces représentations particulières, elle assistait à toutes les fêtes royales et seigneuriales.]
[160] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 206. This is corroborated in Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 4:23-24. Although Gilbert frames this court performance as a result of the triumph of *Tancrède*, according to Parfaict the court performance actually took place two weeks before the premiere of *Tancrède* (March 7, 1702). Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 5:345-346.
[161] Dangeau, *Journal*, 336. [Madame de Maintenon y monta un moment et entendit chanter la Maupin, qui est la plus belle voix du monde.]
[162] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 332; *L'Année littéraire*, 89. Her last recorded performance was as Isabelle in de La Barre's *La Vénitienne*, on May 26, 1705. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 6:113-114.
[163] Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, 104; Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France*, 259; Clayton, "Early French Singers," 61; *L'Année littéraire*, 89-90; Rochefort, "Mademoiselle D'Aubigny-Maupin," 283.
[164] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 209; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 194.
[165] Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 182.
[166] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 239-240.
[167] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 244; Houssaye, *Princesses de comédie et déesses d'opéra*, 182.
[168] Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Senneterre de Lestrange, Marquise de Florensac (1671-1705), was the wife of Louis de Crussol, Marquis de Florensac. Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Saint-Simon*, 13:47-49.

her friendship and protection. Mademoiselle Maupin, after having bitterly mourned the loss of this lady, asked for her leave and retired to a distant district."[169] This Countess died at the age thirty-five—a very similar age to Maupin herself—of a short and sudden illness.[170] Gilbert speculates that the two had likely been lovers since 1701, or thereabouts.[171] Rogers claims that the affair lasted two years, beginning after Maupin "forsook for ever the opposite sex" in reaction to d'Albert's marriage to Mlle Montigny. However, in reality d'Albert did not marry Montigny until 1713.[172]

With very little information available about her life after her retirement from the stage, all that is left to relate is that Maupin died in 1707, in her mid-thirties, of unknown causes.[173] Apparently she died alone and childless, although Cardinal Dubois includes an ambiguous reference in his memoirs: "she made children, she said, in reparation for her deadly strokes."[174] While of course it is possible that some of Maupin's love affairs resulted in children, there is no other evidence to support Dubois's claim. Where and how those children might have been raised is just one of the many details about Maupin's life which have been irrevocably lost to history.

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[169] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 225. [Sa retraite fut occasionnée par la mort de Mme la comtesse de Florensac qui honorait Mademoiselle Maupin de son amitié et de sa protection. Mademoiselle Maupin, après avoir pleuré amèrement la perte de cette dame, demanda son congé et se retira dans un quartier éloigné.] Letainturier-Fradin is indeed quoting almost directly from the 1741 Parfaict manuscript. The full passage is as follows: "Comme nous ne rendons compte que des talents et non des aventures particulières des personnes qui ont représenté sur le theatre de l'Opera nous abandonnons ici Mlle Maupin jusqu'à sa retraite qui fut occasionnée par la morte subite de Mad. la Contesse de Florensac qui honoroit [*sic*] Mlle Mauoin de son amitié et de sa protection. Mlle Maupin après avoir pleuré amerement [*sic*] la perte de cette dame demanda son congé et se retira dans un quartier éloigné ou elle venus avec son mari qu'elle fit revenir de province avec toute la rigularité [*sic*] et la piété possibles. Elle mourut à l'age de 33 ans en quelques mois." Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 315-316.

[170] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 226, 232. The Marquise died on July 2, 1705. Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Saint-Simon*, 13:47.

[171] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 212. "Madame de Florensac reappeared at Court in April 1701. . . . It was apparently about this time that she heard la Maupin at the Opera, and an intimacy sprung up between the two women on which neither letters nor memoirs throw any light." This approximate timing would also align with Maupin's performance in *Omphale*, which took place on February 23, 1702 at Trianon for the royal court. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 4:23-24.

[172] Jeffares, "Between France and Bavaria," 74.

[173] *L'Année littéraire*, 90; Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 247.

[174] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 183.

Chapter 3
"She persisted in these anomalies": Early Modern Understandings of Gender Non-Conformity

Due to her extremely unconventional life story, it is tempting to describe Maupin in modern terms: a genderqueer, feminist, bisexual badass. Indeed, many popular twenty-first century sources use exactly those words.[1] However, to give in to this impulse would be to erase the ways in which concepts as fundamental as gender and sexuality have changed since the seventeenth century. Identity markers such as "queer" and "bisexual"—and even the now-widely accepted use of the word "gender" as a descriptor of the social consequences of the sex binary—are not transhistorical terms, and cannot be projected onto historical subjects.

In the following chapter, I contextualize Maupin's story within the dominant discourses on gender and sexuality during the early modern period, including social roles and norms as well as scientific models of sex and sexuality. This allows me to offer insight into how Maupin's contemporaries might have viewed her, as well as how her life relates to twenty-first century perspectives on gender. In order to fully situate Maupin in the context of the late seventeenth century, I must examine three main elements of her identity: first, her gender-non-conformity; second, her sexuality, including both different-sex and same-sex attractions; and third, her employment as a professional performer. The first two categories overlap significantly in the early modern worldview, and thus I often discuss both in conjunction with each other. As for the third category, although Maupin's profession may seem to translate unproblematically from the seventeenth century to the present, early modern people thought about stage performers—and particularly actresses, who were marked as highly unconventional women—in ways idiosyncratic to their time.

[1] Kellgren-Fozard, "The Sword-fighting, Bisexual Badass La Maupin"; Porath, "Julie d'Aubigny: Princess of the Opera"; Romano, "This 17th-century sword-swinging opera star will rule the internet in 2013."

Listening to the Silences

Carolyn Dinshaw identifies the "unspeakability" of homosexuality to be one of the primary difficulties in writing queer history.[2] The fact that at least some elements of Maupin's non-normative sexuality have escaped erasure already sets her apart from many other historical figures. Still, separating the truth of her life from the fantasy is a complicated (and frankly futile) endeavour. Because many older sources reproduce their predecessors verbatim and without citation, it is difficult to pull apart the many layers of myth, hyperbole, and cultural prejudice. When analyzing sources, I was faced with the question of whether the biases I found in the text were truly the author's own, or merely borrowed from another time and place. Further, the possibility that a later source may quote from an uncredited, lost primary source calls into question the tendency to privilege sources based on their temporal proximity to the events.

Adding to these complications, there are very few sources available from around Maupin's lifetime. Beyond a few short mentions of her musical performances and career, no records of her were published before her death, even those written by people who knew her personally. Gilbert speculates that this was no accident, claiming that fear of repercussions, either from the notoriously violent Maupin herself or from her wealthy and powerful friends and supporters, ensured an enforced silence on her private affairs.[3] He writes: "letters, anecdotes, lampoons, songs poured forth pell-mell regarding this celebrated actress, but always and everywhere she was spoken of by a pseudonym and no one ever dared to refer to her by her real name."[4] He even gives an example:

> In 1702, a Chevalier de Mailly published the story of a certain female captain well known in Paris by the blue riband she wore as a sash and by the extraordinary costume with which she was bedizened. The book, however, was no sooner out than it was pounced upon, probably by the friends of Mademoiselle Maupin.[5]

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[2] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 5.
[3] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 173-174.
[4] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 174.
[5] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 173.

Gilbert appears to be citing a letter from 1702 published in Pierre Clément's 1866 *La police sous Louis XIV*, which describes a complaint from a bookseller's wife. She had advanced de Mailly a considerable sum with the promise that he would deliver a memoir on the life of Mlle Maupin, but when the manuscript, titled *La fille capitaine*, was finished, it proved too scandalous to publish.[6] Whether its publication was stopped by the bookseller and his wife's sense of propriety, or real threats of violence from Maupin or her friends, remains unknown. The letter-writer goes on to explain that de Mailly had distributed many other sordid tales through the apparently less scrupulous publishers of Holland—so with *La fille capitaine* notably missing from print, it may still be that Maupin stepped in, personally or by proxy.[7] Gilbert's theory of self-censorship is supported by Cardinal Dubois's claim that Maupin threatened him with violence after he shared the story of her convent adventure with a lover of hers.[8]

Of course, Maupin's alleged attempts to keep her private affairs hidden only make her more intriguing to modern researchers. Often when dealing with queer histories, it is the silences which speak loudest: the constant companion made conspicuous by their absence from the official record, the small details mentioned and then hastily forgotten or glossed over, the contradictions left unexplained. Maupin was not wholly successful in scrubbing herself from

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[6] Pierre Clément, *La police sous Louis XIV* (Paris: 1866), 456. "The wife of a certain Auroy, a bookseller, told me that she had taken the liberty of complaining to you against an insolent author who calls himself the Chevalier de Mailly, and her complaints are very well founded. She had commissioned him to compose a little work in the form of a historical short story, under the title: *The Girl Captain*, and she had given him the memoirs of this person, so well known in Paris by the blue cord she wears in a scarf and by the extraordinary clothing she wears. . . . But the Chevalier de Mailly, instead of confining himself to a simple and modest narration, has mixed in it several stories which the least scrupulous modesty could not tolerate. . . " [La femme du nommé Auroy, libraire, m'a dit qu'elle avoit pris la liberté de vous faire ses plaintes contre un auteur insolent qui se fait nommer le chevalier de Mailly, et ses plaintes sont très-bien fondées. Elle l'avoit chargé de composer un petit ouvrage en forme de nouvelle historique, sous le titre : *la Fille capitaine*, et elle lui avoit conflé les mémoires de cette personne si connue dans Paris par le cordon bleu qu'elle porte en écharpe et par l'habit extraordinaire dont elle est vêtue. . . . Mais le chevalier de Mailly, au lieu de se borner à une narration simple et modeste, y a mêlé plusieurs histoires que la pudeur la moins scrupuleuse ne poirroit souffrir. . .]

[7] Pierre Clément, *La police sous Louis XIV* (Paris: 1866), 456. "I stepped in to make him listen to reason, but I understood from his speeches that he prides himself on not having any. I have learned, moreover, that he is a man accustomed to spreading libels in public and to sending to Holland those of his manuscripts which the exactness of the censor's seal has rejected. He is credited with . . . a number of fugitive plays that are sold there." [Je me suis entremis pour lui faire entendre raison, mais j'ai compris à ses discours qu'il se pique de n'en pas avoir. J'ai sy d'ailleurs que c'est un homme accoutumé à répandre des libelles dans le public et à envoyer en Hollande ceux de ses manuscrits que l'exactitude du sceau a rejetés. On lui attribue *la Vestale amoureuse*, *le Comte de Clare*, *les Entretiens des cafés*, et quantité de pièces fugitives qui s'y débitent.]

[8] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 183. The lover in question was supposedly the Duc de Chartres, the son of Monsieur (Philippe d'Orléans, King Louis XIV's brother).

history, but Dubois's claim does raise the tantalizing prospect of further adventures suppressed not by authorial sensibility but by a particularly aggressive type of self-imposed censorship.

When Maupin felt the need to enforce silence on others through the threat of violence, was it because she considered particular stories too damning to be circulated? Did she fear legal repercussions, either from victims of violence or disgruntled lovers? Or were certain details of her story simply too intimate to be shared with a disapproving public? There are surviving snippets which hint at a hidden domestic world to which full access is denied: the cohabiting "sister" in the magistrate's report, for example, or the conspicuous silence of the press on the subject of Maupin and the Marquise de Florensac. Indeed, Letainturier-Fradin comments specifically on Maupin's lack of public presence from the time he speculates their affair began, painting an enthralling picture of what might have been:

> Their affair probably lasted from 1703 to 1705, and for two years they lived with that tenderness which they thought ideal, ethereal, out of reach of the defilement of men; and the young women isolated themselves, enamoured, appearing only on those occasions when their presence was indispensable. . . . We do not find, after 1702, any song or satire against the two women, except the critiques of the roles of Maupin who had still kept her job at the Opera.[9]

While I am sorely tempted to embrace this idyllic image of sapphic domesticity, at the same time I am afraid of what I might find were I able to delve deeper into Maupin's inner life. Was she a kind person? Did she treat her lovers well? Or had she internalized the toxic masculinity and misogyny rampant in her day? The fact that, in her lowest moments, she seems to have been willing to abandon her romantic conquests, assault her servants, and possibly make sexual advances on women without their consent, suggests that she may not have been the "ahead-of-her-time" feminist icon she is sometimes portrayed to be.

At the same time, not all of the worst stories about Maupin may be true. Since the most extreme accounts were published after her death, it is impossible to know whether the authors

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[9] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 231-232. [Leur liaison dura sans doute de 1703 à 1705, et, pendant deux ans, elles vécurent de cette tendresse qu'elles pensaient idéale, éthérée, hors d'atteinte de la souillure des hommes; et les jeunes femmes s'isolèrent, énamourées, ne paraissant qu'en des occasions où leur présence était indispensable. . . . On ne trouve, après 1702, aucune chanson ni satire contre les deux femmes, sauf les critiques des rôles de la Maupin qui avait toujours conservé son emploi à l'Opéra.]

delayed sharing these tales due to fear of retribution, or to avoid refutation. The earliest writings come from three contemporaries who all greatly disliked Maupin and thus had reason to slander her with sensational stories: the Duc de Saint-Simon, an aristocrat whose extensive memoirs offer insight into court life during the reign of Louis XIV; Cardinal Dubois, an influential statesman who gained great political power after winning the favour of Louis XIV; and Anne-Marguerite du Noyer, a journalist and gossip writer.[10]

Even the incident at the royal ball, which Cardinal Dubois claims to have witnessed himself, includes many inconsistencies. For example, it is improbable that Maupin would have killed all three of her challengers then and there, since duels were officially illegal at the time—and punishable by death.[11] While pardons for duelling were common, they were usually based on a lack of proof or evidence, making it highly unlikely that the king would have been lenient if Maupin had killed three noblemen in front of many witnesses, no matter how long she exiled herself to Brussels.[12] Instead, it is possible the quarrel could have been a duel until first blood, which was also common at the time, especially in response to less serious grievances.[13] In that case, it is more believable that Maupin might have stepped out of the Palais-Royal to fight the three men, and then returned immediately to confess to Philippe d'Orléans.

Other stories such as the convent escape are even more difficult to substantiate, and less likely to be accurate. Roger Blanchard and Roland de Candé are particularly sceptical, recording their conversation with Jeanne Cheilan, a professor at the University of Aix: "'In seven years of systematic examination of all the local archives, I have not found once the name d'Aubigny, nor that of Maupin for the period 1684-1738, even though the numerous contracts signed by Pierre

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[10] Although all three of these writers lived at the same time as Maupin, their stories about her were not published until after her death. Du Noyer's letters were published between 1710 and 1713, a few years after Maupin died in 1707. Saint-Simon's memoirs were written thirty years after the events occurred, and not published until the early nineteenth century. Similarly, Dubois's memoirs were likely written shortly before his death in the mid-eighteenth century, and published in the early nineteenth century. Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, xiv-xvi.
[11] Billacois, *The Duel*, 69, 178.
[12] Billacois, *The Duel*, 178-179.
[13] Billacois, *The Duel*, 197; See also Anne-Pierre Coustard de Massi, *The History of Duelling. In Two Parts. Containing the Origin, Progress, Revolutions, and Present State of Duelling in France and England* (London: 1770), 128.

Gaultier provided me with an important if not complete list of opera actors.'"[14] However, Blanchard and de Candé relate that Cheilan was able to find documents proving that a "Jacques Sérane, originally from Montpellier, had been engaged at the Opéra de Marseille on September 12, 1687, that he had married on February 26, 1688 a twenty-one-year-old singer, Louise Tourniaire, and that he had been part of the Marseille troupe without interruption until 1699."[15] In the spring of 2023 I had the opportunity to visit the Avignon municipal archives myself, and searched through records of fires as well as police and court records between the years of 1685 and 1690. Unfortunately I was similarly unable to find any mention of the names "d'Aubigny" or "Maupin," nor did I find any convictions for arson or records of convent fires.

Kaz Rowe suggests that the convent adventure may be a total fabrication, a story circulated by Maupin's enemies to discredit her and capitalize on the scandal that would inevitably accompany such an illicit affair.[16] At the time, it was not uncommon for women—especially assertive, outspoken women—to be accused of homosexuality or other sexually deviant behaviour in public campaigns of slander.[17] According to Gilbert, the convent tale first appears in the private letters of du Noyer, first published between 1710 and 1713 but written earlier.[18] The gruesome details of grave-digging and arson are all in place, but the young nun orchestrates the plan all by herself, and by the end of the tale is married to her (male) lover with several children.[19] Gilbert suggests that du Noyer changed her protagonist's sex in order to avoid retribution from Maupin and her friends: "though she found it impossible to hold her tongue, [du Noyer] fully realised that, when referring to la Maupin's early adventures at Avignon, it would be

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[14] Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 106. [Interrogée par les auteurs, Jeanne Cheilan, professeur à l'université d'Aix, écrivait en 1983: "En sept and de dépouillement systématique de toutes les archives locale, je n'ai pas trouvé une seule fois le nom d'Aubigny, ni celui de Maupin pour la période 1684-1738, alors que les nombreux contrats signés par Pierre Gaultier m'ont fourni une liste importante sinon complète d'acteurs d'opéra."]
[15] Blanchard and de Candé, *Dieux et divas de l'opéra*, 106. [Et Mme Cheilan pécisait que Jacques Sérane, originaire de Montpellier, avait été engagé à l'Opéra de Marseille le 12 septembre 1687, qu'il avait épousé le 26 février 1688 une chanteuse de vingt et un ans, Louise Tourniaire, et qu'il avait fait partie de la troupe marseillaise sans discontinuer jusqu'en 1699. Mais sur l'incendie du couvent et l'arrêt du parlement d'Aix, on est réduit aux hypothèses, en soupçonnant l'affabulation…]
[16] Rowe, "Examining the Chaotic Legend of Julie D'Aubigny."
[17] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 41-43.
[18] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 171. Gilbert is referring to Letter XXVII in Volume I of du Noyer's *Lettres Historiques et Galantes.*
[19] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 171-173; Du Noyer, *Lettres Historiques et Galantes* (Amsterdam: La Compagnie, 1760), 1:311-315.

prudent, if not necessary, to conceal the name and quality of her *dramatic personae*."[20] However, as Rowe argues in their video on the topic, it seems unlikely that du Noyer would feel the need to censor herself by adding so many contradictory details in what was originally a private letter, published only after Maupin's death.[21]

Although Gilbert cites du Noyer as the source of the convent adventure, the 1702 letter on de Mailly from Pierre Clément's *La police sous Louis XIV* makes direct mention of the story in the format more familiar to us: according to the letter's author, de Mailly's manuscript included "the kidnapping of a nun who dug up another, set fire to her cell and went on the run for several years."[22] Was the convent adventure already in circulation, at least orally, when du Noyer and possibly de Mailly recorded their versions of it? It is possible that du Noyer's story was enthusiastically conflated with some similar events which really did befall Maupin—or, the tale could have been embroidered and misremembered until it became part of Maupin's legend. In the end, we must accept that we will never know exactly what is true or false when it come to the many legends surrounding Maupin.

Explaining Maupin's Sapphic Masculinity

In nearly all of the sources available, Maupin's romantic relationships with women are acknowledged to some extent, even if the tone is one of extreme disapproval. Her taste for women is even sometimes discussed beyond the mention of specific lovers. One of the earlier French sources available, Clément and de la Porte's 1775 *Anecdotes dramatiques*, labels Maupin "the new Sappho"—in this time period, a clear reference to romantic love for women.[23] This particular document is quite open about Maupin's sexual preferences: "the singular taste of this woman for persons of her sex was so lively, that she exposed herself to frequent contempt on

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[20] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 173.
[21] Rowe, "Examining the Chaotic Legend of Julie D'Aubigny."
[22] Clément, *La police sous Louis XIV*, 456. [l'enlèvement de la religieuse qui en déterra une autre, mit le feu à sa cellule et courut le monde pendant plusieurs années.]
[23] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 328. [Nouvelle Sapho [*sic*], elle avoit [*sic*] conçu un attachement trop tendre pour une jeune Marseilloise [*sic*] . . .] See also Van der Cruysse, *Madame Palatine, princesse europénne*, 351.

their part."[24] In contrast, Parfaict's 1756 *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris* is more guarded: "Mlle Maupin's passion for martial arts and her frequent habit of dressing as a man gave rise to many stories about her, true or false, but since these are mostly romantic in style and irrelevant to our subject, we do not think it appropriate to retell them."[25]

In regards to her militant tendencies, Alex Sokalski explains that, although many stories of duelling women were in circulation at this time, they typically depicted their subjects as absurd or humorous, and almost invariably involved women fighting other women.[26] Maupin appears to have been an exception to this rule of gender as well: she regularly duelled men, and was obviously considered to be a formidable opponent. However, beyond the outward trappings of male clothing and sword-fighting, Maupin's unconventional masculinity raises more complex questions. How did her seduction of women relate to her gender expression? Were her relationships with men considered contradictory to her masculinity? How did seventeenth-century people account for Maupin's simultaneous appropriation of both feminine and masculine qualities and social positions?

Medical Understandings of Gender

It is possible to find some answers by considering the Galenic medical system of the four humours, which was still in general use in late seventeenth-century Europe. Based on ancient Greek thought, this model relied on the theory of the bodily humours: four fluid substances within the human body whose balance was believed to influence health and disposition.[27] Crucially, these humours also decided a body's level of relative heat, which in turn determined a wide variety of physical characteristics and types of behaviours.[28] For example, Maupin's fiery temper and boundless sexual energy might have been ascribed to a surplus of blood, resulting in excessive heat.

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[24] Clément and de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 330. [Le goût singulier de cette femme pour les personnes de son sexe était si vif, qu'elle s'exposait à de fréquens mépris de leur part . . .]
[25] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 3:352. [La passion que Mlle Maupin avoit [*sic*] pour les exercices des armes, & l'habitude fréquente où elle étoit [*sic*] de s'habiller en homme, ont donné lieu à plusieurs histoires vraies ou fausses qu'on raconte d'elle, mais comme elles sont la plûpart dans un goût romanesque, & peu nécessaires à notre sujet, nous ne jugeons pas à propos de les rapporter.]
[26] Sokalski, "'Choose Your Weapon,'" 15. See also Billacois, *The Duel*, 72-73.
[27] These humours were: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.
[28] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 4, 112.

The humoural system was particularly important to perceptions of non-conforming genders and sexualities. In the seventeenth century, a person's gender was often understood to be ranked on a hierarchical scale based on their level of relative heat. Thomas Laqueur terms this a "one-sex" model because, rather than being classified as a totally distinct category (as they would be later in the nineteenth century and today), women were sometimes framed as underdeveloped or deformed versions of men, lacking the heat which allowed men to attain a higher degree of perfection.[29] Thus gendered variations between bodies were viewed not as the *cause* of essential differences in physicality and behaviour, but rather as *symptoms* of differences of position within a larger natural hierarchy, in which men occupied the highest place.[30]

While Laqueur argues that the one-sex and two-sex models developed in a steady progression, moving from the more ancient one-sex to the more modern two-sex model with an evolutionary shift taking place over the course of the eighteenth century, many medical historians have critiqued this theory as overly simplistic. Instead, scholars such as Katharine Park and Helen King propose that multiple competing models of sex and sexuality were constantly in flux throughout this time, with no clear "before" and "after."[31] Thus, I do not argue that Laqueur's one-sex model is historically "true" to the seventeenth century—I too am sceptical of any straightforward, progressivist narrative describing a shift from one uncontested model of sex to another. Instead, what I take from Laqueur's studies, as well as the many responses and critiques his book has inspired, is that boundaries and definitions of biological sex are changeable, and have in the past been understood as much less rigid than they are often imagined to be today.

Even in the late seventeenth century, despite the Scientific Revolution's new emphasis on observation over philosophy, doctors and theorists alike continued to conceptualize biological sex in the more fluid manner associated with the Galenic humours.[32] Mitchell Greenburg

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[29] Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 33. Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 8, 127, 141.
[30] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 25. To explain this fundamental hierarchy, elaborate theories were constructed concerning the implantation of embryos: if a fetus developed on the cooler side of the womb, the left side, it would be female, whereas the hotter right side was believed to produce males. Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 34.
[31] King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*; Park, "Cadden, Laqueur, and the 'One-Sex Body.'" Helen King writes: "If we were to take them as ideal types, the two stages of Laqueur's model would have some value; but this is not how they have been read. Instead of using them as conceptual, comparative tools to make similarities and differences clearer, the two stages have been reified and the alleged movement from one to the other attached to a specific period, and to other real changes in that period." King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, xi.
[32] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 70.

explains that even after the Scientific Revolution, new models casting the human body as a mechanical system were leveraged to prop up old hierarchies:

> The male body was the ideal object of creation, being both more hot than the female, and particularly more closed. The female body because of its effluents was famously described as a 'leaky vessel,' tautologically dangerous for a society that in the seventeenth century was growing increasingly wary of any unbounded system.[33]

Unlike later models, which propose two completely distinct sexes (an idea which has dominated Western European thought particularly over the last century), under the early modern humoural model there was a middle ground between the two extremes of man and woman.[34] This dangerous yet seductive liminal space allowed for iterations of gender beyond a strict binary, including both masculine women and feminine men. Masculine women, having unusually high levels of vital heat, were considered more energetic, aggressive, and sexually promiscuous. However, they still lacked enough heat to give them full rational control of their exaggerated sexual impulses.[35] This serves to explain why Maupin's androgyny was not considered a deterrent to her male lovers: instead of being a sign of exclusive homosexuality, Maupin's masculinity marked her as sexually available and therefore potentially even more alluring.[36]

Literary Models of Gender

Masculine women appeared as a specific archetype throughout seventeenth-century art and literature, and were often referred to as "amazons" or "viragos." These literary iterations were not accurate depictions of the ruthless warrior women of Greek mythology, but rather tantalizing symbols of androgyny and uncontrolled sexuality. Maupin herself was labelled a virago, with Marie and Léon Escudier offering a rather vivid description:

> At first sight you are more surprised than charmed by the appearance of this virago, with an imperious tone, a determined bearing, and a quick, sure hand; but now all these

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[33] Greenburg, "Molière's Body Politic," 143.
[34] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 52.
[35] Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation," 206.
[36] Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation," 234. Another illustration of this phenomenon is the early modern trend of female sex workers dressing in masculine clothing in order to attract male clients.

> menacing glances are softening, the voice so cruelly mocking now reveals lovely inflections; a smile of ineffable charm comes to touch those lips which formerly expressed hatred or disdain; and in a word, the woman reappears with her grace, her sweetness, her exquisite delicacies.[37]

For the Escudiers, Maupin's womanly side is often masked by her masculine aggression and heat, only to reappear in softer moments.

Maupin is also called an amazon in Blaze Castil's *L'Académie impériale de musique.*[38] Not merely a mythological reference, the amazon existed in the seventeenth century as a contemporary cultural figure. The image of an exceptional woman bravely leading men into battle was prevalent in the mid-seventeenth century, popularized not only in fictional literature but also through the real-life events of the Fronde.[39] A politically-motivated civil war involving nobles both in support of and against the rule of the then-child King Louis XIV, the Fronde, in the words of Joan DeJean, "gave France the most sustained and the most public examples of female militarism in its history."[40] Some of the rebellion's most important leaders were aristocratic women, including the Duchesse de Chevreuse, the Duchesse de Longueville, and the Duchesse de Montpensier, all of whom were termed "amazons" in popular parlance.[41] Although the Fronde ended in 1653, two decades before Maupin was born, these legendary militant women remained in the national consciousness. Their legacy would almost certainly have informed seventeenth-century understandings of masculine women like Maupin—or at the very least, contributed to an increased sense of anxiety about powerful women.

Social Meanings of Cross-dressing

Artistic representations of the amazons of the Fronde usually depict them on horseback, armed, yet dressed in fashionable feminine clothing. Maupin, on the other hand, was notorious

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[37] Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, 95-96. [Au premier abord vous êtes plus surpris que charmé à l'aspect de cette virago au ton impérieux, aux allures décidées, à la main prompte et sûre; mais voilà que tout à coup ces regards si menaçants s'adoucissent, cette voix si cruellement railleuse a des ravissantes inflexions; un sourire d'un charme ineffable vient effleurer ces lèvres qui naguère exprimaient la haine ou le dédain; et un mot, la femme reparaît avec sa grâce, sa douceur, ses exquises délicatesses.]
[38] Castil, *L'Académie impériale de musique*, 64.
[39] DeJean, "Violent Women and Violence Against Women," 121.
[40] DeJean, "Violent Women and Violence Against Women," 131.
[41] DeJean, "Violent Women and Violence Against Women," 131.

for her adoption of full male costume. Although the practice was not widely accepted in society, there are several other well-known examples of cross-dressing from this time period, including Queen Christina of Sweden, the abbé de Choisy, and even Louis XIV's own brother, Philippe d'Orléans. Generally, male cross-dressing was more frowned upon than its counterpart, as it appeared to contradict the assumption that nature invariably strove towards perfection. If men were higher on the scale of perfection than women, it made sense for women to attempt to ascend—but if a man was to debase himself by acting like a woman, it was considered an unnatural degradation.[42] However, an important distinction was made between women who sometimes wore male clothes for convenience or even entertainment, and those who actively attempted to live their lives as men—in the latter case, the person was likely to be severely punished.[43]

Traditionally, a high social station—especially powerful connections at court—allowed for more freedom when it came to gender play, as was the case with Louis XIV's protection of his brother Philippe d'Orléans.[44] While Maupin was far from aristocratic, Joseph Harris suggests that because she was an actress and earned her own wages—giving her a certain amount of control over her own life—she likely had more licence than other women of her time.[45] More to the point, actresses as a class were considered fallen women who had given up any possibility of respectability by joining a profession which involved the display of their bodies in public.[46] Thus

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[42] Laqueur, *Making Sex,* 127.
[43] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 49-53.
[44] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 59. Philippe d'Orléans frequently wore feminine clothing and had many male lovers throughout his life.
[45] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 182. In contrast, Letainturier-Fradin paints what seems like an over-idealized picture, claiming that Maupin's cross-dressing was accepted by seventeenth-century society simply because it suited her own tastes: "La Maupin was at ease; no one was shocked at her boyish looks; she was admired for her bravery and beauty, for it was known that there was no affectation in her, that her tastes and her clothing were in perfect harmony." [La Maupin était à son aise; nul ne trouvait choquantes ses allures garçonnières; on l'admirait pour sa bravoure et sa beauté, car on savait que chez elle il n'y avait pas d'affectation, que ses goûts et ses costumes étaient en parfait accord.] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 77. I take this with a grain of salt, however, because Letainturier-Fradin, along with other biographers of his period, often exaggerate the sexual permissiveness and hedonism of seventeenth-century society in order to compare it to their own, more "morally upright" century. See Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, xv; Rogers, "La Maupin," 178-179.
[46] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 38. In fact, all professional actors (regardless of gender) were excluded from normal systems of morality: even at the end of the seventeenth century, actors were still officially excommunicated from the Catholic Church, meaning they could not receive sacraments or receive a Christian burial unless they first renounced their profession. Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 38.

as a performer, Maupin already existed outside of the strict mores which constrained the behaviour of more honourable women.

In fact, crossing-dressing was fairly common onstage, although it appeared far more often in comic or sentimental contexts than in serious genres like tragic opera. Theatrical cross-dressing could serve a variety of functions, from slapstick comedy, to voyeuristic pleasure, to exciting plot twist. Travesty (cross-gender) roles for male actors were usually comic and meant to evoke disgust and ridicule. However, Harris suggests that the presence of the male actor gave the female character he embodied more freedom to "transgress with relative impunity the codes of decency and bienséance that dictated female behaviour onstage."[47] In other words, a male actor could play an un-virtuous or even disgusting female character, while it would be considered immoral to allow a female actress to perform the same role.

On the other hand, an actress dressed as a man was more often a plot device than a convention: a significant number of plays from this time period feature a female character forced to dress as a man in order to protect her virtue in an extreme situation.[48] Ironically, these cross-dressing plots usually resulted in the virtue of the actress being compromised, even as her fictional counterpart gained more protection. Such plot devices were often treated as an opportunity for male audience members to see an actress's legs, and possibly breasts—often there was a recognition scene in which the beleaguered lady dramatically and visually revealed her true sex. These disguise plots also allowed for titillating scenarios between women, as Harris comments:

> Seventeenth-century French literature abounds with examples of women inadvertently falling in love with other women and infringing, or at least attempting to infringe, a range of sexual taboos—not only those of cross-class desire, adultery and female sexual agency, but also of pre-marital sex, bigamy and troilism. In many cases, these women behave in a far more shameless manner than literary bienséance would allow them to if the women they love were actually (as they believe) male.[49]

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[47] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 78.
[48] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 101.
[49] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 167.

Similar to the example of travesty roles, cross-dressed actresses allowed for a certain amount of freedom from restrictive sexual taboos. Harris argues that the sexual play between women was seen as non-threatening, as long as in the end everyone ended up in their proper heterosexual pairings: "whatever taboos are ostensibly transgressed, none are broken irreparably since any behaviour conducted by women amongst themselves is seen as non-sexual and hence ultimately innocent in nature."[50] Thus, theatrical cross-dressing was connected with non-normative sexualities, but did not necessarily invoke homosexuality in a direct sense. Indeed, in most cases cross-dressing was a short-term transgression that ultimately culminated in a re-confirming of heterosexual norms: the conventional happy ending of a wedding for the leading couple. This example confirms Judith Butler's theory that a simple inversion of gender expression is not necessarily subversive, but may instead uphold conventional gender roles.[51]

Understanding Maupin's Unconventional Persona

In Maupin's case, cross-dressing certainly seems to have been connected to same-sex attraction in some way. Although she never attempted to live as a man for any extended period of time, according to Cardinal Dubois Maupin's cross-dressing was both a personal preference and a tactic for seducing women: "she took such delight in passing for a man, that she always dressed as one, and the women noticed so handsome a cavalier. That was somewhat her aim."[52] In contrast, biographer Cameron Rogers claims that Maupin's practice of cross-dressing was the *cause* of her same-gender attraction, rather than a result:

> Trained in the exercises and diversions of men, she was no stranger to the admiration of women who justifiably mistook her sex, and little by little the virus instilled into an ardent nature by the opportunities that offered themselves to one engaged in so dangerous a mummery, obtained its effect.[53]

Whether or not she set out to present herself as such, Maupin appears to have been mistaken for a young man many times, and not only by women. Cardinal Dubois writes that at

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[50] Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, 170.
[51] Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 314.
[52] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 183.
[53] Rogers, "La Maupin," 184.

the masked ball before the famous triple duel, not only Monsieur but also Monsieur's lover the Chevalier de Lorraine expressed an attraction to La Maupin, whom they both perceived as a young man.[54] Dubois writes that Monsieur "asked everybody who was the pretty boy, and no one could tell him."[55] Maupin's uniquely androgynous appearance when dressed as a man seems to have appealed to people across all sorts of gender and sexual categories.

The Permeability of Sex

As illustrated above, the relationship between gender and sexuality was intimately intertwined in early modern thought, and in occupying the sensual middle ground between two gendered extremes, the feminine youth and the masculine virago were both in a particularly sexualized position. Not manly enough to be in control of their amorous passions, yet aggressive enough to act on such urges, young men and masculine women were essentially considered sexually incontinent. The youth would presumably grow out of this phase, while the virago was generally condemned to a life of ridicule and unhappiness. But there was another potential—if unlikely—possibility for the virago: under the Galenic model the boundaries of physical sex were considered at least somewhat permeable, and authors cited tales of young women spontaneously sprouting male genitalia due to abnormal outbursts of heat or energy.[56] As a result, early modern science and natural philosophy also drew connections between homosexuality in women and intersex physicality, situating both perceived deviances in the monstrous figure of the tribade: a woman who had masculine genital characteristics and slept with women.[57] In fact, by the end of the seventeenth century, many European doctors believed that all intersex people were in fact hyper-masculine women, with either abnormally large clitorises or prolapsed vaginas.[58]

However, Emma Donoghue points out that in seventeenth-century medical writings, the causal relationship between intersexuality and homosexuality is unclear: there is no consensus

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[54] In an interesting connection, the Chevalier de Lorraine was the younger brother of La Maupin's first lover, the Comte d'Armagnac.
[55] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 184.
[56] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 126-127.
[57] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 200. Intersex people are individuals whose bodies do not neatly fit into the medically-defined categories of "male" and "female."
[58] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 201.

whether the masculine "member" is a result or a cause of lesbian activity.[59] Accounts of intersex individuals in the seventeenth century often concentrate on court rulings as to the "true" sex of the person concerned, as decided by medical and legal experts.[60] Donoghue writes that the criteria used to decide the "true" or "hidden" sex of an intersex person were most often rooted in heterosexuality: for example, the ability to have procreative penetrative sex or the ability to generate offspring.[61]

Perhaps Maupin's sexuality resisted categorization even within her own century: she seems to have been seen neither as exclusively a virago, whose overheated sexuality was usually fixated on men, nor a tribade, whose masculinized body might have prohibited relations with male lovers. Instead, it may be most helpful to situate Maupin within the more liminal world of early modern sapphic sexuality. In the early eighteenth century, homosexuality was not yet seen as an identity marker, but rather a deviant behaviour that anyone was at risk of falling into.[62] Additionally, at this time in Europe sex between women was seen as much less transgressive than sex between men, as long as the women in question were still available as heterosexual partners. Sapphic relationships were generally tolerated as a prelude or a less satisfying alternative to more fulfilling heterosexual matches, and invoked milder reactions such as amusement or indulgence rather than the disgust and violence reserved for male homosexuality.[63]

However, queer women were treated much more harshly if they were seen as usurping the power of a male position—for example, if they used a dildo or similar device to simulate heterosexual penetrative sex, or if they attempted to pass as male or legally marry a female partner.[64] As Lillian Faderman writes:

> While a woman who engaged in lesbian sex posed no threat, at least to a libertine mentality, as long as she maintained all other aspects of her role as a woman, someone who both engaged in lesbian sex and rejected the other aspects of a female role *always* aroused societal anxiety.[65]

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[59] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 201.
[60] Daston and Park, "The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature," 427. Note that "hermaphrodite" is an outdated term and no longer acceptable to describe intersex people.
[61] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 203.
[62] Blank, *Straight*, 2-3; Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, 45.
[63] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 26.
[64] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 30, 36.
[65] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 47.

Faderman explains that in the early modern period, the majority of legal cases against lesbian activity were against women who tried to pass as men, and the punishments were usually more severe if a dildo was used.[66] In particular, she notes that while male writers of the time often described sapphic relationships to titillate their (presumed male) readers, the women they depicted were invariably feminine, and usually ended by partnering with a man. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that public opinion became more virulent against all forms of lesbianism.[67]

When taken in the context of seventeenth-century Europe, the most transgressive elements of Maupin's story are not necessarily her sapphic affairs, but rather her rejection of other gender roles and conventions. In contrast to her modern reputation as a queer rebel, even her cross-dressing was less socially threatening than it might have been if she had actively sought to live as a man. In fact, perhaps her most shocking behaviours were rooted in her aggressive approach to affairs of the heart as well as the sword. In a time when a woman's honour was based on a dangerous balancing act between sexual passivity and public-facing purity, Maupin clearly chose to live instead by that exclusively male code of honour: the gentlemen's duel. Even within seventeenth-century descriptors of sexual deviance, Maupin evades categorization, combining elements of all three types: the fiery and passionate virago, the ambiguously gendered tribade, and the sapphic woman, still feminine enough to allure male partners.

Typecasting at the Opéra

While the tribade was usually considered a monstrous figure, confined to sensationalized medical or legal case studies, the virago was a popular literary type—and also regularly appeared on the Paris stage. At the Opéra, the virago generally took the form of a spurned goddess or

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[66] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 49-53.
[67] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 43.

queen, exemplified in the title role of Lully's 1686 *Armide.* The character, a powerful Saracen[68] enchantress, was a perennial favourite with audiences as well as with star actresses. Further, Armide inspired librettists and composers to depict many other leading female characters of her type, including the child-killing sorceress Médée and the warrior princess Clorinde.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Maupin was particularly known for her portrayals of such androgynous characters, including the specific examples listed above. However, this was not simply a case of type-casting, but also a reflection of the system of *emplois* used in French theatre at the time. Helpful for theatres with a large, fixed company operating on a repertory system, *emplois* were specific character types easily identifiable within works based on conventional models.[69] Upon joining an acting troupe or theatre, a performer would be assigned an *emploi* based on their vocal and physical characteristics, as well as their particular acting strengths or emotional tendencies.[70] Thus the *emploi* assigned to an actor was—in theory—connected to certain perceived innate qualities, such as temperament. This system was not as arbitrary as it may appear: early modern performers used a less psychological method of acting than we do today, aiming to embody idealized stock types rather than create realistic, individualized characters.

At the Paris Opéra, singing actors had exclusive rights to any characters which fell within their *emploi*.[71] At any given moment, there were usually three soloists within each *emploi*, ranked according to seniority: the "*premier*" singer would take the lead role, the "*second*" would take on a smaller role and act as understudy to the "*premier*," and the "*troisième*" would similarly cover the "*second*" and perform an even smaller role.[72] Upon retirement, an actor's rank within their *emploi* would then be passed down to the next in line.[73] When Maupin debuted

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[68] Saracen is an archaic term originating in the Middle Ages, used by Europeans to refer to Muslim peoples living in the geographic area of Arabia. John Victor Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xiii-xix. See also Daniel J. Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe," in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, ed. David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
[69] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 208.
[70] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 211, 220. See also Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:496.
[71] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 209.
[72] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 1:47-48.
[73] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 1:49.

at the Opéra, the singer Marie Le Rochois was the "*premier*" for the virago-type characters (known as *rôles furieux*), before passing that title on to Mlle Desmatins upon her retirement in 1698.[74] Maupin occupied the "*second*" rank within the "*furieux*" *emploi*, and therefore for most of her career played lead virago characters only when Desmatins happened to fall ill, as was the case with the role of Médée in *Médus, Roi des Mèdes*, and possibly also Armide in Lully's opera of the same name.[75]

Rochois was the most famous and beloved actress of the generation just before Maupin, widely known for her magnetism onstage. One of the most remarked-upon aspects of Rochois's performances was her ability to act even when she was not singing: "during the refrains especially, her mute play was more eloquent than speech; all the feelings, all the passions, were painted on her face."[76] In fact, Gilbert writes that Maupin greatly admired the older actress from the moment they first shared the stage in the 1690 revival of Lully's *Cadmus*.[77] And like Maupin's, Rochois's legacy lasted long after her death—even in the late nineteenth century, Arthur Pougin draws on earlier descriptions to paint an almost supernatural picture of Rochois's transcendent onstage presence:

> [Rochois] was transfigured on the stage. Her black eyes, which were very beautiful, were full of flame and illuminated wonderfully a physiognomy of which mobility was the principal character and which knew how to take up with inconceivable grandeur the expression of the most intense passion. Her radiant look, the noble attachment of her head, which gave her, despite her small size, an air of haughty, imposing pride, her majestic step, and finally the magnitude of a gesture at once full of grace and harmony—

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[74] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 212, 206; Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:498.
[75] Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 336.
[76] Paul Smith, "La Rochois et La Desmatins," *La Diligence: Journal des voyageurs,* November 1847, 4. [Pendant les ritournelles surtout, son jeu muet s'exprimait avec plus d'éloquence que la parole; tous les sentiments, toutes les passions se peignaient sur son visage.]
[77] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 189. ". . . On the very first day, [Rochois] won a place in the all-accommodating heart of la Maupin."

> everything came together to give the viewer the most complete illusion and to give the actress all the appearance of real beauty.[78]

Titon du Tillet (quoted in Strunk 1998), with the advantage of having seen her perform in person, adds to this mythos of transfiguration, describing how when Rochois was in character, her powerful presence overshadowed even the most beautiful of the other actresses:

> When she would become passionate and sing, one would notice only her on the stage. This struck me most especially in the opera *Armide,* in which she played the greatest and most powerful role in all our operas. She appeared in its first act between two of the most beautiful and imposing actresses ever seen on the stage, Mesdemoiselles Moreau and Desmatins, who served her as confidantes. . . . At the moment in which Mademoiselle Rochois opened her arms and lifted her head with a majestic air . . . these two confidantes were, in a manner of speaking, eclipsed. We saw only her on the stage and she alone seemed to fill it.[79]

Many writers comment on La Maupin's striking appearance, supporting the notion that physical characteristics were important to success at the Opéra. Indeed, Rochois herself was often considered to have succeeded *despite* being "of a mediocre size, very dark-skinned, rather full of body, with a face whose features were far from shining by distinction."[80] Maupin, on the other hand, seems to have possessed many advantages: "[she] was not very tall but she was very pretty; she had the most beautiful hair which was chestnut verging on blonde, big blue eyes, an aquiline nose, a pretty mouth, very pale skin, and a perfect neck."[81] In Maupin's case, her good looks may even have led the public to overlook certain deficiencies elsewhere. Cardinal Dubois recalls in typically evocative language: "Maupin . . . had a siren's voice and knew not a note of music. I admired, however, as the public did; a proud and masculine face, an imposing figure, are

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[78] Arthur Pougin,"Une Cantatrice de l'Opéra au temps du Lully: Marthe Le Rochois," *Le Ménestrel: Journal du monde musical* 59, no. 12 (1893): 92. [Mais il faut ajouter que cette petite femme, si naturellement chétive, se transfigurait à la scène. Ses yeux noirs, qu'elle avait fort beaux, étaient pleine de flamme et éclairaient merveilleusement une physionomie dont la mobilité était le principal caractère et qui savait prendre avec une inconcevable grandeur l'expression de la passion la plus intense. Son regard plain d'éclat, la noble attache de sa tête, qui lui donnait, en dépit de sa petite taille, un air de fierté hautaine et imposante, sa démarche majestueuse, enfin l'ampleur d'un geste à la fois plein de grâce et d'harmonie, tout se réunissait pour procurer au spectateur l'illusion la plus complète et pour donner à l'actrice toute l'apparence d'une réelle beauté.]

[79] Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 573.

[80] Pougin,"Une Cantatrice de l'Opéra au temps du Lully," 92. [. . . taille médiocre, très brune de peau, assez grêle de corps, avec un visage dont les traits étaient loin de briller par la distinction . . .]

[81] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 3: 352.

qualities as useful at the theatre as elsewhere. I remarked especially the beauty of her teeth, hair, and bosom."[82] Other writers agree that Maupin could not read music, but many argue that she made up for this defect with excellent skills in memorization and stagecraft, rather than succeeding on her looks alone.[83]

Maupin was certainly not the only actress at the Opéra to trade on her physical attractions. On the other end of the spectrum of *emplois* from the "*furieux*" viragos was Fanchon Moreau, who played more conventional leading ladies: virtuous, love-struck princesses who today might fit into the category of the ingénue, then known as "*rôles tendres*."[84] Fanchon (often known by her first name because her sister was also employed at the Opéra) was renowned for her beauty, and—typical of successful actresses of this period—had many lovers in high places, including the Dauphin, Louis XIV's son and heir.[85] At first glance it might seem contradictory that a particularly promiscuous actress should play the Opéra's young, innocent princesses. However, as Patricia Howard argues, the leading female roles of the Opéra were meant to invoke an exemplary court mistress rather than an idealized pure maiden.[86] With infidelity and adultery the norm among the aristocracy, and Louis XIV's mistresses officially recognized by the court, in seventeenth-century France the crux of female power lay not in chastity but in prudently accepting the attentions of powerful men.[87] Female characters at the Opéra were much more likely to be punished for either attempting to remain chaste while being pursued by a worthy hero, or for too ardently pursuing the wrong suitor.[88]

Unusually for a singer at the Paris Opéra, Maupin played roles of various types throughout her career. While certain star singers found some flexibility within the system of *emplois*—notably, Rochois and Desmatins both occasionally branched out into "*tendre*" roles—it was rare for a performer to exhibit as much range as Maupin, who sang not only "*furieux*" and "*tendre*" leading roles, but also comic roles, all right up until her retirement.[89] It was much more

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[82] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 181.
[83] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 3: 352.
[84] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:498.
[85] Somerset-Ward, *Angels and Monsters*, 25.
[86] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the Précieuses," 84.
[87] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the Précieuses," 83.
[88] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the Précieuses," 84.
[89] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:503.

common for singers to debut with small roles, including comic characters, and eventually graduate to a single *emploi* as they moved up in the ranks.[90] I find it intriguing to speculate what it was about Maupin's physicality, personality, or voice that was so particularly resistant to categorization.

Maupin Onstage

Like Fanchon Moreau, Maupin famously had many affairs with noble members of her audience. Cardinal Dubois reveals that he first encountered Maupin while on an excursion to the Opéra during which he was meant to procure a new mistress for the Duc de Chartres. However, after finishing with Dubois's choice (a dancer named Mlle Florence) the Duc moved on to Maupin, much to the Cardinal's chagrin:

> Maupin had what her predecessor had lacked; physically, as morally, she was a dragoon; she handled the sword like a fencing master; her tongue was no less audacious. Her sorriest defect, in my opinion, was her passion for her own sex; this even led her into scandalous excesses. The Duc de Chartres did his utmost to convert her and did but half succeed. I had contrived this affair, which brought me nothing but vexations, with the alternative of having my throat cut by a woman.[91]

Touchard-Lafosse charmingly adds that, the morning after her debut in *Cadmus*, Maupin awakened to find "thirty amorous letters, containing offers which, totalized, would have produced a capital of a hundred thousand crowns."[92] And according to Letainturier-Fradin, her charms were appreciated by spectators of all classes and types: "her splendid form gained her enormous success among the gallants on the stage, the turbulent young people of the pit, and the serious characters of the boxes."[93]

What made Maupin so attractive to both male and female members of her audiences? While at least part of her fame was likely due to her notorious offstage adventures, evidence

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[90] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:503.
[91] Dubois, *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois*, 182.
[92] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 222. [Le lendemain, à son lever, mademoiselle Maupin eut à décacheter trente missives amoureuses, contenant des offres qui, totalisées, eussent produit un capital de cent mille écus.]
[93] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 135. [Sa splendide plastique y obtint un succès énorme parmi les galantins de la scène, les jeunes turbulents du parterre et les graves personnages des loges.]

suggests that Maupin also won over spectators with her onstage magnetism—after all, one performance was reportedly all it took for her to gain the affections of the young woman in Marseille. Again I am forced to speculate: although many contemporary sources include general comments on Maupin's success as a performer, few offer more specific descriptions. The most informative observation I have found is in reference to her performance as the murderous sorceress Médée. The role was apparently so difficult that even the legendary Rochois said she would have been afraid to attempt it,[94] and Maupin was particularly praised for eschewing the conventional props which most actresses used to keep their hands occupied.[95] Letainturier-Fradin even suggests that her practice of wearing men's clothing may have contributed to her comfort onstage: "La Maupin appeared without a wand, without a handkerchief and without a fan, which were indispensable accessories in order to give a countenance to these young ladies; but La Maupin was hardly embarrassed by her hands; the habit of wearing a male costume gave her a special ease."[96]

However, this praise must be weighed against accounts which claim that the Paris public cooled towards Maupin after her return from Spain in 1698, such as this passage from Marie and Léon Escudier:

> During the absence of Mademoiselle Maupin, profound modifications had been made in the taste of the public; its musical intelligence had developed, it had seen new subjects appear on the operatic stage, and it had become more demanding because it could compare more. With her voice devoid of method, her cavalier manner, her acting full of energy, but in which the shades of passion were not always clearly marked, Mademoiselle Maupin was no longer in harmony with the dispositions of an audience that was beginning to appreciate the dress, the distinction, the strong studies and all the

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[94] Castil, *L'Académie impériale de musique*, 526.
[95] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 352.
[96] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 167. [. . . la Maupin paraissait sans baguette, sans mouchoir et sans éventail, accessoires indispensables pour donner une contenance à ces demoiselles; mais la Maupin n'était guère embarrassée de ses mains; l'habitude du costume masculin lui donnait une aisance particulière.] See also Wood and Sadler, eds., *French Baroque Opera*, 172.

> exquisite delicacies of art. Nevertheless, she had the courage to fight public indifference, and did not quit the Opera until 1705, at the age of thirty-two.[97]

Clayton records the same:

> [La Maupin] no longer excited the enthusiasm which she had been accustomed to raise; the public were cold and reserved. Her voice was still fresh, her acting excellent, and her beauty undiminished; but during her absence many things had combined to alter the public taste. New performers had appeared, and the audience had become more exacting, more critical. Mdme. la Maupin was a bold, showy actress, but wanting in those delicate shades and niceties of expression which the public now demanded. Finding herself no longer an idol, a fit of penitence for a life misspent seized the poor siren; who regretted the dissipation of past years, and bewailed the errors of her youth.[98]

Strangely, these negative evaluations of Maupin's return to the stage are flatly contradicted by most other sources. In particular, her creation of the role of Clorinde in 1702 was almost universally considered one of the greatest successes of her career. In fact, Du Casse writes that Maupin's performance as Clorinde contributed in no small part to the favourable reception of the opera *Tancrède* as a whole: "Tancrède had an immense vogue, thanks to the admirable voice and the bold acting of La Maupin, for whom Clorinde had been created."[99]

How might one make sense of these conflicting accounts? Jean Gourret and Jean Giraudeau suggest that certain cabals may have organized against Maupin, including devotees of La Rochois and supporters of would-be opera reformer Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[100] It is also possible that some criticism was motivated by Maupin taking on roles critics considered outside of her proper vocal *emploi*. Letainturier-Fradin explains that to the Paris public, unused to contraltos, "La Maupin's deep voice was confusing when she played roles written for soprano;

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[97] Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, 102. [Pendant l'absence de mademoiselle Maupin, de profondes modifications s'étaient opérées dans le goût du public; son intelligence musicale s'était développée, il avait vu se produire sur la scène lyrique de nouveaux sujets, et il était devenu plus exigeant parce qu'il pouvait comparer davantage. Avec sa voix dépourvue de méthode, ses allures cavalières, son jeu plein d'énergie, mais où les nuances de la passion n'étaient pas toujours nettement accusées, mademoiselle Maupin n'était plus en harmonie avec les dispositions d'un auditoire qui commençait à apprécier la tenue, la distinction, les fortes études et toutes les exquises délicatesses de l'art. Toutefois elle eut le courage de lutter contre l'indifférence publique, et ne quitta définitivement de l'Opéra qu'en 1705, à l'âge de trente-deux ans.]
[98] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 60.
[99] Du Casse, *Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre en France*, 257. [Tancrède . . . eut une vogue immense . . . grâce à l'admirable voix, au jeu hardi de la Maupin, pour qui avait été crée le rôle de Clorinde.]
[100] Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 39.

her decisive carriage and bearing made her an ingenue lacking in gentleness, a lover too skillful to pretend sincere candour; and they taunted her ruthlessly when she persisted in these anomalies."[101]

This account raises even more questions: were audiences sceptical of Maupin's portrayals of ingenues because of her real-life reputation, or because of the aesthetic concerns of seventeenth-century theatre? If the notoriously promiscuous Fanchon Moreau was accepted as a tender ingénue, what was the audience's objection to Maupin's portrayals of these young lovers? Were critics' loudest protests directed more towards Maupin's unusual vocal timbre, or towards her transgressions of traditional *emplois*? Was the appropriateness of the performer's vocal type —which usually takes precedence in today's operatic aesthetic—considered more or less crucial than the purely theatrical alignment of personal characteristics and dramatic type? A quote from a contemporary critic, Le Cerf, may offer some illumination:

> The constraint and the disguises, to which the castrati reduce the Italians, are faults which we do not have, and which in fact give us more advantage over them. . . . For things to be good, and in order, men and women must not cross over . . . and do each other's jobs: everyone feels bad about it; it is a real abuse. That La Maupin sometimes leaves off her hairstyle and her fan to take up a spear and a helmet, as a goddess, as a warrior woman: there is nothing to say. These are favorable occasions for her, where her lively and cavalier air, and her bold and unique voice shine even better than in ordinary roles, without offending modesty or verisimilitude. But nothing more. The modesty of our theatre is a precious advantage that we cannot keep too much. . .[102]

In accordance with the overarching system of *emplois*, Le Cerf excuses Maupin's gender-non-conforming appearances onstage by arguing that they are natural for *her*, considering her innate vocal and physical qualities. At least in Le Cerf's opinion, it is both Maupin's unusual

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[101] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 214. [La voix grave de la Maupin déroutait lorsqu'elle attaquait des rôles écrits pour soprano; son port et son maintien décides en faisaient une ingénue manquant de douceur, une amoureuse trop savante pour feindre une candeur sincère; aussi la raillait-on impitoyablement quand elle persistait dans ces anomalies.]

[102] Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la Musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 1:122-123. [La contrainte et les déguisemens, où les Castrati réduisent les Italiens sont des défauts que nous n'avons point, et qui nous donnent en effet plus d'avantage sur eux, que Monsieur l'Abbé ne s'efforce de leur en attribuer sur nous. Pour que les choses soient bien, et dans l'ordre, il ne faut point que les hommes et les femmes aillent sur les droits, et fassent le métier les uns des autres: tout le monde s'en trouve mal; c'est un vrai abus. Que la Maupin quitte quelquefois sa coiffure et son éventail, pour prendre une lance et un casque, en Déesse, en femme guerriere: il n'y a rien à dire. Ce sont des occasions favorables pour elle, ou son air vif et Cavalier, et sa voix hardie et unique brillent encore mieux que dans les rôles ordinaires, sans choquer la pudeur ni la vraisemblance. Mais rien de plus.]

voice and her masculine temperament (and, it is tempting to extrapolate, perhaps in particular her active rather than receptive approach to seduction) that disqualifies her from playing conventionally feminine roles. What can following this line of inquiry tell us about the links between identity, character, and voice? I explore these increasingly philosophical questions further in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
"An extensively explored bodily element": Performance as History

"Musical sounds are made by labor. And it is in the irreversible experience of playing, singing, or listening that any meanings summoned by music come into being."[1] In her 2004 article "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" Carolyn Abbate questions musicologists' reluctance to consider the practical, real-time decisions musicians make in order to bring pieces to life. In a similar vein, Elisabeth Le Guin writes that "to put the performer always first, front and centre, inverts an established order of musicological thinking. . . . Taking the performative point of view profoundly complicates the whole enterprise of talking coherently about music."[2] By including performance as a crucial part of my research, I throw in my lot with what Abbate calls the "drastic" side of music: that which is non-verbal, embodied, ineffable, "wild."[3] Just as I embraced play as a methodology when speculating on the narrative and cultural meanings of Maupin's life, I take a similarly playful approach to discussing the music Maupin sang. For Abbate, "real music, music-as-performed . . . might suggest multiple concrete meanings and associations, conflicting and interchangeable."[4] I want to allow these multiple meanings to flourish rather than shutting down alternatives in an attempt to impose a singular definitive interpretation.

In these final two chapters I turn my attention to the act of performing, first focusing on Maupin's musical career and then reflecting on my own practice as a genderqueer artist. Of course, my experience of performing French Baroque opera is likely very different from Maupin's. As Suzanne Cusick suggests, any such performance, no matter how "historically informed," requires a negotiation between centuries' worth of cultural knowledge, tangible and intangible.[5] Le Guin agrees:

> An eighteenth-century sense of embodiment is a realm both familiar and unfamiliar to us now. . . . We can only resort to analogies, images, associations, all of them historically

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[1] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 505.
[2] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 13.
[3] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 509-510.
[4] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 532.
[5] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 28.

> and culturally bound. In the end what a bodily sensation is, as an experience, can only be approached through what it *means* within the culture that introduced that body to itself in the first place.[6]

In the interest of situating myself in my own cultural moment, I begin with a short review of recent scholarship on the links between identity, gender, and voice, followed by a deeper application of these concepts to Maupin's voice in conversation with perspectives from her own century. Next, I investigate four of Maupin's most iconic roles, analyzing them through the interrelated lenses of historical context, performance practice, and my own embodied experience of singing excerpts from these operas. As Le Guin writes, "the performer's relationship to the work of art must have an extensively explored bodily element."[7] Although we have no record of music in Maupin's own hand, just as Le Guin describes the "intimacy" of playing pieces Boccherini wrote for himself, I have discovered a similar intimacy in singing the music Maupin brought to life centuries ago.[8]

Voice, Body, and Gender Identity

Voice and identity are closely linked in Western European philosophy. In the words of Mladen Dolar, the voice "directly discloses the interior, so much so that the very supposition of an interior depends on the voice."[9] Beyond its literal meaning, "voice" can also represent an individual's expression of self—whether audible, literary, visual, or through some other medium. Freya Jarman-Ivens adds that "the voice is coded not only as identity-bestowing . . . but also as identity-*revealing*."[10] In other words, Western thinking holds that the most important function of the voice is to translate from the inner world of the "true" self to the outer world of interpersonal communication.[11]

And yet, the human voice is still stubbornly tied to the physical realm of the body. Cusick writes that "we believe the voice *is* the body, its very breath and interior shapes projected

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[6] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 6.
[7] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 14.
[8] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 2.
[9] Dolar, *A Voice And Nothing More*, 81.
[10] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 29.
[11] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 27-28.

outward into the world as a way others might know us, even know us intimately."[12] Jarman-Ivens suggests that not only does a voice seem to express the body to which it belongs, but a voice, once heard, serves to constitute or produce a corresponding body: "on hearing a voice, the listener must assign it a source."[13] We link the voice so closely to both body and selfhood that when the illusion of coherence is successful, we often conflate them as one and the same.

Of all identity labels, gender is perhaps most precariously dependent on non-verbal vocal cues. David Azul notes that "the correct detection and attribution of a speaker's gender is considered an everyday competence of conversation partners and addressing a speaker with the wrong title or pronoun is regarded as embarrassing."[14] Azul argues that the process of projecting and identifying gender through the medium of the human voice is much more complex than is often taken for granted, identifying four distinct processes:

> 1 Subjective gender positioning (how does the speaker identify in terms of gender?)
> 2 Desired gender attribution (how does the speaker wish to be perceived and addressed by others?)
> 3 Gender presentation (what does the speaker do to perform their vocal gender?)
> 4 Gender attribution (which gender does the speaker attribute to their own voice?; which gender do others attribute to the speaker's voice?)[15]

The question of what a person's voice "should" sound like becomes especially blurry when non-binary identities are thrown into the mix, with voices, bodies, and identities that do not align in ways immediately legible to conventional understandings of gender. While Azul's four processes may be largely invisible (or inaudible) to cisgender speakers and their listeners, for trans and gender-non-conforming people any vocal interaction can become a minefield of misattribution. As Judith Butler explains, when assumed correlations between identity categories appear to be out of alignment, dominant discourses scramble to explain away the perceived discontinuity—often placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of non-conforming individuals rather than on the limiting belief systems that exclude them.[16] Common strategies used by trans

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[12] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 29.
[13] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 7.
[14] Azul, "How Do Voices Become Gendered?" 85.
[15] Azul, "Gender-related Aspects of Transmasculine People's Vocal Situations," 674.
[16] Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 315.

people to mitigate this discomfort and potential danger include: administering testosterone to deepen the voice; accessing speech therapy in order to learn to speak with a different pitch, resonance, or inflection; and undergoing vocal surgeries.[17]

While I have not undergone any gender-affirming medical treatments or vocal therapies (nor do I want to—I love my voice as it is and have no desire to change it), I still sometimes wish that my voice did not so immediately cause strangers to label me as a woman. Yet ironically, during my operatic training I was told many times that I should alter my speaking voice to make it higher, brighter, and more energetic-sounding in order to match my lyric mezzo-soprano singing voice. Why did a perceived difference between my speaking and singing voice cause consternation for my teachers? And why is it that my body and my voice are so insistently attributed "female"—despite my explicit assertion of non-binary identity—while still falling short of a "correct" performance of womanhood?

In a 2022 article, Stephan Pennington argues that the music education system is directly implicated in the development of cisheteronormative voice expectations: "that men and women would operate in completely different registers is naturalized and even makes its way into everyday speech habits. The history of singing is complicit in the maintenance of gender vocal essentialism."[18] Lisa Quoresimo agrees, arguing that the advent of fixed-pitch notation in Western European music coincided with an ossification of the vocal ranges expected from particular gendered and sexed bodies.[19] Drawing on historical descriptions of female basses and high male voice types, in her 2018 dissertation Quoresimo provides convincing evidence that the vocal boundaries between genders were considered much more malleable before the Scientific Revolution and its accompanying focus on biological determinism.[20] Combining this with Laqueur's arguments on the humoural spectrum of sexual difference, we find an early modern body which, both physically and sonically, was much more ambiguously sexed than we today often take for granted.

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[17] It is important to note that safety is not the only reason a trans or non-binary person might access these voice-altering interventions. Trans people may pursue such vocal changes as a way to alleviate gender dysphoria or simply to feel more comfortable in their bodies.
[18] Pennington, "Transgender Passing Guides," 3.
[19] Quoresimo, "Construction of Gendered Differences in the Voice," 60-62.
[20] Quoresimo, "Construction of Gendered Differences in the Voice," 66-69.

Maupin's Voice

In his 1668 *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, seventeenth-century voice teacher Bénigne de Bacilly devotes the majority of his instruction to the art of pronunciation, treating timbre as a secondary topic. Even within his discussion of the non-verbal qualities of voices, gender is less conspicuous than a twenty-first century reader might expect, with categories like "big," "small," "light," "sturdy," "brilliant," and "husky," all presented as relatively disconnected from gender.[21] The few exceptions to this rule align with Laqueur's view of early modern gender being closely linked to bodily humours and heat. For example, Bacilly identifies certain voices as naturally slow and soft, lacking "the fire and the disposition needed to put life into singing."[22] He goes on to claim that "these voices are more commonly female because of their phlegmatic disposition, which causes this slowness and inert gentleness."[23] Note that Bacilly does not consider softness and slowness to be inherent or exclusive to female voices, but simply more common among women due to their cooler natures.

If seventeenth-century boundaries between the sexes were as ambiguous as Laqueur and Quoresimo claim, is it possible that Maupin's medium treble voice wouldn't have automatically marked her as a woman? Although the male contralto roles common in Italian serious opera were nowhere to be found in French repertoire (at least partially due to the French distaste for castrati),[24] the French alternative, the *haute-contre* (high tenor), would not have sounded like the muscular tenors of today. *Haute-contres* likely employed a much lighter registration, especially into the upper end of their range—as did the majority of higher male voices at this time.[25] In these circumstances, is it possible that Maupin could have occasionally been mistaken for an

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[21] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 15-40. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 175-190. Bacilly came from a courtly tradition of French singing more attuned to solo songs performed as chamber music; however, this school of singing was passed on through pedagogical lines to star of the Paris Opéra Marie Le Rochois.

[22] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 38-39. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 189.

[23] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 39. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 190.

[24] Castrati were male singers castrated before puberty in order to preserve the treble range of their voices. See Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 237.

[25] Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*, 155, 179.

haute-contre, like Ellen Creathorne Clayton suggests in her version of the convent escapade?[26] There is no record of Maupin singing a male role at the Paris Opéra, but in a more provincial company like the Marseille Académie, where there were fewer talented singers to go around, might she have been considered for an *haute-contre* role?

I remain cautiously sceptical, considering how little practical knowledge we have about vocal technique and registration before the advent of sound recording technology.[27] While I agree that social pressures certainly contribute to the difference in average pitch between men's and women's voices, I question Quoresimo's presumption that most individual human voices have the hidden potential to sustainably occupy any range of the full eight octaves available to the human species at large.[28] The following passage from Bacilly shows that he recognizes at the very least a noticeable difference in pitch between male and female voices, as he understands them:

> Although the correct method of singing can be applied to all types of voices, it is all the more evident in high ones, especially when they render the various passions. . . . From this observation, it would seem that female voices have a considerable advantage over male ones, if the latter did not have more vigour and steadiness in executing vocal embellishments and more talent in expressing passions than female ones. For the same reason, falsetto voices convey what they are singing in a far better way than natural voices. On the other hand, they sound piercing and often lack good tuning, unless they are so well trained that they seem to have become natural.[29]

While it is unclear exactly what Bacilly means by the "vigour and steadiness" he ascribes to male voices, he conclusively connects female voices with a relatively "high" pitch. However, he also acknowledges the existence of "falsetto" voices, male voices occupying a similar range to female voices. While he elsewhere makes a distinction between falsetto and "natural tenor" voices, it is still possible that Bacilly's "falsetto" voice refers to the *haute-contre*, as in French

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[26] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 54.
[27] Richard Wistreich, "Lost Voices," *Early Music* 35, no. 3 (2007): 456–58.
[28] Quoresimo, "Construction of Gendered Differences in the Voice," 54, 66-69. The strongest scientific evidence for a social theory of gendered voice differences comes from studies which find that the voices of prepubescent children show gendered differences in average pitch and formant frequencies long before these differences could be caused by any structural dimorphism in the vocal tract. See Zimman, "Transgender Voices," 5.
[29] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 44-46. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 192-193.

choral repertoire of the time the *tenor* and *haute-contre* were differentiated.[30] What remains unclear is whether the timbral difference between an *haute-contre* and a female contralto would be recognizable to seventeenth-century ears.

Unfortunately, we have very little information that might indicate how Bacilly would have labelled Maupin's voice. Although we know she was considered a *bas-dessus*, literally a "low soprano," without recordings it is impossible to know the full extent of her range or what the timbre of her voice sounded like. The few contemporary descriptions we have of her singing are vague, as when Parfaict writes that Maupin "had the finest bas-dessus voice ever talked about, so fine that no woman has been found since her death who can equal her," or when Le Cerf quips that "the Abée must have no ears, if after having heard La Maupin's voice, he misses La Rochois's."[31] While it is tempting to also take into account later writings, it is hard to trust authors like Gilbert to give an accurate description centuries after Maupin's death: "she possessed unquestionable artistic gifts. Her voice, with its warm, rich tones, and excellent control, brought our heroine an engagement worth three thousand pounds a year."[32] At this point, all we can be certain of is that Maupin's voice was somewhat lower and darker than many other female singers of her day (hence the *bas-dessus* label), and that it was considered "fine," even within the context of the Opéra.

But what did having a "good" voice mean in early modern France? French singing technique of the seventeenth century was self-consciously different from that of Italian opera, a genre which generally prioritized long, lyrical lines and impressive coloratura. In serious Italian operas, the plot was usually concentrated in passages of secco recitative, which allowed for quicker movement through dialogue in order to reach the arias, in which the soloists could showcase their vocal skills. This is, of course, an over-simplification (and one which the French

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[30] "Those with natural voices scorn the falsetto voice, saying that it is out of tune and like squealing, while the latter claim that refinement in singing is much more apparent in a brilliant voice, such as the falsetto voice, than in a natural tenor voice, which usually has less brilliance though better tuning." Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 35-36. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 187.

[31] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 3:351. [Mlle Maupin, qui possédait un bas-dessus le plus beau dont eut ouï parler, & tel que depuis sa mort on n'a point trouvé de fille qui en ait approché.] Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 1:123-124. [Il faut que Monsieur l'Abbé n'ait point d'oreilles, si aprés avoir entendu la voix de la Maupin, il regrette celle de la Rochois.]

[32] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 189. Three thousand pounds sterling at this time period would be worth over 800,000 American dollars in today's currency.

were only too eager to exaggerate to their own advantage), but recitative and air are generally less distinct French *tragédies*, with airs being shorter and less ornamented and *récit* being more measured and lyrical. As Sarah Nancy explains, French opera tended to prioritize language, poetry, and story over musical beauty, and therefore French singing technique prioritized language comprehension over lyricism.[33] This is strongly supported by Bacilly's marked emphasis on pronunciation and poetry in his singing treatise.[34] Nancy clarifies further that "the [French] performer's first task was not to sing well, but to embody the dramatic fiction by playing a role. It is thus relevant to notice that the performer was called an 'actor.'"[35]

In fact, Bacilly identifies very specifically this dramatic sensibility which was so prized in singers:

> *Mouvement* is . . . a certain quality which gives singing its soul and is called *mouvement* because it moves people, I mean that it arouses the listeners' attention, even the most impervious ones. One could say that it awakens in the hearts of the listeners whatever passion the singer wishes to inspire, mainly that of 'tenderness'. Due to this fact, most women never manage to acquire this ability of expression, which they think is contrary to their modesty because it partakes of the theatre; thus their singing is utterly lifeless, for lack of wanting to act a little.[36]

I find it interesting that, although Bacilly finds most women wanting in the area of dramatic acting, he places the blame for their limitations not on innate characteristics but on the social pressures of womanhood. As we know Maupin had no such qualms about her modesty, I am quite comfortable speculating that she possessed Bacilly's "mouvement" in abundance, and I imagine she used it to great effect in her performances at the Paris Opéra.

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[33] Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la Musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 2:76-77.
[34] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 5. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 169-170. Bacilly even goes so far as to write, "singing can hardly be practised without words."
[35] Nancy, "The Singing Body," 67.
[36] Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, 200. Translation by Elena Madeleine Lorimer. See Lorimer, "A Critical Edition and Translation of Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques Curieuses Sur L'art de Bien Chanteur* (1668)," 298.

Maupin's Roles

As described in Chapter 3, Maupin was cast in many roles reflective of her masculine and militaristic tendencies, including the sword-wielding princess Clorinde, the war goddess Athena, the murderous witch Medea, and the huntress Diana. Still, I am tempted to speculate even further, beyond traditions of typecasting. Did Maupin's real-life persona affect audiences' receptions of her onstage characters? Maupin's amorous adventures were so notorious—along with her cavalier attitude and penchant for masculine dress—that it would be almost unthinkable for audience members, composers, and librettists to be unaware of her transgressions.[37] Indeed, Touchard-Lafosse claims that she was "loved by the public for her qualities, and even for her faults, more than for her talents."[38] Just as cross-dressed male actors were allowed to engage in more explicit or immoral sexual behaviour than would be acceptable for a female actress, did Maupin's reputation for real-life non-conformity perhaps give her more license to be an "improper" woman onstage? I suspect that, because she had no reputation to speak of—besides that of a notorious troublemaker—she had little fear of losing it. And as Laqueur's humoural model shows, at this time period an androgynous sexuality such as hers would have held a deep fascination for audience members of all genders.[39]

Despite Maupin's famous penchant for cross-dressing, there is no record of her ever playing a man onstage. Although Clayton wrote in 1863 that "it was in male characters that [Maupin] shone more especially: for these her appearance and manners were well suited," as discussed in previous chapters, true trouser roles, in which a female performer plays a male character, were rare in French opera and spoken theatre at this time.[40] Most cross-dressed roles featured a female character donning male clothing during the course of the action, and the majority of these roles appeared in comic or sentimental spoken theatre.[41] Maupin played two of

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[37] Deschanel writes that "La Maupin's fame at the Opera was not entirely of good quality: her morals, always a little lesbian, made her more famous than she should have been." [La célébrité de la Maupin a l'Opéra ne fut pas toute de bon aloi: ses moeurs, tant soit peu lesbiennes, la rendirent fameuse plus qu'il n'eût fallu.] Deschanel, *La vie des comédiens*, 258.
[38] Touchard-Lafosse, "Aventures de la Mlle Maupin, etc.," 245. [. . . aimée du public pour ses qualités et même pour ses travers plus que pour ses talents . . .]
[39] Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation," 234. See pages 7-9 and 13 of Chapter 3.
[40] Clayton, "Early French Singers," 56.
[41] See pages 8-9 in Chapter 2 and pages 11-12 in Chapter 3.

these women-in-male-disguise at the Opéra, both in comedic ballets. However, just because Maupin did not play men onstage does not mean her performances did not subvert gender expectations in other ways. In the section below I discuss four of Maupin's most iconic roles in detail: examining how they relate to the gender and sexual politics of their time, exploring how they embody contrasting *emplois*, and tracing how they reflect the evolution of the artistic environment at the Paris Opéra.

The first of these roles is an archetypal virago or "*rôle furieux*": the title character from Jean-Baptiste Lully and Philippe Quinault's 1686 *Armide.* The second, although she is a warrior princess—Clorinde from André Campra and Antoine Danchet's 1703 *Tancrède*—exhibits many of the softer characteristics typical of a "*tendre*" role. Third, La Folie ("folly" or "madness") in André Cardinal Destouches and Antoine de La Motte's 1703 comédie-ballet *Le Carnaval et La Folie* exemplifies the equally transgressive—but much more comedic—archetype of the female fool, led solely by her heart and her capricious whims.[42] And finally, the fourth role gestures even more playfully towards Maupin's real-life tendencies, casting her as the cross-dressing Isabelle in Michel de La Barre and de La Motte's 1705 *La Vénitienne*. I have chosen these roles not only because they elicited strong reactions from critics and audiences, but also because all four reflect different facets of Maupin's offstage gender transgressions. As I analyze the roles through the lenses of historical context and audience reception, I will also speculate on Maupin's own experience of embodying such roles, using theories of intertextuality put forward by Linda Hutcheon.[43]

Lully's *Armide*

The Saracen sorceress Armide is in many ways the definitive virago of French Baroque opera.[44] As the opera begins, the titular Muslim princess has seduced and magically enslaved all

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[42] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 191.
[43] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*.
[44] Although she is the most celebrated, Armide was not the first virago to appear at the Opéra. Her most notable precursor is the goddess Cybèle from Lully's 1675 *Atys*, which features a very similar sleep scene, placing the hero Atys totally in Cybèle's power. Cybèle also pursues revenge after Atys rejects her love, humiliated at being brought low by a human man—but unlike Armide, Cybèle's vengeance is successful: she blinds him and then turns him into a tree.

but one of the crusading Christian knights who are her enemies. Only the opera's hero, Renaud, has escaped her power. Planning to lure Renaud into a trap, Armide creates a series of beautiful illusions in the form of an enchanted garden; there her demon underlings, disguised as nymphs and shepherds, serenade their quarry. Waiting until her enemy is totally disarmed by his surroundings, Armide then enchants Renaud to make him fall asleep, seizing the chance to take her revenge. In this scene, by far the most celebrated in the opera, Armide approaches the sleeping Renaud, meaning to seize her chance for revenge—but an irresistible power, even more potent than sorcery, prevents her.

Patricia Howard notes that the phrase "malgré moi" (despite myself) recurs frequently in Quinault's libretti as his heroines helplessly recognize they are being overwhelmed by the strength of their own emotions.[45] Armide's second act monologue dramatizes this exact struggle: while her rational mind tells her that Renaud is her enemy and must be destroyed, as she gazes upon him her heart is filled first with pity, and then with an attraction so strong she is unable to resist its pull. Such depictions of women emphasized the perceived weakness of their minds, and supported their exclusion from the rational, male spaces of public life and politics. Although Armide may seem to wield unlimited magical power (depicted onstage through the theatre's spectacular machinery), the ostensible moral of the opera is that her power—and in fact any woman's power—is merely an illusion.

In contrast, Renaud's arc seems to prop up the facade of male self-control and rationality. Like many of Quinault's heroes, he has two powerful, conflicting motivators: love, and military glory.[46] In Lully and Quinault's operas, the hero often has to choose between the two—and glory is invariably positioned as the correct choice. In *Armide*, this negative view of romance is taken to the extreme, with love being portrayed as nothing but an elaborate illusion. Renaud falls for Armide only under the influence of her enchantments, and when her spells are later broken, he quickly abandons her. In the end, military glory proves to be the only thing worthy of the hero's attention. As Renaud departs from the heartbroken Armide, he says to her: "Glory requires that I leave you, / It orders love to cede to duty."[47]

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[45] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the *Précieuses*," 62.
[46] Newman, *Jean-Baptiste de Lully and his Tragédies Lyriques*, 68.
[47] [La gloire veut que je vous quitte, / Elle ordonne à l'amour de céder au devoir.]

Buford Norman suggests that in some ways Armide and Renaud are mirror images of each other, both initially valuing freedom and military glory over love.[48] However, the outcome of the opera is very different for each: Armide is almost destroyed by her inability to reconcile her passion for Renaud with her love of liberty, while Renaud escapes relatively unscathed, manhood intact. Further, the opera's sleep scene adds another layer of nuance. Renaud, lying asleep and totally defenceless, enchanted by Armide, is effectively freed of any accountability for his actions towards her. Conveniently, he surrenders his precious self-control under the irresistible coercion of sorcery. Robert Walser suggests in his work on masculinity in metal music that "negotiations of the anxieties of gender and power are never conclusive; that is why . . . these imaginary resolutions of real anxieties must be reenacted over and over again."[49] Perhaps the sleep scene offered seventeenth-century audiences a chance to explore their profound anxieties surrounding the mutability of manhood without fully comprising the hero's masculinity. In fact, there were several such scenes featured in operas of the time period, most notably in Lully's 1675 *Atys*: like Renaud, *Atys*'s titular hero is placed under a sleep spell while a powerful woman, in this case the goddess Cybèle, lusts over his unconscious body.

Armide's Transgressive Power

This fixation with the reversal of gendered power structures was not unique to the stage. During the first few decades of his reign, concern about King Louis XIV's many love affairs reflected a fear of female usurpation of masculine energy and power. Under the humoural model, it was believed that merely remaining in the company of women for too long could drain a man of his vital "heat," rendering him cooler and more effeminate.[50] Since the body for seventeenth-century people was a highly permeable entity, it was perfectly natural to fear that the king's masculinity, in the form of heat, could pass from his male body into a woman's by a kind of gender osmosis. Anxiety about the king's promiscuity was therefore not only a matter of morality

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[48] Norman, *Touched by the Graces*, 335.
[49] Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 110.
[50] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 7, 124.

but of public concern: if Louis was to lose his precious manhood to the seductive charms of a woman, how could he rule the country with sufficient strength?

The possibility of a love spell or potion was also far less fantastical to the seventeenth-century mind. Although Paris's last execution for witchcraft had been ordered over fifty years earlier, belief in the supernatural, and in particular in the potential power of the devil, was still widespread in the 1680s.[51] One particular scandal known as *L'Affaire des poisons* brought to light the depth of superstition prevalent even in France's upper classes. Lasting from approximately 1677 to 1682, the Affair involved several members of Louis XIV's court. Some highly respectable aristocratic women were questioned and charged with poisoning, or accused of performing black magic.[52] To the great discomfort of the king, it appeared that for many years members of his court had been visiting fortune tellers—known as *devineresses*—for services ranging from romantic advice to purveying love potions and even poisons. It seems that many seventeenth-century men, kings included, preferred to embrace the facade (however worrisome) that women were bewitching them into sexual relationships—if not with spells and potions, then with feminine wiles. As Susan McClary suggests, it was likely more comfortable for men to project the responsibility for their sexuality onto the charms of women, securing the illusion of their own rationality and self-control.[53]

In the case of Armide, however, some spectators' relationships with the sorceress may have been more complex than appearances suggest. Downing A. Thomas argues that seventeenth-century audiences left *Armide* identifying more with the defeated princess than with the triumphant male hero: contemporary reviewer Jean-Laurent Le Cerf de La Viéville wrote that opera-goers were "captivated despite themselves, distracted, upset by Armide's unhappiness."[54] This fascination with the opera's anti-heroine was at least to some extent a result of the talent of star soprano Marie Le Rochois, for whom the role was created.[55] A Monsieur Boyer of the Académie Française, writing in 1697, described Rochois's Armide casting a spell not only over

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[51] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 143.
[52] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 203, 209, 212-213, 221.
[53] McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, 233.
[54] Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la Musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 2:16. Translation by Downing A. Thomas.
[55] Rochois premiered the title role of Armide on February 15, 1686. Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 1:302.

Renaud but over the spectators as well: "The sincere Parterre [the ground level seating area] makes a great noise: / It is, more than Renaud, caught by the enchantment."[56]

Rochois was particularly praised for her electric portrayal of the sleep scene. Le Cerf (quoted in Smith 1847) wrote in 1705 that "One has seen twenty times . . . everyone, terror-stricken, without breathing, remaining motionless, their whole soul in their ears and in their eyes, until the air of the violin which finishes the scene gives permission to breathe; then the spectators resume their breath with a buzz of joy and admiration."[57] According to Tralage, women in particular seemed to react to Rochois's powerful performance: "In the boxes there is no woman coquettish enough / To not wish to be a man at that moment."[58] Here we find an intriguing cross-gender identification, possibly allowing disenfranchised women the pleasure of erotic agency—the chance to experience desire in a context free from the restrictions of gender roles. Instead of fulfilling its ostensible function of reassuring insecurities surrounding female masculinity, for some *Armide* may have momentarily reversed systems of gender and created a space for vicarious transgression. Although there are no similar surviving records of Maupin's performance of the role, it is easy to imagine the magnetic energy she must have brought to the beloved character.

McClary argues that despite her ostensible defeat and Renaud's escape after the love spell is broken, Armide "manages to have the last word" in the context of Lully's opera.[59] Armide's final aria, which she sings suspended above the stage in a flying carriage drawn by dragons, is furious, fast, and stormy. The relatively high vocal range and martial dotted rhythms point towards the sorceress's uncrushable spirit. Like many of Lully's airs, there is a repeated motto of both text and melody: "Perfidious Renaud flees from me! / Perfidious though he be, my feeble heart follows him."[60] Although Armide references her weakness, she still strives to resist the love that torments her. In the very last lines of the opera she sings:

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[56] Tralage, *Notes et documents*, 103. [Le sincere Parterre à grand bruit lui fait feste: / Il est, plus que Renaud, dedans l'enchantement;]
[57] Paul Smith, "La Rochois et La Desmatins," *La Diligence: Journal des voyageurs*, November 1847, 5. Translation by Paul Smith.
[58] Tralage, *Notes et documents*, 103. [Aux loges il n'est point de femme assez coquette / Pour ne souhaiter pas d'estre homme en ce moment . . .] Tralage says he is quoting from a "M. Boyer."
[59] McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, 230.
[60] [Le perfide Renaud me fuit: / Tout perfide qu'il est, mon lâche cœur le suit.]

The hope of revenge is all that remains to me.
Fly, Pleasures, fly, lose all your attractions.
Demons, destroy this palace.
Let us leave, and if it may be, let my fatal love
Remain entombed in this place for ever.[61]

The opera ends without a clear resolution for Armide, who remains free and autonomous even as she chooses to destroy her own castle. As McClary asks, "Where is the frame to seal off all this excess?"[62] In many other literary settings, such a transgressive woman would have been killed off by the end of the story, or at the very least tied down by a heterosexual marriage. Yet, flying into the sky in her demonic carriage, Armide seems more inspired than defeated by Renaud's betrayal. Perhaps this is why *Armide* was sometimes referred to as "the women's opera"—the rage of the spurned Armide may have offered women in the audience a sense of vindication despite the libretto's cruel treatment of its heroine.[63] And with the memory of a beloved star actress leading the performance, it is easy to imagine how Lully's opera become a perennial favourite for years to come, being revived many times throughout the eighteenth century.

Bringing Armide to Life

Marie Le Rochois's performances of Armide's monologue were legendary, setting the gold standard for critics and audiences alike and cementing Lully's setting of the text as the perfect vehicle for a skilled and charismatic performer. The simplicity of the vocal line and close attention to textual phrasing and timing allow for a significant amount of freedom on the part of the singer. Every accent and every rest is thoughtfully positioned—not as a metrical necessity, but as an opportunity for a breath, a gesture, or a look from the actor. The melodies are shaped carefully to follow the rise and fall of the character's quickly changing emotions, moving from rage to confusion to despair in the space of just a few bars.

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[61] [L'espoir de la vengeance est le seul qui me reste. / Fuyez, plaisirs, fuyez, perdez tous vos attraits. / Démons, détruisez ce palais. / Partons, et s'il se peut, que mon amour funeste / Demeure enseveli dans ces lieux pour jamais.]
[62] McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, 233.
[63] Boindin, *Lettres historiques sur tous les spectacles de Paris*, 94. [On a dit qu'Armide est l'Opera des femmes, Atys l'Opera du Roi, Phaëton l'Opera du Peuple, Isis l'Opera des Musiciens.]

At first, Armide's delivery is strong and confident as she revels in delight at the opportunity to strike down an enemy who has for so long evaded her vengeance. Yet as she raises her dagger to kill him, the stage directions note that she "cannot execute her plan"—an excruciating moment of tension, portrayed in the score as simply two full beats of rest (fig. 2, 0:41).[64] While this choice may seem underwhelming to those of us used to film scores tightly synchronized to the action of a scene, in this case Lully's setting follows an opposite logic: the lack of musical material gives the actor onstage complete control over the timing of this crucial emotional shift.

The following section of the monologue continues in this vein, with Armide almost stuttering her lines, interrupted by frequent rests and made further disjointed by Lully's rapid alternation between high and low registers (fig. 2, 0:54-1:22). Finally, letting out an involuntary sigh, Armide turns to reflection rather than action, convincing herself that it would be too cruel to take the beautiful Renaud's life. Instead, she decides to punish him by casting a spell to make him fall in love with her. The short air which closes the scene, while in a minuet rhythm, feels more frantic than elegant as Armide calls for her demons to whip up a wind to carry her and Renaud away (fig. 2, 3:17). As she sings "I yield to this conqueror, I am overcome by pity," Armide sounds tortured and unsure, as if she is still fighting her feelings of attraction.[65] The key is E minor, described by Marc-Antoine Charpentier as "effeminate, amorous, and plaintive," highlighting Armide's frailty and vulnerability in this moment.[66] Arms raised to the heavens, she summons tempestuous spirits to carry her away with her captive: "Come, fulfill my desires, / Demons, transform yourselves into charming zephyrs . . . / Fly, and carry us to the end of the universe!"[67] Yet despite the assertive text, the vocal line begs for a sensual *tremblement*[68] ornament on the word "desires," the tension and delayed release of the appoggiatura highlighting Armide's state of agitated arousal (fig. 2, 3:20).

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[64] [Armide va pour frapper Renaud et ne peut exécuter le dessein qu'elle a de lui ôter la vie.]
[65] [Je cède à ce vainqueur, la pitié me surmonte . . .]
[66] Claude Crussard, "Marc-Antoine Charpentier théoricien," *Revue de musicologie* 24, no. 75/76 (1945): 64. [Effemmé, Amoureux et plaintif.] Charpentier describes the moods associated with different keys in his short treatise *Règles de Composition* (c. 1690).
[67] [Venez, secondez mes désirs, / Démons, transformez-vous en d'aimables zéphyrs . . . / Volez, conduisez-nous au bout de l'univers.]
[68] A *tremblement* is a specifically French form of the Baroque trill, with an extended upper appoggiatura followed by a quick turn or trill.

Having performed this scene myself, I can attest that there is a certain visceral pleasure in embodying such extremes, especially in the context of a society in which emotional turbulence is generally considered shameful. As a femme-presenting person, I know all too well the pressure to project an aura of rational calm in order to disprove the stereotype of the "hysterical" woman. Performing Armide's monologue offers the chance to explore opposing affects side by side: fury and tenderness, determination and confusion, attraction and repulsion. This duality is no accident —Armide is arguably the epitome of the virago archetype, her unusually masculine heat contributing not only to her unfeminine power and strength, but also to her irresistible sensuality and her chaotic swings of mood and emotion. McClary writes:

> Such fables . . . caution against powerful women and their potential for rage. But they also play on the cultural associations of men with order and women with the excess that comes of being fully human. The women get all the good music in these operas; even as they stand as figures of fear and anxiety, they also inspire envy through their license to a much greater range of self-expression.[69]

In a culture in which showing intense affect in public is still linked pejoratively with femininity and irrationality, singing Armide's monologue can feel like a powerful reclamation. Imagine: during the orchestral thunder and lightning of the opening *symphonie*, the sorceress enters slowly and majestically, relishing in her triumph over Renaud. The feeling of vindication is electric, the sheer camp wickedness rivalling the best Disney villain songs. Then comes the gradual loss of certainty, the frustration and confusion as Armide's feelings shift wildly. Although more unsettling, this still provides physical satisfaction, allowing for violent swings of emotion rarely permitted in polite society.

The pure melodrama of the scene calls for the presentational acting style contemporary to the late seventeenth century. In *The Art of Gesture*, Dene Barnett explains that in this period, each poetic phrase would have been physically illustrated by accompanying gestures, codified into several different types according to function.[70] Indicative gestures literally point to something specific: their use can be as simple as gesturing towards a person, place, or thing

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[69] McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, 233.
[70] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 18.

when mentioned.[71] Imitative and expressive gestures are both descriptive, painting physically either an image referenced in the text or the emotion the character is experiencing. Emphatic gestures accentuate a specific word, and commencing and terminating gestures indicate which character is about to speak and when they have finished.

Barnett also explains that the relative size and intensity of gestures varied situationally, especially from genre to genre.[72] In a high tragedy like *Armide*, the scale would have had to be appropriately large enough to fit the stakes of the conflict and the spectacular setting and scenery. We can imagine during Armide's aria, as she calls her demons to her aid, the drama would be at its height. On the command "Come," the actor playing Armide might gesture imperiously outwards towards the demons (in a fully staged production, likely physically depicted by dancers onstage or even suspended from the flies). A more personal, inward movement might accompany the phrase "fulfill my desires," not only acknowledging the mention of the sorceress's self, but also the intimate nature of her yearnings. The actor might press their hand against their chest or even wrap their arms around their torso. On the line "Demons, transform yourselves into charming zephyrs," the actor's focus would likely once again turn outward. They might employ a descriptive gesture imitating the lightness and fluidity of the disguised demons' movements, perhaps highlighting the word "charming" with a special flourish. Additionally, because Armide is a "*rôle furieux*," the actor would almost certainly have been holding a long wand or sceptre known as a "*baguette*" ("*rôles furieux*" were also known as "*rôles à baguette*" by association) in addition to the prop dagger necessary to the scene.[73]

There are very few explicit mentions of gender in early modern acting treatises. Barnett's *The Art of Gesture*, which draws from many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, includes illustrated examples depicting both female and male figures, and records that many women actors were admired and looked to as examples of excellent stagecraft.[74] Yet gender seems to only have significantly affected the logistics of acting when it came to the standing order in groups: a character's position onstage was decided by "rank, age, sex and kinship:

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[71] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 28.
[72] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 15.
[73] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:502.
[74] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 59, 242-244.

master over servant, lady over gentleman, father over son and the old over the young."[75] While costuming would have clearly indicated gender onstage, it seems that the fundamentals of gesture remained the same across gender lines. Instead, much more attention was paid to the distinction between decorous and elegant gestures—meant to reflect the virtue and nobility of a character—and their opposite. A violent gesture or a straight line of movement instead of a graceful curve was indicative of moral inferiority, low class, or uncontrollable emotion.[76] Therefore, counterintuitively to twenty-first-century sensibilities, an actor portraying Armide with physically powerful gestures might have highlighted her mental weakness rather than her strength of will.

Fig. 2. Video recording of "Enfin, il est en ma puissance . . . Volez, volez" from *Armide*.[77]

[75] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 388.
[76] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 57.
[77] Performed by Camille Rogers and Louise Hung in Toronto, Canada, on May 17, 2023. Filmed and edited by Ryan Harper.

Maupin as Armide

Given Armide's fiery and transgressive nature, Maupin seems like a perfect fit for the role dramatically. However, with Maupin being so well-known as the first contralto soloist at the Opéra, it may seem an unusual choice to have her play a role originated by a soprano.[78] Did her androgynous aura allow her to transgress vocal boundaries to take on characters which suited her non-conforming tendencies? Or, were there simply not enough existing low-voiced roles to showcase her theatrical talents? The contralto was a relatively rare voice type in France at the time, especially outside of the chorus. Adolphe Julien writes that Maupin "had a superb voice . . . which had already been appreciated during her debut as Pallas in *Cadmus*, but which she had not yet been able to fully showcase, the practice then being to write only the secondary roles in these low registers."[79] Julien is correct here: because of the complex system of *emplois* and understudies at the Paris Opéra, the ranges of leading roles could not be too closely tailored to any one individual singer, who might need to be replaced at a moment's notice. While a few small roles attributed to Maupin, such as La Nuit in Collasse's *Canente* or Bellone in Charpentier's 1693 *Médée*, have a somewhat lower tessitura, the leading roles written for her occupy the same range typical of all treble roles at the Opéra.

In any case, Maupin was not actually first in line for the role of Armide in the 1703 revival, but likely filled in due to an illness or other absence.[80] The printed libretto lists the soprano Mlle Desmatins in the title role, which aligns with her designation as "*premier*" interpreter of "*rôles furieux*" at the time.[81] The substitution theory is supported by a satirical song written to chastise Maupin for singing the role a tone lower than the original key:[82]

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[78] "Maupin, La," in *A Dictionary of Musicians*, 136.
[79] Julien, "La Maupin," 129. [. . . elle avait une voix superbe, cette duelliste émérite, une admirable voix de bas-dessus (on dirait aujourd'hui *contralto)* qu'on avait déjà appréciée lors de son début dans la Pallas de *Cadmus,* mais qu'elle n'avait pas encore pu bien faire valoir, l'usage étant alors de n'écrire que les rôles secondaires dans ces registres graves.]
[80] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 1:303.
[81] Schmidt, *The Livrets of Jean-Baptiste Lully's Tragédies Lyriques*, 423. The Parfait brothers record a precedent, writing that Maupin was given the role of Médée in the 1702 premiere of *Médus* when Desmatins happened to fall ill. Parfaict, "Histoire de l'Académie royale de musique," 335-336.
[82] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 211. Rogers also mentions this satirical song: "La Maupin insisted on singing a soprano's part [in] a contralto's register and the result called forth a long and popular ballad of reproof." Rogers, "La Maupin," 201.

The poster on Tuesday
mentioned a new Armide.

All admired Maupin's
magical science;
Hear how her divine art
extends the music . . .
She was able to disguise Lully.

Maupin, accept my compliment;
the audience admires you.
They saw Lallemant play,
but they only laughed;
For Desmatins, they say . . .
you alone consoled Paris.[83]

The anonymous poet is invested in ridiculing all involved for daring to re-write the sacred notes of Lully, but here Maupin is singled out for particular critique.[84] Although admitting that Maupin has at least "consoled" the Parisian public in the absence of the soprano Mlle Desmatins, the writer then suggests that Maupin should "know herself better" and leave the role of Armide to Desmatins alone.[85]

Still, another line claims that all of Paris will line up to see Maupin perform, and will come "only for her," which suggests that this particular critic's opinion may have been at odds with the general sentiments of the public.[86] Indeed, other writers such as the Escudiers jump to defend Maupin at the expense of Lully and his contemporaries: "Under the influence of her talent, full of verve and brilliancy, Lully's repertoire assumed a new physiognomy; she knew how to give interest and life to these songs, sometimes so discoloured, and laid the foundations for the reform which, a few years later, was to be accomplished in our opera."[87] In this instance

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[83] [L'affiche, mardi, fit mention / De l'Armide nouvelle. . . . / Admirés tous, de la Maupin / La science magique; / Aprenez que son art divin / S'étend sur la musique . . . / Elle a sçu déguiser Lully. . . . / Maupin, reçois mon compliment; / Le parterre t'admire. / Il vit jouer la Lallemant, / Mais il n'en fit que rire; / De la Des Matins, ce dit-on . . . / Toi seule as consolé Paris.] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 211-213.
[84] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 211-212.
[85] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 213. [Connois-toi mieux, pauvre Maupin . . .]
[86] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 211-212. [Ne vinrent que pour elle…]
[87] Escudier, *Vie et aventures des cantatrices célèbres*, 97. [Sous l'influence de son talent plein de verve et d'éclat, le repertoire de Lully prit une physionomie nouvelle; elle sut donner de l'intérêt et de la vie à ces chants parfois si décolorés, et jeta les bases de la réforme qui, quelques années après, devait s'accomplir dans notre opéra.]

at least, it seems possible that Maupin was a casualty of the ongoing war between Lully purists and would-be opera reformers.[88]

Perhaps most intriguingly, the satirical song claims that "Maupin has no other ambition than to sing Armide," hinting that Maupin felt a strong connection to the role. Beyond the issue of vocal range and transposition, the pressure to follow the performances of the great Rochois—who not only originated the role but also played it to great acclaim in multiple revivals—must have been intense for both Maupin and Desmatins. Yet, as Linda Hutcheon writes, "adapters must have their own personal reasons for deciding first to do an adaptation and then choosing which adapted work. . . . They not only interpret that work but in so doing they also take a position on it."[89] Although Hutcheon is referring primarily to adaptations between mediums, she also acknowledges that every new production of an opera, even if the score is reproduced relatively unchanged, is still an adaptation because the historical context has shifted: the cast will almost certainly have changed, and often the setting, costumes, and other story-telling elements will change as well.[90] Further, Hutcheon also recognizes the possibility of including the performer under the label of "adaptor."[91]

Seeing Maupin through this lens, she becomes an active adaptor of the existing text of *Armide*— not only the notated score, but also the memories of Rochois's turn as Armide, which clearly lived on in the minds of audiences. In fact, Maupin herself may have seen Rochois play Armide in revivals which took place in 1692 and 1697, an experience which would likely have been transformative for an ambitious young performer.[92] Hutcheon asks, "what motivates adapters, knowing that their efforts will be compared to competing imagined versions in people's heads and inevitably be found wanting?"[93] As a performer myself, I can testify to the energizing influence a superb actor or singer can have on a fellow artist in the audience. The goal is not necessarily to duplicate the inspiring performance, but to harness the same energy within oneself: I want to do *that*, but as *me*, with all the unique ideas and perspectives I would bring. Gilbert

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[88] Gourret and Giraudeau, "La Maupin," 39.
[89] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 92.
[90] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 39, 80-81.
[91] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 81.
[92] Lois Ann Rosow, "Lully's 'Armide' at the Paris Opera: A Performance History: 1686-1766" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1981), 228-229.
[93] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 86.

writes that from the first day of rehearsals for Lully's *Cadmus*, Rochois "won a place in the all-accommodating heart of la Maupin," and even suggests that Maupin's admiration for the older actress may have extended to romantic feelings as well.[94] Whether Maupin looked up to Rochois as a mentor or as a love interest, it seems natural that seeing the more experienced actress in the role of Armide could have spurred on Maupin's own desire to inhabit the character herself.

Campra's Clorinde

Another of Maupin's most iconic roles, the Saracen princess Clorinde from Campra's 1702 *Tancrède*, was clearly influenced by the earlier model of Armide. In fact, the two stories not only share a geographical setting, but are also drawn from the same source material, the epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso. Like Armide, Clorinde is renowned for her great beauty and unconquerable spirit; yet even more than her older counterpart, Clorinde is regarded as a fearsome warrior, relying not on sorcery but on her fighting prowess alone to win the respect of her enemies and the loyalty of her armies. Again we are faced with questions about the intentions of various artistic adaptors: could Maupin's offstage adventures have inspired the role, one that Campra wrote expressly for her? As Julien writes, Campra "could hardly have wished for a performer better suited to the heroic character of Clorinde than the intrepid and cavalier Maupin, whose romantic and licentious adventures, her unbridled love affairs, and her duels, had given her a notoriety at least equal to her talent."[95] Although under the strict system of *emplois* and assigned understudies, individual singers did not have the seniority to request roles which would show off their unique voice and mannerisms, it certainly seems significant that Campra chose this story of all the available options to adapt into his next opera.

Maupin's first appearance as Clorinde would have been in her Act II monologue "Suis-je Clorinde." Left alone after being captured by her enemy Tancrède and his crusader army, Clorinde indulges in an extended dramatic scene in the style of Lully. The text setting is clearly influenced by *Armide*, with many martial dotted rhythms evoking the military theme. The vocal

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[94] Gilbert, "Mademoiselle Maupin," 189-190.
[95] Julien, "La Maupin," 129. [Et quelle interprète aurait-il pu souhaiter de mieux appropriée au personnage héroïque de Clorinde, que cette intrépide et cavalière Maupin, à qui ses aventures romanesques et licencieuses, ses amours effrenées et ses duels avaient fait une notoriété au moins égale à celle de son talent et sa beauté?]

line stays in the higher end of the singer's range when the text mentions glory or battle, and descends lower when evoking more tender emotions such as shame, despair, or love. As in *Armide*, love is described in terms of war, with Clorinde lamenting that Tancrède has not only beaten her army, but also conquered her heart.[96]

In the following air "Hâtez-vous ma raison," Clorinde calls upon reason to banish the feelings of love which trouble her. Although the tempo and dance style are similar to Armide's "Volez, volez," the vocal line is more elegant, an encouraging soliloquy rather than an agitated tirade. The piece would have been performed with *notes inégales*, adding to the noble tone, and the key is "sweetly joyous" G major.[97] Like many arias of the time period, the piece is structured around a repeated refrain: "Hasten, my reason, and banish from my heart / The too-charming image of a cruel enemy."[98] At this point in the opera, Clorinde is significantly more hopeful and self-assured than her counterpart Armide, and when Tancrède arrives and presses his suit, she firmly rejects him despite her hidden feelings.

With Clorinde, Campra reportedly made sure to showcase Maupin's lower register, which was often described as being remarkably beautiful.[99] However, although Clorinde is known as the first contralto leading lady at the Opéra, the role as a whole is not actually much lower than that of Armide. In both scores, the notated pitches do not extend below an occasional D4[100] on the bottom of the staff (which would have sounded like a C4 by modern tuning standards).[101] Clorinde's high notes are mostly notated F5's, with two notated G5's during her dramatic duet with Tancrède in Act IV Scene 6. In contrast, Armide sings many notated G5's, and has several A5's in moments of elevated emotion. This difference in range points towards Clorinde's unique mixture of "*furieux*" and "*tendre*" characteristics: while it was typical for "*rôles furieux*" to include extensions up to high A5's, "*rôles tendres*" generally occupied a slightly more restricted range to indicate a sense of noble restraint.

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[96] "I saw him [Tancrède], shining with glory, / Come out of his last combat; / It is little that Mars gives him immortal brilliance, / Love finishes his victory." [Je l'ay vû tout brillant de gloire, / Sortir de ce dernier combat; / C'est peu que Mars luy donne un immortel éclat, / L'Amour acheve sa victoire.]
[97] Crussard, "Marc-Antoine Charpentier théoricien," 64. [Doucement joyeux.]
[98] [Hâtez-vous, ma Raison, bannissez de mon cœur, / D'un cruel Ennemy, l'image trop charmante;]
[99] Julien, "La Maupin," 129.
[100] D4 refers to the D just above middle C on the piano keyboard. See Appendix III for an explanatory diagram.
[101] Cyr, *Performing Baroque Music*, 63-64. Generally, French Baroque vocal music is tuned to A392 (392 Hz), a whole tone lower than the modern tuning standard of A440.

In a more practical vein, while a whole tone may not seem like a huge gap, it can make all the difference in a vocal performance, especially in the declamatory style of seventeenth-century French récit. In my experience singing excerpts from *Tancrède* and *Armide*, Clorinde's slightly lower tessitura allows the performer's voice to stay warmer and richer throughout. I find it particularly significant that except for the two notated G5's in a moment of high emotion, the entirety of Clorinde's role lies at a notated F5 or below. These F's would have sounded like a modern E♭5, which today is generally considered to be the transition point between a medium treble voice's middle and upper registers.[102] Perhaps Maupin's contralto voice was more comfortable in this range, just below the second passaggio.[103] The slightly lower tessitura of Clorinde—a whole tone lower than Armide—is also consistent with Maupin's decision to sing the latter role transposed down.

Clorinde's Romantic Fate

Later, after Tancrède magnanimously frees all his captives, he and Clorinde meet once more. The Saracen magician Isménor has lured Tancrède deep into an enchanted forest in an attempt to ambush and kill him. Despite his professions of devotion, as well as her own feelings, Clorinde encourages Tancrède to flee, and in Act IV Scene 6 the pair sing a dramatic duet explicitly evoking the tension between duty and love:

> Inhuman Glory, alas! How you trouble our hearts!
> Love presented us with its most pleasant chains,
> We leave its sweetness for you;
> We are going to give ourselves over to eternal suffering,
> Inhuman Glory, alas! How you trouble our hearts![104]

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[102] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25. Note that I do not endorse this text as a pedagogical method, since the opinions expressed are often sexist, ableist, and fatphobic.
[103] The second passaggio refers to the registral transition between a classically trained treble voice's middle and upper ranges.
[104] [Gloire inhumaine, helas! Que tu troubles nos cœurs! / L'Amour nous présentoit ses plus aimables chaînes, / Nous quittons pour toy ses douceurs; / Nous allons nous livrer à d'éternelles peines, / Gloire inhumaine, helas! que tu troubles nos cœurs!]

As in *Armide*, love is associated with feebleness as Clorinde urges Tancrède: "It is too much to let our weakness show, / Let us not tarry, let us separate."[105] Yet in a reversal of the usual poetic motif, "Inhuman Glory" is framed as the cruel oppressor of love.[106] The two reluctantly part, and return to their warring armies.

Clorinde and Tancrède's softer attitude towards love and relative ambivalence towards war and military glory reflect the changing attitudes and tastes of Paris audiences in the fourteen years between the premieres of *Armide* and *Tancrède*.[107] Georgia Cowart explains that in the final decades of the seventeenth century, Louis XIV's interest in the Opéra gradually faded, influenced by the more pious inclinations of his official mistress and secret wife, Mme de Maintenon.[108] Julia Prest agrees, adding that opera became a less politically useful tool as Louis XIV grew older and his image changed: "the heroism celebrated in the prologue became increasingly divorced from the reality of France's king."[109] After Lully's death in 1687, younger composers like André Campra turned for support to other patrons, including the Dauphin (Louis XIV's son), Monsieur (Louis XIV's brother), and the famously libertine Duc de Vendôme.[110] This particular group of aristocratic patrons was far less interested in projecting an image of dutiful military service, and through the 1690s into the eighteenth century the themes presented at the Opéra followed suit.[111]

This increased emphasis on a more romantic view of love plays out in the conclusion of Clorinde's story. Immediately after her separation from Tancrède, Clorinde sings the beautiful lament "Estes-vous satisfaits," set in "solitary and melancholic" B minor.[112] The air sounds slightly more Italianate than any of Armide's, possibly influenced by the Italian-trained composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier and his 1693 opera *Médée*. As in Médée's lament "Quel prix de mon amour," faster, more declamatory passages alternate with a slow, languishing

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[105] [C'est trop laisser voir de foiblesse, / Ne tardons plus, séparons-nous.]
[106] [Gloire inhumaine, helas! Que tu troubles nos cœurs!] Maupin would have sung this duet with her old travelling companion Gabriel-Vincent Thévenard, who was known at the Opéra as an excellent actor and bass singer.
[107] Clorinde's attitude toward romance in particularly notable, since in the original Tasso source she never openly declares her love for Tancred. Banducci, "*Tancrède* by Antoine Danchet and André Campra," 16.
[108] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 134.
[109] Prest, "The Politics of Opera under Louis XIV," 167.
[110] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 139.
[111] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 140, 157-158.
[112] Crussard, "Marc-Antoine Charpentier théoricien," 64. [Solitaire et mélancolique.]

refrain: “Are you satisfied, Duty and cruel Glory? / For you am I going to sacrifice my life and my love.”[113] The vocal line sounds pleading, even weary, and the repetitions give the singing actor opportunities not only for musical ornamentation, but also for exploration of different moods and subtexts. In the opening statement, the actor might portray Clorinde pleading with duty and glory as if they were entities who could show her mercy; the second time around they might depict her anger at the cruelty of her unjust fate; and during the final iteration the actor might exude a sense of resignation or acceptance. A skilled performer would choose vocal decorations and gestures to support each interpretation of the refrain, constructing a believable and satisfying character arc for the audience to follow. If we follow the trend of Clorinde embodying characteristics of the “*tendre*” *emploi*, the actor might hold a large handkerchief, the prop associated with the perpetually weeping “*rôles tendres*.”[114]

Fig. 3. Video recording of “Estes-vous satisfaits” from *Tancrède*.[115]

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[113] [Estes-vous satisfaits, Devoir, Gloire cruelle, / Je vais vous immoler ma vie & mon amour.]
[114] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l’Opéra de Paris sous l’Ancien Régime*, 2:502.
[115] Performed by Camille Rogers and Louise Hung in Toronto, Canada, on May 17, 2023. Filmed and edited by Ryan Harper.

The opera ends tragically for all involved: in an offstage battle, Tancrède mortally wounds a disguised Clorinde, not discovering her identity until it is too late. She dies in his arms, and his last grief-stricken lines imply he may attempt suicide: "In spite of your efforts, cruel fate, grief will be able to put an end to my future!"[116] Although she is not allowed to live happily ever after, Clorinde is given an honourable death rather than being punished with shame or rejection —the usual fate of a virago.

In fact, Clorinde's story is in some ways more conventional than Armide's, ending with her dutifully succumbing to death rather than pursuing forbidden love. Unlike Armide, she does not engage in witchcraft—the villainous Isménor is the one who attempts to ensorcel the hero Tancrède. Similarly, in *Armide* the title character summons La Haine (Hate) in an attempt to rekindle her loathing for Renaud, while in *Tancrède* it is Isménor rather than Clorinde who summons manifestations of Hate and Vengeance to his aid. Another key difference is that Clorinde's love is reciprocated by Tancrède, making it much less transgressive than Armide's by early eighteenth-century standards. While extra-marital affairs were relatively acceptable at the French court, a woman aggressively pursuing an uninterested man, on the other hand, was considered distasteful. In Patricia Howard's words, opera libretti of the time taught that "unsought, uncontrolled love, from a woman, is a shameful emotion; love can only bring happiness when it is offered in response to the suit of a hero."[117] *Tancrède*'s rejected woman is not Clorinde but the miserable princess Herminie, who unsuccessfully tries to win the hero's love for herself. Meanwhile, Clorinde is already the object of Tancrède's affections when she comes to realize her own feelings for him. Significantly, the role of Herminie was assigned to Mlle Desmatins, then the "*première*" for "*rôles furieux*," further associating Clorinde with the "*tendre*" emploi in contrast.

And yet, Clorinde's gender-non-conformity extends far beyond Armide's penchant for power and domination. In her opening soliloquy, she declares triumphantly, "I have long imitated

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[116] [. . . malgré votre effort, Inhumains, la douleur saura finir mon sort!] In a final scene re-written for the 1707 revival of the opera, Tancrède is prevented from committing suicide by his soldiers. For more on this different version of the finale, see Banducci, "*Tancrède* by Antoine Danchet and André Campra," 54-55.
[117] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the *Précieuses*," 83.

the pride of Diana, / I have done more; I have sought war and carnage."[118] Not only rejecting the trappings of heterosexual love, she also actively embraces masculine activities and clothing. Could any of the differences between the two unconventional heroines be due to the influence of Maupin's habits and reputation? When it comes to Clorinde's romance it seems unlikely, as Maupin herself was known to be anything but a shy and retiring lover. However, the increased emphasis on Clorinde's physical prowess and penchant for combat could indeed have been inspired by, or meant to highlight, Maupin's own exploits.

Maupin as Clorinde

Despite—or perhaps because of—all of Clorinde's apparent gender transgressions, the warrior princess was one of Maupin's most successful and beloved role, and even after her death her shadow fell over the character. In 1719, more than fifteen years after the opera's premiere, a new actress playing Clorinde in a revival of *Tancrède* was judged against Maupin's example: "Mademoiselle Antier represented Clorinde in such a manner that we did not miss Mademoiselle Maupin too much."[119] The critic meant to pay Antier a compliment by the comparison, but would spectators—at least those who remembered Maupin's original performance—perhaps have found Antier lacking in a certain androgynous magnetism? Or would a less physically dangerous and more conventionally feminine Clorinde have been a welcome reassurance of the stability of gender stereotypes? Unfortunately, there are no other sources comparing the two performances which could give us an idea of audiences' reactions.

Perhaps most intriguing of all, Maupin's notorious offstage behaviour—beside which Clorinde looks positively demure by comparison—makes it difficult to interpret her performance as a mere titillating fantasy in the vein of many other cross-dressed women on the seventeenth-century French stage. If anything, Maupin playing Clorinde could only serve to remind audiences of the very real ways she exceeded all conventional boundaries of gender. Unlike Clorinde, who gave in to the pressures of her lover only under duress, Maupin was well-known

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[118] [J'ay long-temps de Diane imité la fierté, / J'ay fait plus; j'ay cherché la guerre & le carnage;] In an appropriate echo, Maupin later played the goddess Diana herself in Campra's *Iphigénie en Tauride.*

[119] Boindin, *Lettres historiques sur tous les spectacles de Paris*, 124. [Mademoiselle Antier a representé Clorinde, d,une maniere à ne pas faire regreter Mademoiselle Maupin.]

for taking on the role of the pursuer in her romantic relationships, whether with men or women. In this sense at least, Maupin seems much more suited to play Armide, and I wonder whether this was one of the reasons she was so eager to take on the role. As a queer and gender-non-conforming person, I know firsthand how powerful it can be to embody a character who reflects a certain facet of oneself. Did Maupin see herself in Armide? Could she relate all too well to a woman whose desires were considered too strong and too transgressive for the society around her?

If I could have a conversation with Maupin, one of the questions I would most want to ask would be: which of her roles were her favourites to play, and why? It may not be a case of ranking Armide over Clorinde or vice versa; perhaps Maupin enjoyed playing different aspects of each character in their own unique way. I personally have played many wildly contrasting roles, from high femme goddesses and sensitive poets to dirtbag teenage boys and even a cat, on one memorable occasion. Through all my experiences on stage, I have found that embodying various roles helped me connect with different facets of myself—sometimes facets that I actively hide in my everyday life, and other times facets of myself which I take pride in even in the face of transphobia and misogyny. As I suspect Maupin did, I have explored, challenged, and validated my identity through the characters I have performed.

Race in *Tancrède* and *Armide*

As a white scholar and performer, I am aware that there are aspects of both historic and lived experiences of racial violence and harm which lie outside of the scope of my understanding. Beliefs about sex, sexuality, and gender are very often inextricably tied to beliefs about race, and in many ways were—and continue to be—used to reinforce each other. Thus in the following section I will examine links between race and gender in *Armide* and *Tancrède*, while acknowledging that this is an important and much larger subject than I am able to address here, and which could easily take up an entire dissertation in its own right.

Firstly, both Armide and Clorinde are labelled "sarrasine" (in English "Saracen"), a term early modern Europeans first applied to Arab Muslims in the Middle Ages.[120] Both women are set up as adversaries to the European Christian forces of the First Crusade, a real historical conflict which took place from 1096 to 1099 and which Torquato Tasso used as a loose setting for his fantastical poem *Gerusalemme liberata*. Unsurprisingly, Tasso frames the Christian knights as his heroes, while the Muslim characters and nations are portrayed either as villains or, in the case of a few female characters, tragically uninformed "pagans" to be rescued and converted (in the original text, both Armide and Clorinde eventually convert to Christianity). Tasso published his poem in 1581 while the Muslim Ottoman Empire was expanding its reach into Eastern Europe, which caused great anxiety for many European nations. Unlike Tasso's native Italy, however, France allied with the Ottoman Empire in the mid-sixteenth century in order to defeat a common enemy in the powerful Austro-German Habsburgs.[121] But by the late seventeenth century the political situation had changed, and when the Ottoman Empire attacked Vienna in 1683 France did not join the war on either side (although Louis XIV swiftly took advantage of his neighbours' distraction to wage his own wars elsewhere in Europe). Thus, while the French were not officially enemies of the Ottoman Empire in the late seventeenth century, anxiety about the military and economic power of the Ottoman Empire was accompanied across Europe by continued prejudice against Muslim people and nations.[122]

Many of the racial stereotypes found in *Armide* and *Tancrède* are closely intertwined with early modern beliefs about sex and gender. In both operas, anxieties about powerful women are projected onto exoticized images of non-European people. Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Anja Wieber argue that this is typical of a long tradition of what they call the "double estrangement" of racialized women:

> Orientalism was in Antiquity already affiliated with gender, with stereotypes that lasted well into Late Antiquity and far beyond: Oriental men were effeminate and weak; Oriental women, generally subordinated and enslaved by the autocratic system of those regions, could take advantage of such masculine weakness and become, in a complete

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[120] Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, xiii-xix. See also Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism."
[121] Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism," 214.
[122] Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism," 218.

> reversal of the accepted norm, strong and dominant. The result was a typical form of political despotism, in which female rulers could be represented as ruthless, cruel and sexually voracious: from the East came both the eunuchs and the Amazons. . . . All of these figures function as negative exempla, intended to show what happens when the gender roles are reversed, when men lose control and women gain it.[123]

Thus early modern European doctors were following a long-standing tradition when they displaced fears of intersex and hyper-masculine women onto women from relatively warm, Southern, non-European countries. Warmer climates were claimed to produce "over-heated" women who were masculine physically as well as emotionally.[124] Egypt—at the time, a majority Muslim nation under the control of the Ottoman Empire—was often the particular focus of these types of sensational statements: Emma Donoghue writes that "rumours of a widespread practice of infibulation[125] there were twisted into proof that there must have been something big that needed cutting off."[126] The sexually aggressive virago and the physically monstrous tribade were conveniently projected onto the exotic "Other," allowing any European examples of masculine women to be dismissed as singular aberrations.

In a 2021 editorial, Ayana O. Smith explains that operas and other works of art which include racist depictions of marginalized people often either "erase their contributions (invisibility) or over-police their bodies (hypervisibility)."[127] In this case, the early modern obsession with Muslim women's bodies and sexualities is a clear example of hypervisibility, weaponized in order to justify both oppression and fetishization. Noémie Ndiaye expands on this idea in her book *Scripts of Blackness*, explaining how theatrical depictions of Black women in the early modern era gestured towards, yet also circumscribed, the grim realities of life under colonialism. Although a direct comparison cannot be drawn between experiences and depictions of Black women and Arab Muslim women in the seventeenth century, creators of French theatre certainly used similar strategies to project their racist ideas onto Black and Muslim characters,

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[123] Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Anja Wieber, "Introduction," in *Orientalism and the Reception of Powerful Women from the Ancient World*, 1-15 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 2.
[124] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 205.
[125] Infibulation refers to a surgical removal of the inner and outer labia as well as a partial closure of the vulva via suture. Today similar practices are typically called "female genital cutting" or "female genital mutilation."
[126] Donoghue, "Imagined More Than Women," 205.
[127] Smith, "Editorial," 245.

often in an attempt to avoid acknowledging the truth of the violence enacted on these characters' real-life counterparts by the French empire. Ndiaye writes:

> Across Western Europe, Afro-diasporic women *were* performed in black-up very frequently in the seventeenth century, and the scripts of blackness[128] deployed around those characters . . . grappled with a taboo that was, indeed, unrepresentable: not Afro-diasporic women themselves, but the fact that, in the age of colonial expansion, those women were often sexually assaulted by white men within social, political, and economic structures that rewarded such acts of sexual violence. This gruesome reality . . . was systematically obfuscated on stage, as plays featuring black female characters redirected spectators' attention toward irrelevant and vacuous interrogations of Afro-diasporic women's desirability.[129]

A similar obsession with the desirability of racialized women's bodies is placed front and centre in *Armide*, with the reality of male violence similarly obscured. In order to uphold the fiction of (white) masculine nobility and self-control, it is Armide's transgressive desire which incites the tragedy, while Renaud lies helpless under her enchantments, conveniently freed of any accountability for his actions towards her.

We also find in *Armide* and *Tancrède*, as in so many *tragédies en musique*, a language of love rife with metaphors of colonizing and enslavement: chains, knots, conquerers, and suffering abound. Ndiaye argues that this was no accident, but rather served to subtly justify France's investment in slavery even as it "gracefully sidestepped ideological contradictions."[130] By using such violent and coercive imagery in reference to consensual romantic relationships, French Baroque opera simultaneously normalized and fetishized the tools of the colonizer. Ndiaye further points out that France had a particularly precarious relationship with depictions of its own colonialism. Even while the king took steps to solidify France's place among other European colonial powers, as a nation France took pride in its history of prioritizing freedom from enslavement and servitude:

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[128] Note that Ndiaye uses the lowercase spellings "black" and "blackness" here intentionally, to distinguish between "*blackness* (lowercase) . . . an artificial prescriptive category created for strategic purposes" and "*Blackness*," which is "informed by . . . empowering dynamics of politico-cultural self-identification." Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, 28-29.
[129] Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, 84.
[130] Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, 92.

> The scripts of blackness we find in high baroque performance culture speak to France's unreconcilable aspirations as champion of the Freedom Principle and as a fledgling colonial power in the era of color-based slavery. Resolving the contradiction between old ideals and colonial realities was the fast-growing local ideological need that the script of black enslavement to love could and would fulfill so efficiently on stage for decades. . . . Starting in the 1620s, the hermeneutic configuration of cosmetic blackness became erotic, circulating fantasies of consensual enslavement.[131]

Finally, race may also have influenced the differences between librettists' treatment of Armide and Clorinde. Armide was molded into the archetypal operatic virago, consumed by her own lust and fury at being rejected, the violence of her emotions highlighting her innate "otherness." In contrast, Clorinde's relatively decorous fate, and associations with the purer "*tendre*" character type, could be in part due to her relative proximity to whiteness and Christianity. In the original source material of the opera's libretto, her parents are Black Ethiopian Christians, the king and queen of their country, and Clorinde is born with white skin because of her mother's constant contemplation of a portrait of St. George during her pregnancy. (Valeria Finnuci explains that Tasso's Clorinde is an example of an externally-influenced birth, a phenomenon which was considered a very real possibility for a pregnancy in the early modern era.)[132] In the Tasso source, fearing the jealous rage of her spouse, Clorinde's mother decides to present a Black baby to her husband the king and gives her daughter into the care of one of her servants, a eunuch named Arsete.[133]

Arsete raises Clorinde in isolation, a situation which allows her to indulge her masculine tendencies: as a child she prefers exercise, the outdoors, and wrestling with wild beasts to feminine arts such as embroidery.[134] When Clorinde finally learns of her complicated past, she chooses to remain loyal to the Muslim faith in which she was raised, and only at the end of the story, when she is mortally wounded in battle by her crusader lover, does she ask to be baptized as a Christian. (However, this conversion is not shown in Campra and Danchet's version of *Tancrède*. Similarly, Lully's *Armide* does not include the scene from *Gerusalemme liberata* in which Armide is eventually reunited with Rinaldo, and he convinces her to convert.)

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[131] Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, 92.
[132] Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 121-125, 134-137.
[133] Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 124.
[134] Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 126.

While most of these details do not appear in the texts of the operatic versions of these stories, audience members likely would have known the context of the larger work, as Tasso's epic was widely read and many other adaptations were also popular at the time. As Ayana O. Smith writes, Baroque operas often tell stories that can serve to create "distinctions between 'civilized' and 'barbarous' identities. . . . Representation of 'othered' identities creates a collective origin myth allowing European audiences morally to justify imperial and colonial domination."[135] Smith explains that, through opera, writers used "the terms of Enlightenment philosophy to define 'Western civilization' in a hierarchical position through constructed dualities, usually positioning ancient Greek or Roman progenitors" (or in this case medieval Christians) "as representatives of values such as 'victory', 'laws', 'reason', 'rationality', 'power', 'duty'; as receivers of 'gifts', 'love', 'land', 'riches'; as dominators of 'nature', 'landscape', 'beauty'; or rejectors of 'madness' or other non-normative conditions."[136] We might easily add non-conforming expressions of gender to this category of "non-normative" behaviours that Western operatic heroes were set up to reject.

Destouches's La Folie

Viragos such as Armide and Clorinde were not the only transgressive women to be portrayed at the Opéra: the third role of Maupin's I will examine is non-conforming in a different manner. Although the character's name, "La Folie," directly translates to "Madness," she is not meant as a representation of mental illness but rather a particularly extreme version of the comedic "coquette" stereotype. Born as a caricature of the proto-feminist *Précieuses* (upper-class women who strove to forge a place for themselves among the literary elites of mid-seventeenth-century France), the "coquette" was a direct foil to the "prude," who on principle rejected all romantic advances by men. As Patricia Howard explains, "The role of the prude is to refuse, of the coquette to choose. The coquette does not experience passion, and is fully in control of her emotions."[137] This image of a woman who exists solely to keep her male lovers in a state of

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[135] Smith, "Editorial," 246.
[136] Smith, "Editorial," 246.
[137] Howard, ""The Influence of the Précieuses," 61.

perpetual torment, all while taking no true pleasure in her romantic entanglements, is a fascinating opposite to the over-emotional virago. When examined side by side, the prude, virago, and coquette show the contradictory nature of dominant seventeenth-century views on women: if a woman was cold towards men, she was either a prude to be discarded and dismissed, or a coquette to be simultaneously worshipped and reviled. A virago, on the other hand, was usually seen as a failed prude, a woman too weak to commit even to her own misguided convictions. The only acceptable woman, then, was the ideal mistress presented by Lully and Quinault in their tragic operas: submissive, responsive, and sexually available to the hero—but only when he decided to pursue her.[138]

As the eighteenth century began, however, new leading patrons of opera became far more invested in celebrating pleasure and revelry for their own sake rather than glorifying the expensive military campaigns of their king. The Opéra became known as an ideal harbour for libertines, with many noblemen using their influence to obtain places for their courtesans among the ranks of the chorus or ballet.[139] According to Georgia Cowart, in response to these trends "a new generation of librettists, notably Antoine Houdar de La Motte and Antoine Danchet, further emphasized the element of galanterie, overshadowing the old heroic ideals."[140] This reversal was seen most strongly in the lighter genres of the *opéra-ballet* and *comédie-ballet*, with heroes and heroines who exalted love and pleasure over war and glory.[141] Cowart points out that, heralding this shift, new allegorical figures and deities began to appear in these pieces: "Folly (La Folie, the female fool). . . . Momus, ancient Greek god of satire and jester of the gods; Bacchus, god of wine; Ceres and Flora, goddesses of abundance; and Plutus, god of commerce and symbol of a new commercial theater."[142] This new "cult of folly," as Cowart terms it, celebrated rather than rejected characters who were subversive and pleasure-driven, and even embraced those associated with madness and transgression—the heyday of the coquette had arrived.[143]

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[138] Howard, "Quinault, Lully, and the Précieuses," 83-84.
[139] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 140, 157-158, 176.
[140] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 162.
[141] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 182. Virginia Scott notes that during this time comedy overtook tragedy in popularity in spoken theatre as well. Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 196.
[142] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 191.
[143] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 191.

Two years after her success in *Tancrède*, Maupin appeared as just such a character: La Folie in Destouche's *Le Carnaval et La Folie*.[144] Labelled a *comédie-ballet*, the piece premiered at court in 1703 and at the Opéra in 1704.[145] The libretto tells the zany love story of the archetypal figures Carnival (played by Maupin's old friend Gabriel-Vincent Thévenard) and Folly, who through a series of twists, turns, and misunderstandings eventually end up happily married. While the coquette as she is most often evoked in seventeenth-century French society embodies many negative gender stereotypes, "La Folie" in Destouche's *Le Carnaval et La Folie* is more complex than she appears at first glance. Under the guise of a light-hearted comedy, she turns gendered power dynamics on their heads without being punished by the narrative—something possible only in such a carnivalesque setting.

For example, from her very first entrance La Folie lives up to her name and reputation by impetuously commanding that her parents, the gods Plutus and La Jeunesse (Youth), let her rule their island kingdom:

> I owe my life to your love,
> But count me not under your obedience;
> The honour of bringing me up
> Pays you enough for my birth.
> Abandon this island, or let me rule it.[146]

Even for a divine daughter this is a bold request, and underlines the looser social mores which rule the world of eighteenth-century comedy. Even more surprisingly, La Folie's parents give in to her demands, and in a quick, lively air she calls on the Pleasures to continue their revels. The piece is a gavotte, a brisk dance in duple time. Playful rhythms highlight the subversive message espoused by our heroine:

> Allow Love to bind you,
> Young hearts, yield to its fires:
> Without love and madness,

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[144] Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:51-52.
[145] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 194; Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 2:51-52.
[146] [Je dois la vie à votre amour, / Mais ne me comptez pas sous votre obéissance; / L'honneur de m'avoir mise au jour / Vous paye assez de ma naissance. / Abandonnez cette île, ou m'y laissez régner.]

There are no happy moments.[147]

In this comedic worldview, love is no longer a cruel enemy as in the *tragédie*. Instead, the madness of passion is heartily recommended to all, while glory and duty are nowhere to be found.

Embodying La Folie

Continuing the comedy, Le Carnaval enters and announces his intention to ask for La Folie's hand in marriage. Plutus and La Jeunesse express their approval, but La Folie leaves without saying a word (the stage directions indicate that she responds only with "a mocking gesture").[148] When Le Carnaval follows La Folie, begging for an explanation, she briskly explains that she doesn't want to marry him because her parents approve of it—and she always disobeys them on principle. When he presses her, she responds capriciously: "I loved you for no reason, and I change on a whim."[149] Le Carnaval storms out, furious, but La Folie is unconcerned, just as a true coquette should be: "Don't think that your forgetfulness alarms me. My beauty promises me a thousand new slaves."[150] I can only speculate, but I suspect this onstage lovers' quarrel may have been made even more delicious for the audience through knowledge of Maupin and Thévenard's long and tumultuous history—Thévenard's weeks-long besiegement in the Palais-Royal, for example, or the rumour that they used to whisper insults to each other onstage between verses of the love duet in *Tancrède*.[151]

Le Carnaval decides to drown his sorrows in wine and calls for the god of satire and mockery, Momus, who indulges him. Momus relays to La Folie that Le Carnaval has forgotten her in his drunken revels, and she becomes jealous of his indifference. In an attempt to distract her, La Folie's Professor of Madness instructs his musicians, dancers, and poets to ply their trades. Momus then goes back to Le Carnaval and, having stolen La Folie's divine sceptre,

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[147] [Souffrez que l'Amour vous lie, / Jeunes coeurs, cédez à ses feux: / Sans l'Amour et la Folie, / Il n'est point de moments heureux.]
[148] [un signe de moquerie]
[149] [Je vous aimais sans raison, / Et je change par caprice.]
[150] [Ne croyez pas que votre oubli m'alarme, / Ma beauté me promet mille esclaves nouveaux.]
[151] See pages 23-24 of Chapter 2.

convinces the unfortunate Carnaval that La Folie has pledged herself to Momus. In a fit of rage, Le Carnaval takes his revenge by whipping up a fierce storm. La Folie sees this violent destruction and rejoices, correctly deducing that Le Carnaval still harbours feelings for her. Her air, in a moderate duple tempo, is graceful and assured:

> What a triumph for my charms!
> Ah! May his revenge delight me!
> The roaring air, the rumbling waves,
> The trees uprooted in the bosom of the forests,
> The overturned rocks, and the trembling earth,
> Ah! This spectacle enchants me![152]

When imagining how Maupin might have comported herself on stage in this role, we can turn again to Barnett's *The Art of Gesture*. In accordance with the conventions of "*léger*" or comic roles, she likely would have been staged with a fan in her hand.[153] Additionally, Barnett writes that gestures would vary in scale depending on genre, with comedy usually being portrayed in a more naturalistic manner than tragedy.[154] Virginia Scott agrees, explaining that in comedies actors would use movements that were more relaxed, casual, and closer to everyday life.[155] Thus, while La Folie is not as outwardly masculine-presenting as Clorinde, it is possible that Maupin was able to bring more of her own personality to her embodiment of such a comedic character. La Folie certainly seems to possess Maupin's strong-willed nature; she is quite remarkable among opera heroines—not only because she defies her parents' wishes, but also because she makes decisions about her own sexuality without being punished for them. In this aspect, at least, La Folie is far more transgressive than either Armide or Clorinde.

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[152] [Quel triomphe pour mes attraits! / Ah! Que sa vengeance m'enchante! / L'air mugissant, l'onde grondante, / Les arbres arrachés dans le sein des forêts, / Les rochers renversés, et la terre tremblante, / Ah! Que ce spectacle m'enchante! / Quel triomphe pour mes attraits!]
[153] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 2:502.
[154] Barnett and Westropp, *The Art of Gesture*, 15.
[155] Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France*, 233.

An Italian Invasion

The role of La Folie seems very likely to have been tailored to Maupin and her promiscuous reputation, and I suspect such a true-to-life portrayal of her free-spirited nature would only have been acceptable within the confines of a comedic romp. Still, against all odds the plot is eventually tied up in a neat heterosexual bow. After Plutus and La Jeunesse see the destruction Le Carnaval has wrought on their island, they angrily retract their approval of his proposal of marriage. Immediately upon hearing this, La Folie decides to marry Le Carnaval just to spite them. The piece ends with wedding celebrations, including a brilliant, coloratura-filled *da capo* aria for La Folie. The text is in Italian, and translates to a carefree hymn to the joys of love and pleasure:

> Happy shines my heart in my chest,
> My soul laughs in celebration.
> And still dear is that delight
> Which is felt in loving.[156]

Beyond the prioritization of love over filial duty, this aria showcases a bold new development in French opera: along with increasingly light-hearted comedic sensibilities, early eighteenth-century audiences also embraced more Italianate musical styles which had been intentionally excluded from French opera for decades.[157] In *Le Carnaval et La Folie*, this foreign influence is most noticeable in La Folie's solo music. Musical elements like jig rhythms, melismas, and chromaticism are used to depict La Folie as wild and untameable.[158] In this final, show-stopping piece in particular, Maupin was called upon to sing coloratura rivalling the most florid Italian arias.

While Armide and Clorinde are marked as racially "other" through their narratives, their otherness is not depicted musically in the same way as La Folie's; only the latter's transgressions are reflected with Italianate runs and flourishes. To twentieth-century ears these Italian musical styles may seem neutral when it comes to gender, but in eighteenth-century England and France

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[156] [Lietto brilla il cor nel petto / Riede l'alma à festeggiar / E pur caro quel diletto, / Che si prova nel amar.]
[157] Prest, "The Politics of Opera under Louis XIV," 171.
[158] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 194.

homosexuality—in particular male sodomy—was often considered a vice of Italian origin.[159] Italian culture, and by extension music, was associated with decadence, wildness, foreignness, and effeminacy (in the early modern sense of the word, implying irrationality and uncontrollable sexuality).

Fig. 4. Video recording of "Lietto brilla il cor" from *Le Carnaval et La Folie*.[160]

Further, incorporating Italianate music in the specific context of a comedy would instantly be associated with the long tradition of *commedia dell'arte* which from the early seventeenth century had taken root in Paris in the form of resident troupes, and which for cultural conservatives would hold connotations of lower-class audiences and tastes.[161] For these reasons —along with simple old-fashioned xenophobia—the Paris public of the early eighteenth century remained split over whether they wanted to embrace the new Italianate musical styles finding

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[159] Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," 49-51.
[160] Performed by Camille Rogers and Louise Hung in Toronto, Canada, on May 17, 2023. Filmed and edited by Ryan Harper.
[161] *Commedia dell'arte* is a form of professional Italian theatre which rose to prominence during the second half of the sixteenth century. Although *Commedia dell'arte* originated in improvised street performances featuring stock characters and scenarios, its influence eventually found its way into fully scripted genres of theatre across Europe, including many forms of comic opera.

their way into the *opéra-ballet*, or stay staunchly faithful to the old Lullian *tragédie en musique*.[162]

In this context the role of La Folie seems even more appropriate for Maupin, though to modern eyes she appears less outwardly masculine than a cross-dressing warrior like Clorinde. Supporting this interpretation, Letainturer-Fradin writes that La Folie was the role in which contemporary audiences liked Maupin best—perhaps because they appreciated the knowing way Maupin's real-life affairs and adventures echoed throughout La Folie's onstage mischief.[163] Most transgressive of all, at the very end of the opera La Folie sings this last line with the chorus: "Mars owes me his homage as well as Love."[164] In this *comédie-ballet*, at least, the struggles of both Armide and Clorinde have been turned on their heads. Both love and glory bow before the wild power of Folly as she stands triumphant, unpunished for her willful and obstinate behaviour and rewarded with a happy ending—at least in the patriarchal sense of a well-matched marriage. As much as today we may see this as a disappointing end for the free-spirited Folie, it is in fact a significant improvement from the fate of other coquettes, who were often chastened with humiliation and rejection.[165]

De La Barre's Isabelle

Isabelle, the title character of de La Barre's 1705 ballet *La Vénitienne*, was Maupin's final role, and also one of the few examples of cross-dressing on the stage of the Paris Opéra. As explained in Chapter 3, true trouser roles were basically nonexistent in French theatre, but female characters who dressed in men's clothing as part of an elaborate ruse were accepted as a common convention of comedies. Isabelle fits neatly into this category, as she dons the costume of a Venetian cavalier in an attempt to spy on her unfaithful lover Octave. However, in a typical comedy of errors, Isabelle inadvertently sparks an attraction in her rival Léonore, who spurns Octave for the disguised Isabelle.[166] Although the original heterosexual lovers eventually

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[162] De la Gorce, *L'Opéra à Paris au temps de Louis XIV*, 110.
[163] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 214.
[164] [Mars me doit son hommage aussi bien que l'Amour.]
[165] Ray, *Coquettes, Wives, and Widows*, 21-22.
[166] Bouissou, Denécheau, and Marchal-Ninosque, *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, 4:934.

reconcile, I imagine the sapphic undertones of the plot must have been greatly highlighted by Maupin's presence. Isabelle and Léonore even sing a sweet (albeit partially disingenuous) love duet in Act III.

The plot is filled with humorous instances of disguises and mistaken identities. Octave's servant Zerbin dresses as a nobleman, leading Isabelle to threaten him with a knife, believing him to be Octave. Just one scene later, while Octave consults the fortune-tellers Isménor and Isménide, Isabelle appears before her unfaithful lover in the guise of a mystical Oracle, threatening him with eternal damnation should he fail to return to Isabelle. Such comic scenarios were clearly inspired by, and referencing, Italian comedies in the tradition of c*ommedia dell'arte*: again we see the looser conventions of lighter genres allowing for Italian influences which would be rejected in *tragédies*. Spunky, cross-dressing heroines were a common trope in *commedia dell'arte*, and in fact, the name of Maupin's character is likely a specific reference to Isabella Andreini, a famous Italian actress who created and performed many such roles in the early seventeenth century, including on tours to Paris.[167]

Sounding "Male"

De La Barre's score for *La Vénitienne* is suitably humorous, using clever musical satire to highlight the foibles of the various characters. By referencing elevated, serious styles associated with *tragédies*, de La Barre throws into stark contrast the ridiculousness of the situations he is called upon to depict. For example, Léonore's two airs are written in a highly ornamented noble style, sounding almost archaic in this context and poking fun at the fact that her amorous sighs are unintentionally directed towards a woman in disguise. The comedy was likely enhanced by the fact that Léonore was played by Mlle Desmatins, known for her touching portrayals of truly tragic heroines. Later, Octave's drunken servant Zerbin sings a grand accompanied *récit* in a

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[167] Wilbourne, "Lo Schiavetto (1612)," 3; Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage*, 84-101. Isabelle Andreini toured extensively in France from the 1570s until her death in 1604. Not only was she a famous performer, she was also an accomplished poet, and wrote this about her gender-bending performances: "And just as in the Theatre, I sometimes played women / And sometimes men, representing them in varied style, / As Nature and Art would teach us." [E come ne' Teatri hor Donna, ed hora / Huom fei rappresentando in vario stile / Quanto volle insegnar Natura, ed Arte.] Campbell, "Marie de Beaulieu and Isabella Andreini," 851; Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage*, 111.

style usually associated with profound tragedy and psychological torment—or in this case, Zerbin's fear at being left alone by Octave, which he relieves through the numbing comfort of alcohol. This particular scene is even followed by a *sommeil* (a sleep scene), its conventionally sombre and mysterious tone cheekily undercut by the fact that Zerbin is sleeping off a night of indulgence rather than succumbing to an enchantment in the tradition of Lullian heroes such as Renaud and Atys.

Indeed, the creators of *La Vénitienne* seem to have been intent on parodying as many clichés of operatic *tragédies* as possible. When Isabelle wakes Zerbin from his drunken stupor, she first indulges in a long *récit* in which she calls upon Hate to give her strength before finally raising her dagger to pierce the heart of the man she believes to be her lover—almost certainly a reference to the famous dagger scene in *Armide*. De La Barre and La Motte even included a number in which demonic entities are ostensibly raised from hell by sorcery, as in *Armide, Tancrède*, and many other *tragédies*—although these particular demons are merely a spectacle manufactured by a pair of charlatans, helped along by the disguised Isabelle.

As I looked through the score of *La Vénitienne*, I noticed one more intriguing choice by de La Barre. In Act III, Scene 3, during Isabelle's two short airs (fig. 5) and her duet with Léonore, the bassline is moved up two octaves to sit in the treble clef. Although she is still singing in her own octave, Isabelle now sings in unison with the bassline, which results in a particularly angular melody. Additionally, two flutes harmonize above Isabelle's line. This texture appears for Isabelle only in this particular scene, during which she is in disguise as a man and pretending to woo Léonore in order to convince her to continue rejecting Octave. Later in Scene 4 she returns to a more conventional treble texture to sing an emotional appeal to Octave, followed by a duet for the two lovers in which they renew their affections.

Considering de la Barre's extensive use of musical styles and genres as a medium for commentary on the ballet's text, could this be an example of Isabelle being made to sound more "male" while she is in disguise as a man? The only other singers to sing in unison with the bassline in this fashion are all basses: the god Momus in the prologue, Octave's servant Zerbin, and Isménor the magician. In fact, the only air for bass that deviates from this convention is Zerbin's before his *sommeil*, which has a walking bassline. In contrast, Octave (an *haute-contre*)

does not sing in unison with the bassline, even in his duets with Léonore and Isabelle. The same holds true for the other *haute-contre* soloist ("*un matelot*") in his short duet. This is in line with the wider traditions of French Baroque opera, in which bass singers generally (but not exclusively) doubled the bassline in airs and ensembles.

Fig. 5. Video recording of excerpt from Act III, Scene 3 of *La Vénitienne*.[168]

Still, this texture is not unknown for treble singers in *tragédies en musique*: occasionally, when a performer portraying a goddess or other mythological figure was lowered from the flies, the violins would double their melody in order to help the singer stay in time and in tune. (The *machine* in which the performers were suspended was at the very back of the stage, quite far from the orchestra—which helped set up an illusion of forced perspective, but also made hearing the instruments more difficult.) However, these entrances from above usually took place in the prologue or during a divertissement, and were almost exclusively the purview of secondary rather than principle characters. In contrast, our heroine Isabelle imitates this texture throughout

[168] Performed by Camille Rogers and Louise Hung in Toronto, Canada, on May 17, 2023. Filmed and edited by Ryan Harper.

the whole of the cross-dressing scene in Act III, without finding herself in the *machine* associated with goddesses.

To me, this makes it seem likely that de La Barre deliberately chose this technique to highlight the gender play taking place on stage. Since the bassline is in unison with Isabelle's treble voice, with only two flute lines entwining above, the effect is ethereal, almost otherworldly. Just as Isabelle sings, "in all the world you will find no lover who resembles me,"[169] using this texture to "masculinize" a treble voice is certainly unusual within French Baroque opera.[170] This beguiling musical androgyny, maleness transposed up the octave, seems a perfect metaphor for Maupin's own approach to gender—never attempting to live as a man, but taking on certain trappings of masculinity which suited her own tastes and persuasions.

Conclusions

By paying attention to the specific ways in which Maupin was typecast at the Paris Opéra —and how she in some ways resisted categorization—we can learn more about early eighteenth-century views on gender and sexual deviance. And, if we connect these archetypal roles to our own present-day gender stereotypes, they can also illuminate how ideas about gender have changed over the centuries. Letainturier-Fradin writes that "La Maupin's . . . decisive carriage and bearing made her an ingenue lacking in gentleness, a lover too skillful to pretend sincere candour; and they taunted her ruthlessly when she persisted in these anomalies."[171] And yet Maupin was not cast in male roles, but rather female roles which were transgressive in other ways: through their fiery passion, Amazonian military prowess, or willfully capricious approach to life and love. Maupin's casting at the Opéra shows us clearly that understandings of gender and sexuality are not fixed or inevitable, but rather the products of specific cultural contexts.

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[169] [Non, dans tout l'empire amoureux, / Vous ne trouverez point d'amant qui me ressemble.]
[170] The only other example of this atypical texture I have encountered outside of the context of the performer being suspended in the *machine* is a short duet between two Amazon warrior women in *Tancrède*.
[171] Letainturier-Fradin, *La Maupin*, 214. [La voix grave de la Maupin déroutait lorsqu'elle attaquait des rôles écrits pour soprano; son port et son maintien décides en faisaient une ingénue manquant de douceur, une amoureuse trop savante pour feindre une candeur sincère; aussi la raillait-on impitoyablement quand elle persistait dans ces anomalies.]

So what do I, as a twenty-first-century performer, want to do with these roles? Most importantly, I am not interested in recreating their operas as complete, unchanged works. As Linda Hutcheon writes, "because adaptation is a form of repetition without replication, change is inevitable, even without any conscious updating or alteration of setting. And with change come corresponding modifications in the political valence and even the meaning of stories. . . . The meaning and impact of stories can change radically."[172] A straightforward recreation of these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century roles and operas is not only impossible, but in my opinion is also irresponsible given the racist and misogynist context in which they were written.

Hutcheon argues that "an adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum."[173] Therefore, I must ask: even if I were to reclaim one of Maupin's roles for myself, would my performance of it have any profound effect on audiences who have no personal connection to her story? For example, although they were transgressive in the early eighteenth century, today La Folie's whimsical antics may be more likely to evoke misogynist tropes such as the "manic pixie dream girl"[174] or the female character who plays "hard-to-get" for attention. I am reluctant to recreate such harmful tropes, even unintentionally, in the pursuit of subverting them.

Although I have no desire to replicate the specific circumstances of Maupin's performances, I can still take pleasure in relating to her through time and space. Carolyn Dinshaw writes of "a queer historical touch" which satisfies "a consistent impulse to make contact . . . a desire for bodies to touch across time."[175] When I sing the music of Maupin's androgynous characters I feel connected to a legacy of gender-non-conforming ancestors in my chosen art form, and I find deep comfort in Dinshaw's acknowledgement that community can exist across time.[176] Hutcheon suggests that "there are all kinds of reasons for wanting to

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[172] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, xvi.
[173] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 142.
[174] First used by film critic Nathan Rabin in a 2005 review of *Elizabethtown*, the term "manic pixie dream girl" describes a trope in which a charmingly unstable female character (usually young and conventionally attractive) serves as a guide and/or catalyst for a male hero's personal growth. Hugo Schwyzer, "The Real-World Consequences of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl Cliché," The Atlantic, July 9, 2013, https://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/07/the-real-world-consequences-of-the-manic-pixie-dream-girl-clich-233/277645/. Schwyzer writes that the trope is particularly harmful because it teaches young men that "they need (and, more precisely, are entitled to) a women's inspiration and encouragement to reach their own true destiny."
[175] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 3.
[176] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 21.

adapt. . . . [They] may be intended as tributes or as a way to supplant canonical cultural authority."[177] Although I do not want to perform these roles in full, through my private study of certain excerpts I have found ways to connect with Maupin, turning the canonical assumption of composer supremacy on its head by identifying with performer over creator. In my next and final chapter I explore my personal journey of connecting with and sharing Maupin's story in a way that I believe is more historically responsible than straightforward recreations of the works written for her.

[177] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 93.

Chapter 5
"The third thing that is owned by no one": Personal Reflections on Voice, Performance, and Identity

In her article "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," Suzanne Cusick argues that Western classical music traditions assume "the meaning of a musical work is fixed and irresistible," and that "performances of these works . . . must be faithful to their inherent meanings."[1] She describes eloquently a classical audience's expectation that the performer's identity should disappear, totally subsumed into the unmediated message of the composer: "I am to use my lungs to enable 'the work' ('the music itself') to breathe from its own lungs. It is another being that needs my body for its own to live, for it is a being without physical lungs."[2] The heart of Cusick's argument is that rather than submitting to the tyranny of a long-dead composer's will, classical performers can—and should—approach problematic works through a reparative lens, rebelling against the oppressive imperative to perfectly emulate the creators' original intent.[3]

While Cusick's strategy of resistant performance is admirable, in my opinion it is not applicable in every context. For example, I might be qualified to reclaim a work that is sexist or homophobic, but as a white performer it would not be appropriate for me to attempt to reimagine pieces which invoke harmful racial stereotypes. I also question whether it means something different for me to lend my body not to the vision of a long-dead composer, but to the spirit of a fellow performer, as I do when embodying Maupin. Could a performer-to-performer connection offer a more reciprocal relationship, as Elisabeth Le Guin gestures towards in *Boccherini's Body*?[4] Could I find a middle ground between surrendering my own personhood in the service of bringing life to outdated ideas, and rejecting all traces of the past wholesale?

As I pondered how I might relate to Maupin's most iconic roles responsibly, I came to wonder: what if instead of attempting to embody her characters, I used my voice to bring to life a representation of Maupin herself? Through this process, might I be able to leverage Maupin's

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[1] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 79.
[2] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 88.
[3] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 80.
[4] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 14.

story to share some of my own experiences of gender and queerness with audiences? I turned to Linda Hutcheon's work on adaptation for inspiration: "the creative transposition of an adapted work's story . . . is subject not only to genre and medium demands . . . but also to the temperament and talent of the adapter—and [their] individual intertexts through which are filtered the materials being adapted."[5] In other words, as I have adapted Maupin's life story from the historical reconstruction I compiled through my research, my retelling has inevitably been imbued with my own ideas, experiences, and biases. In particular, because I give life to this version of Maupin through my own performing body, any iteration of her I create is expressed through my own somatic reality as a gender-non-conforming person living in the twenty-first century.

This closing chapter explores that delicate process of connection, identification, and expression. First, I provide a brief introduction to some broader philosophical ideas on the efficacy of art and performance as social intervention. Next, I reflect on my own personal connection with Maupin's story, as well as the potential it might hold for other queer people today, asking the question: how can the Maupin of history serve as a conduit for understanding twenty-first-century assumptions about bodies and identities? Finally, I discuss the process of developing and writing *La Maupin*, a solo cantata about Maupin's life which I commissioned and premiered as a way to share her story with a wider audience.

The Philosophy

In "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance" Suzanne Cusick calls for resistance from modern-day classical musicians, and a renegotiation of the power dynamics between composer and performer. She suggests that such a practice "could be a critical contribution to breaking up the rigidities of the old gender script."[6] As an example of this, Cusick analyzes a recording of Robert Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* by Jessye Norman, ascribing to Norman's performance of the song "Er, der Herrlichste" a vocal resistance against the original intentions of the poet and composer. Cusick argues that by making her voice sound heavy and

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[5] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 84.
[6] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 98.

forced, and by over-emphasizing the German diction, Norman subverts a straightforward, traditionally patriarchal reading of the song's text. By giving an intentionally awkward performance, Cusick suggests, Norman forces listeners to "confront the unnaturalness of the song as a text for the performance of gender. . . . Norman invites us to hear the Frau's voice struggling with the enforced discipline of enunciating someone else's seemingly uncongenial words; a voice struggling to perform . . . the Frau's coming social role as ornament to her future husband's life."[7]

While Cusick's analysis is certainly thought-provoking, as a performer I instantly wonder what Norman herself might have to say about this interpretation. Whenever scholars ascribe intentions to artists other than themselves, whether performers or composers, I tend to feel a healthy sense of scepticism. Perhaps I would find Cusick's arguments more convincing if she was describing her own thoughts, goals, and sensations as she prepared for and executed a resistant performance of a classical work. And yet, while it is certainly possible—and often deeply rewarding, in my experience—for performers to reclaim problematic works for themselves, I question further whether such twenty-first-century recontextualizations necessarily translate well for audiences. Do such subtle changes in perspective have any effect on the gender politics of everyday life? Even if, as Cusick suggests, Jessye Norman put up a deliberate resistance to Robert Schumann's composerly intentions in her performance of his song cycle, does this subversive act have any concrete effect on the behaviour or beliefs of her listeners?

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière argues that simply exposing an audience to the workings of a corrupt system—knowledge which it is assumed they don't have—does not necessarily cause related action.[8] In fact, it is likely that spectators know exactly what kind of world they are living in; therefore, Rancière reasons, any lack of action must stem from some other affective source, not from ignorance. For Rancière, the figure of the naïve, passive, apathetic spectator is a myth. Artists cannot control for specific audience outcomes because spectators are already acting: choosing how and whether to engage with art works; and theorizing, interpreting, and comparing, internally or externally, to previous experiences. In

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[7] Cusick, "Gender and the Cultural Work of a Classical Music Performance," 107.
[8] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 47.

Rancière's words, the spectator "composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her," almost taking on the role of a secondary adaptor.[9] However, Rancière does not give up on art as a useless endeavour but rather redefines it: "[art] is not the transmission of the artist's knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect."[10]

If we take Rancière at his word, the value of art is that it is full of potential meaning, an almost-limitless field of material from which a listener or speaker can choose to make meaning according to their own perceptions and desires. Delightfully, Mladen Dolar compares this phenomenon to Lewis Carroll's poem *Jabberwocky*: "nonsense makes more sense than normal sense; it is far from absent; rather, there is too much of it."[11] In other words, when we say something makes "sense," we mean that somewhere in the process of communication and mediation there has been a pruning down of an infinite range of possible meanings, limiting us to understanding just one or a few. Art, in contrast to "sense," playfully opens up possibilities rather than foreclosing on them. In fact, Rancière's description of art as a liminal "third thing . . . owned by no one," is remarkably similar to D. W. Winnicott's description of play:

> The playing child inhabits an area that . . . is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world. . . . Into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality.[12]

Could the excessive meaning of art offer a hint as to how we might gradually expand the category of what "makes sense" when it comes to gender? It seems that for Rancière, this is the higher purpose of art and perhaps all communication: "to reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought is to alter the field of the possible."[13] Cusick agrees, arguing that "we have a responsibility to understand how our music making may intervene in our audiences' perceptions of how one becomes an embodied, gendered, and sexed person in our

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[9] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 13.
[10] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 15.
[11] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 141.
[12] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 69.
[13] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 49.

culture—so that we may choose to intervene creatively (to perform new possibilities)."[14] Could playing with the expansive potential of artistic expression open up new avenues of thinking and feeling gender? I have certainly discovered more about myself through my research on Maupin—is it possible for me to share that experience with others in a way that is similarly freeing for those who choose to join me?

Maupin as a Conduit

As I indicated in my first chapter, I am much more interested in how Maupin's story can serve gender-non-conforming people today than I am in reconstructing her life to the highest degree of accuracy. I am particularly intrigued by the potential offered by her career as a musician: one of the most beautiful aspects of being both a performer and a researcher is that I can develop an incredibly intimate, embodied relationship with my research subjects, even across centuries. I have the opportunity to engage directly with roles sung by Maupin, and in the case of Clorinde, La Folie, and Isabelle, written expressly for her. Sometimes I am awed by the sheer magic of bringing a piece of music to life that has been interpreted by other human bodies, unknowable except for this thin thread of connection. As Elisabeth Le Guin writes:

> Anyone who performs old music or who has written about its history can attest to identifying with composers. The identification can be a haunting or an irritating experience, containing as it does the potential for possession or invasion; shot through with sorrow, since, in Western classical music, so often the composer is long dead; revelatory, voyeuristic; at its best and sweetest we might call it intimate.[15]

Although Le Guin refers specifically to composers, I have many times felt a similar intimacy with historical performers, a connection across time and space that defies logic and any sense of scholarly objectivity.

Of course, I could never exactly recreate Maupin's performances any more than I could recreate her daily enactment of her own identity—both would be utterly unachievable (and likely unfulfilling) goals. And yet, without making any direct claims to authenticity, music can act as a

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[14] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 42.
[15] Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 14.

bridge between my own contemporary queer experiences and the radically different reality of Maupin's exceptional life. As Dirk von der Horst argues, "aesthetics are a powerful tool with which to investigate historicity because . . . they make the mediation of perception by social and linguistic parameters clear."[16] Especially as classical musicians, we are already used to mediating between the past and the present—we do so every time we make decisions about what kind of performance practices to apply to historical scores as we bring them to life in real time. Why shouldn't I do the same with symbols of gender? Every gesture, every sound I make on stage will be imbued with gendered meanings by my audience, whether or not I intend it. I might as well play with the expectations already so abundantly at my disposal.

But how exactly do I experiment with gender in a way that is legible enough to my audience, while still gently pushing the boundaries of their understanding? As Lisa Quoresimo puts it, "the social constitution of gender is so dominant that to many, an imperfect performance appears to be going against the laws of nature."[17] If I simply present Maupin's story as an example of ahistorical "badassery," a flamboyant exception to the rule of a presumedly tight-laced past, I risk re-inscribing the very gender norms I seek to destabilize. Instead, I turn to a robust body of work from the field of feminist theatre criticism, which draws heavily on the theories of twentieth-century dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Elin Diamond writes that "when gender is 'alienated' or foregrounded, the spectator is enabled to see a sign system *as* a sign system—the appearance, words, gestures, ideas, attitudes, etc., that comprise the gender lexicon become so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will."[18] In other words, by drawing attention to the shallow, surface-level nature of many accepted gender norms, I can highlight the fallacy of mistaking them for markers of inherent internal truth.

In her 1999 handbook *Feminist Theatre Practice*, Elaine Aston writes that a feminist theatre practitioner must "take on the role of resisting agent or performer who functions as an ideological, cultural and theatrical demonstrator—empowered as the feminist critic (rather than female victim) of the 'master' text."[19] Although Aston's techniques are meant to be applied to

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[16] Von der Horst, *Jonathan's Loves, David's Laments*, 94.
[17] Quoresimo, "Construction of Gendered Differences in the Voice," 13.
[18] Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory," 85.
[19] Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice*, 82.

spoken plays, I transpose them as aids to my historical documentation of Maupin's life through music. I take on the role of "resisting agent" by writing a new narrative for myself, scavenged from straight, cisgender historians' versions of Maupin's story.

Firstly, Aston encourages feminist theatre artists to let go of a need for one "true" meaning or version of events.[20] Instead, a resisting performer can acknowledge unknowns and vagueness in a given text, as well as allow for commentary from various sources.[21] This can help create a sense of greater objectivity, critiquing the original author's portrayal of the subject by offering contrasting perspectives. Aston also suggests including relevant historical context whenever possible.[22] Therefore, as I constructed my version of Maupin's life, I made sure to remain aware of the biases and contradictions of the various sources available, and to cross-reference them with related historical facts. In the resulting story as I envision it, I hope I have left enough room for readers and listeners to find multiple Maupins: contrasting facets of her which cannot all be true at once, but which we can hold to be equally possible.

Of course, the techniques of Aston, Diamond, and others in their field shine best when they are used as intended: to illuminate and re-imagine historical texts in modern performance contexts. Again based on Brecht's writings, these practices include "framing devices," or conventions which serve to interrupt the audience's full immersion, reminding them that they are watching a performance and not real events.[23] As I began the process of translating Maupin's life story from a dissertation chapter to the stage, I employed many of these techniques. Firstly, I chose a musical medium, which in and of itself adds a distancing effect for audiences who must suspend disbelief when confronted with characters who sing instead of speak.[24] Further, although the bulk of the cantata's text consists of my own translations of several biographies of Maupin, I decided to begin the cantata with a 1688 poem by seventeenth-century writer Aphra Behn (1640-1689). Not only was Behn one of the first women in England to enter the incredibly male-dominated field of playwriting, she was also a renegade when it came to portrayals of gender and sexuality. While historians don't know for sure the details of her romantic life, there is ample

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[20] Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice*, 88.
[21] Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice*, 90, 166-167.
[22] Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice*, 89.
[23] Bulman. *Shakespeare Re-Dressed*, 109; Unwin, *The Complete Brecht Toolkit*, 194.
[24] Unwin, *The Complete Brecht Toolkit*, 100.

evidence from her plays and poetry that Behn was very familiar with at least the concept of queer sexuality.[25]

The cantata begins with the performer acting as a narrator, singing Behn's poetry as an initial introduction to our heroine. This is a common trope used in solo secular cantatas of the eighteenth century, and also serves to highlight the constructed and sensationalized nature of the presented narrative. The audience enters the world of the cantata very much aware that it is a story being told through a particular frame, and that they are not only invited but encouraged to remain cognizant of such theatrical conceits. As Le Guin writes, embodying another character is "only a step over from the work of maintaining my own person as some kind of unitary thing, the necessary daily fiction of establishing and keeping a hold on identity."[26] By first "playing" myself as narrator before taking on the persona of Maupin, I invite the audience to reflect on the fluid possibilities of identity writ large.

Beginning with a seventeenth-century poem also serves to introduce the listener to the very different world of early modern Europe, especially when it comes to gender. Behn's text includes many references to the sensuality of androgyny, describing the titular "fair Clarinda" with a variety of gendered terms, including "lovely maid," "charming youth," "beauteous woman," "bright nymph," and "swain." Further, the poem reflects many of my own feelings for Maupin, expressing my strong desire to connect with her:

> With thy deluding Form thou giv'st us pain,
> While the bright Nymph betrays us to the Swain.
> In pity to our Sex sure thou wer't sent,
> That we might Love, and yet be Innocent:
> For sure no Crime with thee we can commit;
> Or if we shou'd – thy Form excuses it.[27]

In the musical setting of Behn's poem, composer Colin McMahon creates a particularly ambiguous sound world, divorced from clear metric or harmonic structures. The effect is one of

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[25] Arlene Stiebel, "Not Since Sappho: The Erotic in Poems of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn," in *Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context*, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Routledge, 2013), 158, 161-162.
[26] Le Guin, B*occherini's Body*, 24.
[27] Aphra Behn and Malcolm Hicks, *Selected Poems* (Routledge, 1993), 77.

free-floating text, as yet unattached to narrative as a driving force. McMahon's descriptive text-painting in this movement is a nod to the seventeenth century as well as an opportunity for the performer to highlight the sensuality of the poetry through a more modern lens.

Although for practical reasons I had to begin this performance of the cantata dressed in period clothing, in an ideal production I would further highlight the shift from self to character by singing this first movement wearing something more contemporary. In the future, I might also play with physical alternatives to the conventional recital staging of standing in the crook of the piano—perhaps sitting on a stool or chair to visually and physically contrast with the more frenetic energy of the "Maupin" movements.

Fig. 6. Video recording of "Prologue" from *La Maupin*.[28]

Giving Maupin a Voice

Opening with a poem taken from the period during which Maupin lived not only provides the audience with some historical context, but also gives my version of Maupin licence to speak

[28] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

more colloquially in contrast. This playful anachronism in the text allows audience members to understand Maupin better and form a closer connection with her. As Diamond writes, "in historicized performance, gaps are not to be filled in, seams and contradictions show in all their roughness, and therein lies one aspect of spectatorial pleasure—when our differences *from* the past and *within* the present are palpable, graspable, applicable."[29] Throughout the cantata, McMahon and I worked to intentionally highlight those "gaps" in Maupin's story, playing with ambiguity not only in the explicit narrative but also in the musical and dramatic form of the piece. Below I will briefly describe each of the piece's movements, with an explanation of the techniques used.

After the narrator's prologue, the cantata continues without pause into a jaunty interlude consisting of what McMahon and I affectionately termed "travelling music." During this transition, the performer visually transforms into Maupin by adding costume elements—in full view of the audience, again highlighting the theatricality of the story being presented and the constructed nature of Maupin's identity (fig. 7, 0:00-0:25).[30] Breaking the "fourth wall" with an aside, Maupin then speaks the line: "Bonjour, mesdames, messieurs, and the rest of us" (fig. 7, 0:25).[31] By having Maupin address the audience directly, in speech instead of song, I wanted to highlight the differences between others' opinions of Maupin and her own voice—a voice totally imagined by me, but informed by my research and lived experience. The line also invites the audience to accept several conceits: that Maupin will be actively telling her story rather than passively reliving it, that she will speak to them in English instead of her native French, and that she will use a fairly recognizable form of English rather than the seventeenth-century language of Behn's poetry.

In the following number, "Introduction," Maupin literally introduces herself to the audience, mostly in words I translated directly from nineteenth-century historians. I chose a mix of physical and behavioural descriptions as well as some short anecdotes told by Maupin in the third person:

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[29] Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory," 87.
[30] Power, *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice*, 119.
[31] Colin McMahon and Camille Rogers, *La Maupin: A Cantata for Piano and Voice*, score, 2022.

When I passed, so proud, so handsome,
my hand on the hilt of my sword,
all the women turned their heads, smiling,
provocations which delighted me . . .

"After her debut she received thirty amorous letters . . ."
"She stabbed herself on stage with a real knife,
just to revenge herself on an unfaithful lover . . ."
"She ran three men through with just one blow from her sword . . ."[32]

Fig. 7. Video recording of "Introduction" from *La Maupin*.[33]

There is no indication within the text whether or not these statements are true, nor—perhaps more importantly—whether this version of Maupin believes them to be true. However, the rhythmically cheeky music allows the performer to offer subtextual commentary on the gossip through knowing looks and gestures to the audience. For example, at one point in my performance I put a hand up to the side of my mouth as if letting the audience in on a secret, highlighting the playfully scandalous tone (fig. 7, 1:50). Additionally, many lines of text

[32] McMahon and Rogers, *La Maupin*.
[33] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

acknowledge explicitly that they are quotations of gossip: for example, "*They call me* . . . la nouvelle Sappho. *They say* I am an exception to my sex, one of those errors of nature: in the same body the grace of a woman, the energy of a man" (fig. 7, 0:34-1:04).[34] McMahon further accentuates the tongue-in-cheek nature of the movement with sharp syncopations and a playfully anachronistic waltz theme (fig. 7, 1:05-1:31 and 2:20-7:15). As I prepared my performance, I enjoyed matching my movements to these rhythmic cues to emphasize and sharpen their effect. For example, when at one point I mime unsheathing a sword and mounting an attack, I do so in time to the waltz tempo (fig. 7, 2:28-3:01).

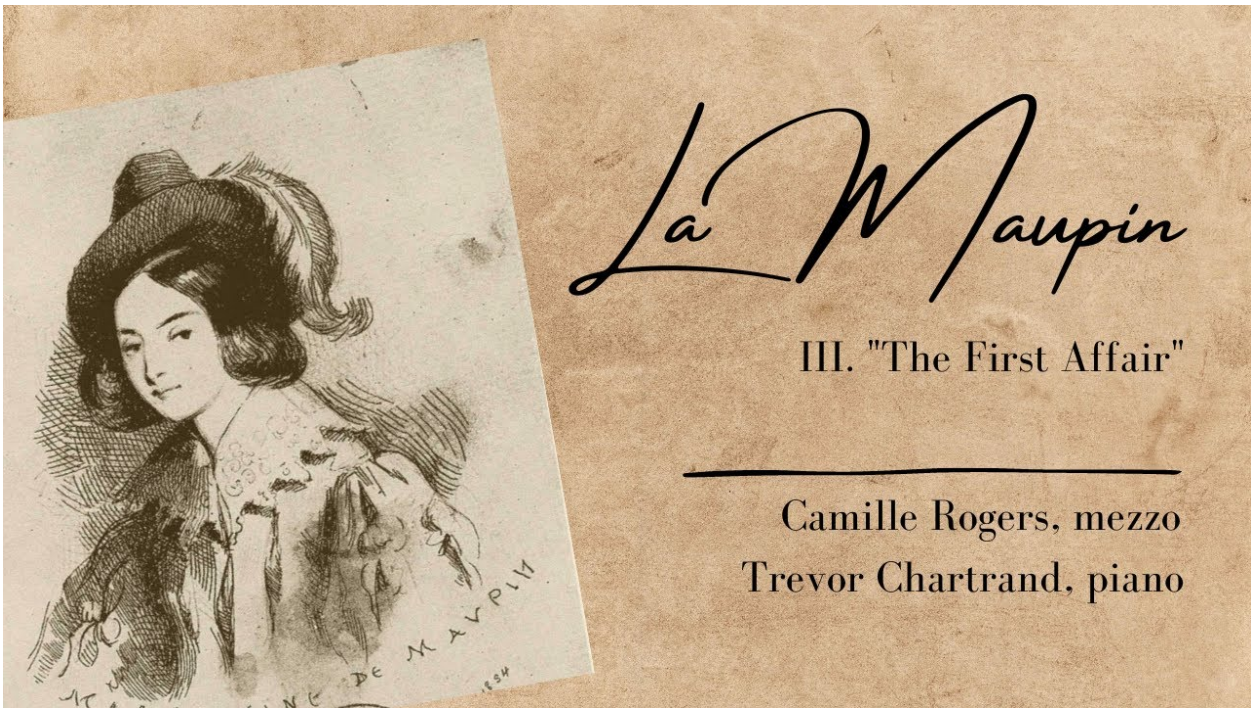

Fig. 8. Video recording of "The First Affair" from *La Maupin*.[35]

Having introduced herself, Maupin next relates the story of her Marseille romance and the convent escape in the third movement, "The First Affair." Throughout, Maupin speaks directly to the audience, recounting the story as a past memory rather than living it out in real time. Luxurious, romantic piano arpeggios accompany Maupin's recollection of her blossoming

[34] McMahon and Rogers, *La Maupin*. Emphasis mine.
[35] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

infatuation with the young lady (fig. 8, 1:22-2:51). The sincerity of her exhortations of love are periodically interrupted by cheeky references to the public's incredulous reactions to romance between women: "everyone was embarrassed to define the nature of our attachment, forbidden as they were to reveal the secrets of Lesbos . . ." (fig. 8, 3:49-4:08).[36]

Since there is no historical consensus on how the convent adventure ended, McMahon and I decided to acknowledge this explicitly in the music and text. After Maupin details the escape, the piano swells in a lush interlude that is then abruptly cut short (fig. 8, 7:33). Maupin, surprised by the sudden silence, is forced to tell the audience that she doesn't remember the end of the story: "I don't remember what happened to that sweet girl. The end of the story is lost. Somehow I escaped the long arm of the law, and found myself, once again, alone" (fig. 8, 7:39-7:56). She soon shakes off her confusion, however, and accompanied by the familiar "travelling" music, (fig. 9, 0:00-0:33) moves on to her memories of singing on the stage of the Paris Opéra.

Fig. 9. Video recording of "The Artist" from *La Maupin*.[37]

[36] McMahon and Rogers, *La Maupin*.
[37] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

The fourth movement, "The Artist," again highlights how Maupin was seen by those around her, using text from historians' descriptions of her performances and audiences' reactions. Maupin performs as if on the stage of the Opéra, complete with a costume change and exaggerated Baroque gestures. This movement in particular gives the performer opportunities to play with historical acting techniques, which Alisa Solomon suggests conveniently overlap with Brechtian distancing: "early modern dramaturgy did not seek to sweep the audience out of their senses, but pointed repeatedly to its own fictiveness."[38] Significantly, this section of the cantata also allowed us to include some of the music from *Tancrède* without resurrecting the whole opera, which would come with a whole host of problematic cultural baggage. Instead, McMahon set the new English text to the melody of Clorinde's aria "Estes-vous satisfaits" in order to give the music an authentically Baroque feel, while adding a much more modern-sounding chromatic piano accompaniment underneath (fig. 8, 1:24-3:04). This movement was also a particularly enjoyable one for me vocally, as I had the opportunity to include traditional French ornamentation such as *tremblements* (fig. 8, 2:53).

Of course, no re-telling of Maupin's story would be complete without at least one duel, and the fifth movement sees our heroine acting out both sides of her encounter with the rude and misogynistic Baron de Servan. The audience gets to see a lot of her personality in this movement, with more asides (fig. 10, 1:24-1:31), playful syncopated rhythms, and unflattering impersonations of the pompous baron (fig. 10, 0:21-0:47). The piece is also particularly rewarding as a performer, setting up many opportunities for physical humour during the confrontation (fig. 10, 1:37-1:57) and following pistol duel (fig. 10, 1:58-2:44). The piano lid plays the part of the gunshot (fig. 10, 2:24), and the pianist is even called upon to give the signal to the combatants—both portrayed by Maupin, of course. Due to the combination of rhythmic complexity and detailed stage movement, this proved a particularly difficult movement to put together in rehearsals. However, with practice I was able to find more comfort and a real sense of playfulness, especially in the over-the-top buffoonery of the Baron.

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[38] Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon*, 39.

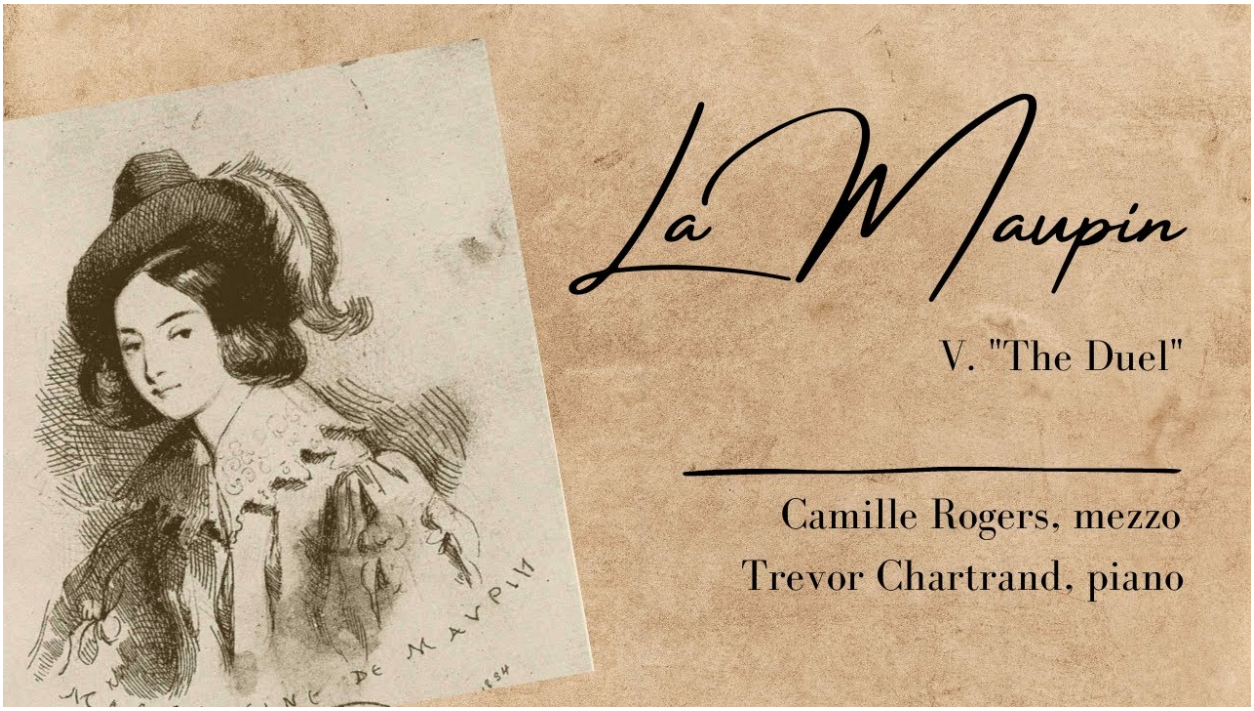

Fig. 10. Video recording of "The Duel" from *La Maupin*.[39]

Finally, we come to the penultimate movement, "The Last Love." As a performer, this movement presented the particular challenge of portraying a romance while being onstage alone. An anachronistic tango bassline repeats through several cycles, paying homage to the ground bass arias of the Baroque era by creating an ostinato effect as Maupin recalls the attraction that blossomed between her and the Marquise de Florensac (fig. 11, 0:24-1:44). I was especially careful in my preparation of this section to plan in my mind's eye where the imaginary Marquise would be in relation to Maupin. In fact, the piano octave struck at the beginning of the movement ended up serving two purposes: one, to confirm my starting note after a section of dialogue spoken over silence; and two, to give me a precise moment to react, as Maupin, to seeing the Marquise for the first time (fig. 11, 0:18).

As the remembered romance deepens, McMahon uses coloratura to evoke the sensuality, pleasure, and intimacy of the hidden world only hinted at in historical texts (fig. 11, 3:20-4:20).

[39] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

Again most of the text is drawn from translations of nineteenth-century biographies, but I also added a few lines from another Behn poem which I felt were appropriate:

> Joys which were everlasting . . .
> And every vow inviolably true:
> Not kept in fear of gods . . . religious cause,
> Nor in obedience to the duller laws.[40]

I particularly wanted this section to sound "ethereal," as is stated in the text, yet still profound, and McMahon and I worked through several rounds of revisions to find different techniques and registrations to depict the mood we were envisioning.

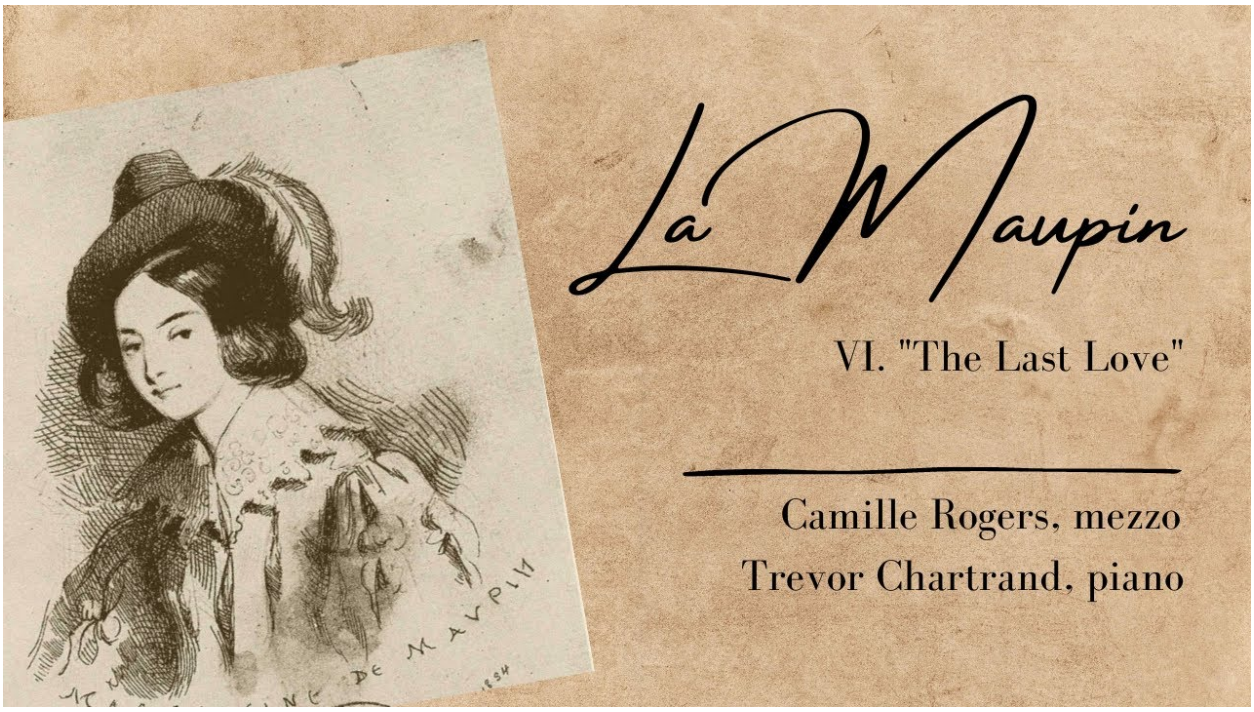

Fig. 11. Video recording of "The Last Love" from *La Maupin*.[41]

The movement ends tragically, with Maupin remembering the Marquise's sudden death, which inspired her retirement from the Opéra (fig. 11, 4:44-5:20). In one of the most vulnerable moments of the cantata, after a long pause Maupin explains her decision through unaccompanied

[40] Behn and Hicks, *Selected Poems* (Routledge, 1993), 1.
[41] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

spoken text. This was a difficult section to practice, as it was hard to know how an audience might react to such a drawn-out beat of silence. In performance, however, this ended up being one of my favourite moments—it felt like a true-to-life depiction of the starkness of grief, as well as a powerful commentary on the forced silencing of queer voices throughout history.

During a sombre piano interlude, Maupin removes certain costume elements (again in full view of the audience) in order to once more become the performer-narrator (fig. 12, 0:00-1:00). Following this, I include the most personal of my reflections on Maupin's story (fig. 12, 1:02-1:46):

> It's unlikely that all these stories are true. But it's possible, and my heart clings to that possibility. Because if someone wrote it down, that means someone dreamed it up. I'm no more or less correct than the dusty Victorian historians, pulling their hair out over the sheer scandal of it all.
>
> In the end, I get to decide what I believe. The Maupin I know may not be real, but I still reach out to her, across the centuries. I have to believe in her, so I can believe in myself.[42]

By highlighting my own personal relationship with Maupin, I wanted to let the audience see some of my process, the "why" behind the creation of the cantata: my felt connection with Maupin through time as a queer person. McMahon highlighted this transition from narrative to reflection in the preceding interlude and the following movement, both of which feature stacked fifths—an especially "timeless" harmony, lacking the forward motion of diatonic structures. The interlude in particular is left sounding unfinished, with no tonal resolution (fig. 12, 0:50-1:00).

In the final "Epilogue," we return to fragments of the same poetry as the prologue, but now informed by what we have heard and seen:

> Fair lovely maid, against thy charms we struggle, but in vain.
> Justify this soft complaint,
> That we might love, and yet be innocent:
> For who, that gathers fairest flowers believes
> A snake lies hid beneath the fragrant leaves.[43]

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[42] McMahon and Rogers, *La Maupin*.
[43] McMahon and Rogers, *La Maupin*. See also Behn and Hicks, *Selected Poems* (Routledge, 1993), 77.

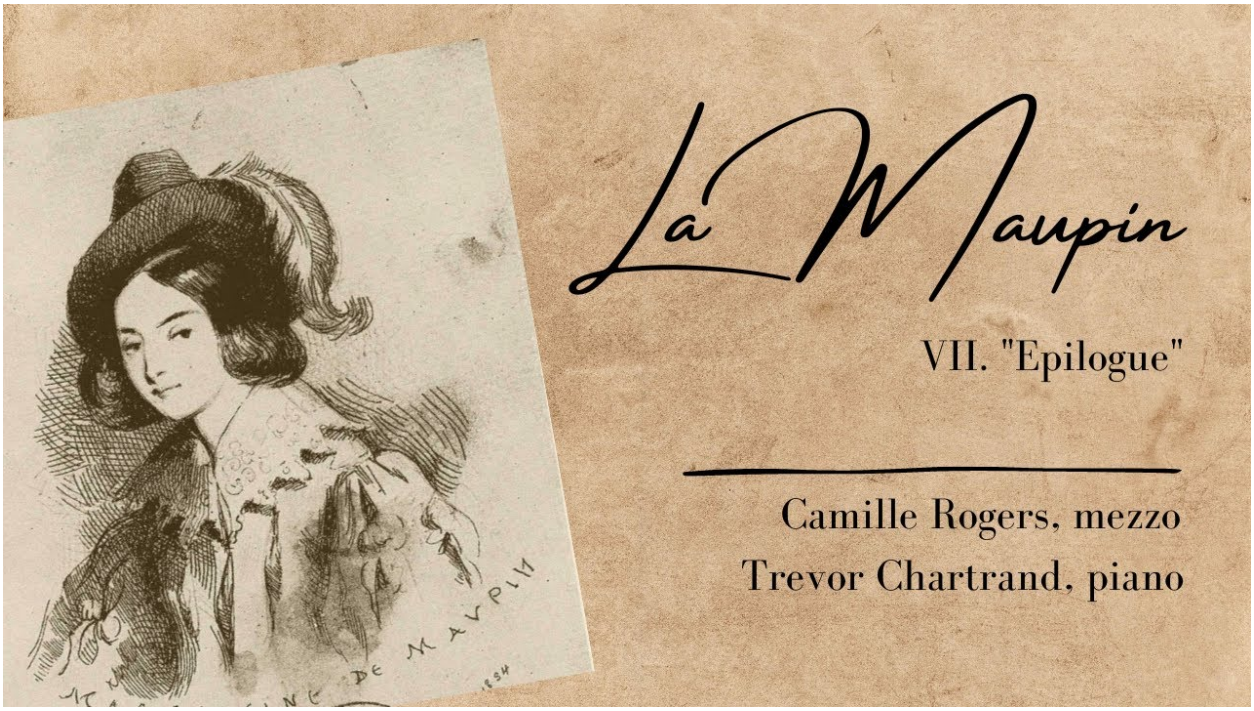

Fig. 12. Video recording of "Epilogue" from *La Maupin*.[44]

Words take on new meanings: Maupin's existence in the past can "justify" mine in the present, and points to the "innocence" and inherent morality of living as one's true self. The last line now gestures to the experience of looking just a little closer at history, beyond the smooth veneer of conformity and assumed-heterosexuality to find what "lies hid beneath." The cantata ends with a series of open fifths from the piano, offering a tentative resolution without foreclosing on further exploration (fig. 12, 4:02-4:26).

Although I thoroughly enjoyed the process of creating, workshopping, preparing, and performing the cantata, there were some elements which felt more difficult than others. For example, I found I was significantly more comfortable when I was embodying the character of Maupin, as I felt it gave me licence to move dynamically across the stage. In contrast, in the first and last movements as "myself," I often felt trapped by the conventions of classical performance. Without a character to inhabit, I felt obligated to take on the traditionally still and dignified persona of the "classical performer," which in many ways feels physically uncomfortable for me. Elin Diamond writes that in a resistant feminist performance the "performer-subject neither

[44] Performed by Camille Rogers and Trevor Chartrand in Toronto, Canada, on November 26, 2022.

disappears into a representation of the character *nor* into a representation of the actor; each remains processual, historical, incomplete."[45] In retrospect, I wish I had given myself permission to experiment more with how I represented my own self on the stage—and I definitely plan to explore alternatives in future productions of *La Maupin*.

Maupin's Legacy Today

My hope in the creation of this cantata is that McMahon and I were able to highlight and embrace the ambiguities between performer and character, past and present, and truth and fiction. Additionally, I set out to offer myself the pleasure of reaching across time to embody a queer, gender-non-conforming ancestor. Speaking and singing as Maupin, moving as her, and inhabiting her life—even just for half an hour—gave me the chance to form a much deeper connection with her story, beyond what I could ever glean from archival and documentary research. In this aspect the cantata has already proved itself a success.

However, another of my goals in commissioning and premiering this cantata is to offer other queer and gender-non-conforming singers the opportunity to perform a piece that directly engages with their lived identities. Linda Hutcheon writes that "some media and genres are used to *tell* stories (for example, novels, short stories); others *show* them (most performance media); and still others allow us to interact physically and kinesthetically with them (as in videogames or theme park rides)."[46] I would argue that for performers, theatrical genres such as opera combine both "telling" and "showing" with the physical sense of knowing and interacting with a text; this means it can be particularly powerful for artists to engage with works that reflect facets of their own identities. There are very few works in the classical canon which deal explicitly with queerness, and I hope *La Maupin* may be a part of other queer singers' artistic journeys. I know that I would have loved to have such a piece available to me when I was a young singer pursuing undergraduate studies.

My final question is: how will my cantata fit into the current context of an internet renaissance of information about Maupin? Her online presence has grown exponentially in the

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[45] Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory," 88.
[46] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, xiv.

past decade, and the ways she is portrayed once again reflect contemporary views on gender and sexuality. Most recent sources claim her as a queer icon, using the modern label of "bisexual" and celebrating her swashbuckling adventures. For example, in his entry on Maupin, Jason Porath of the website *Rejected Princesses* writes:

> At the top of the list of history's greatest rascals is undoubtedly "La Maupin," Julie d'Aubigny: sword-slinger, opera singer, and larger-than-life bisexual celebrity of 17th-century France. Her life was a whirlwind of duels, seduction, grave robbing, and convent-burning so intense that she had to be pardoned by the king of France twice.[47]

Popular discussions of Maupin's queerness usually concentrate on her sexuality, treating her cross-dressing and gender-non-conformity as symptoms of her bisexuality rather than indicators of any type of non-normative or queer gender identity. One exception is an article on *The Daily Dot*, which includes a brief disclaimer about her gender: "although d'Aubigny's gender identification was up for question, one thing is clear: this bisexual sword-wielding genderqueer coquette who seduced her way across France and into the history books has long been denied her place in the annals of pop culture renown."[48]

In the past few years, some more nuanced explorations of Maupin's life have appeared online. For example, Kaz Rowe's 2022 YouTube video essay gives an excellent overview of how the filters of eighteenth-century gossip culture may have shaped the legends circulated after Maupin's death, as well as an in-depth discussion of the sources most often used to reconstruct Maupin's convent adventure.[49] The "Julie d'Aubigny" episode of the BBC podcast *You're Dead to Me*, hosted by Greg Jenner, Sara Barker, and Catherine Bohart with research by Bethan Davies and Kelly Gardiner, also offers a more nuanced look at Maupin's story.[50] Even a decidedly irreverent episode of the YouTube series "Puppet History" acknowledges that "There's a lot of mystery surrounding Jules, even for her most basic biographical information, so I'm gonna try my best. . . . This is just a YouTube video."[51] Similarly, an episode of "Corpse Talk," a kids' cartoon which brings a dead celebrity to life to tell their own story, has the host ask Maupin:

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[47] Porath, "Julie d'Aubigny."
[48] Romano, "This 17th-century sword-swinging opera star will rule the internet in 2013."
[49] Rowe, "Examining the Chaotic Legend of Julie D'Aubigny."
[50] Jenner, "Julie d'Aubigny."
[51] Watcher Entertainment, "The Scandalous Life of France's Bisexual Opera Icon."

"Some people have suggested that not every story about your life is completely true. Did everything you just told me really happen?" Maupin answers: "Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. Let's just say, you don't want to believe everything you read in your story books."[52]

More often, however, internet sources are unquestioningly sensational, playing into the stereotype of the wild, promiscuous bisexual (one blog even names her the "Badass of the Week") and generally either glossing over less savoury aspects of Maupin's history or casting certain episodes in a more positive light.[53] For example, her violence towards women and servants is usually avoided, with the focus instead on her assaults of men: "she killed or maimed at least ten men, and was so badass that she would often sing while she was swordfighting."[54] Additionally, in retellings of the masked ball and the triple duel, the question of consent is rarely raised. "She spent most of the evening courting a young woman, which earned the ire of three of the woman's suitors. When Maupin pushed things too far and kissed the young lady in full view of everyone, the three challenged her to a duel."[55] Little consideration is given to the feelings of the woman positioned as the object of Maupin's attentions, or whether those attentions were wanted or unwanted. This is perhaps even more disturbing when we add the narrative context that Maupin herself may have been forced into a relationship with the much older and more powerful Conte d'Armagnac when she was only a teenager. True, understandings of consent were very different in the seventeenth century from the ways we conceive of it today, but to me that only makes it all the more important to include in discussions of Maupin's story.[56]

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[52] Cartoons for Kids, "The Sword-Fighting Opera Singer Julie d'Aubigny."
[53] Thompson, "Julie D'Aubigny."
[54] Romano, "This 17th-century sword-swinging opera star will rule the internet in 2013."
[55] Porath, "Julie d'Aubigny."
[56] See Garthine Walker, "Sexual Violence and Rape in Europe, 1500–1750," in *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body*, ed. Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (London and New York: Routledge, 2013). Walker explains that while "rape was rarely prosecuted and had a low conviction rate," there were still many complex legal definitions of rape in early modern Europe—definitions which varied widely from place to place and often distinguished between different forms of rape, including: the rape of a virgin, a widow, a married woman, a nun, a noblewoman, a child under twelve, a sex worker, or a woman of colour. There were also often different legal definitions of "abduction and rape, abduction with the intention to forcibly marry, . . . and abduction and clandestine marriage." However, Walker notes that marital rape was not recognized in early modern Europe, and that "not all forms of sexual coercion, even those involving physical force, were treated as 'rape'. Distinctions between 'persuasion', 'seduction' and 'rape' were particularly muddy." Further, in practice, the testimony of powerful adult men was almost always privileged over that of women, children, and servants, which made it very unlikely that most survivors would be believed by the courts. Walker, "Sexual Violence and Rape in Europe, 1500–1750," 431-435.

The situation is difficult: the surviving historical sources are contradictory and unreliable at best, and at worst have a tendency to either over-compensate for the genteel sensibilities of their scandalized readers, or over-exaggerate—for dramatic effect, or even with malicious intent on the part of the author. In their YouTube video, Rowe raises the question: "just how much of this extended wild story is really the truth, and what elements of French society and media at the time would have influenced the way that Julie's story is told? . . . The honest truth, as is so common with history, has been lost to time. All we can do is explore."[57] To what extent should modern storytellers attempt to correct for these differences and biases? When we find in some histories a Maupin who embodies many of the worst elements of toxic masculinity—violence, sexual harassment, and carelessness for the consequences of her actions—our first instinct may be to rehabilitate her as a much-maligned queer icon. Are these versions of her story true to her life, or are they reflections of ideals of masculinity during the time period in which they were written?

Jack Halberstam argues that, rather than developing separately or in segregation from male models of masculinity, female masculinity has also contributed to the historical development of masculinity as a whole.[58] Halberstam describes a "multiplicity of masculinities, indeed a proliferation of masculinities," suggesting that "the more we identify the various forms of female masculinity, the more they multiply."[59] Does Maupin offer an alternative to modern masculinity? While we may reject her methods of violence and intimidation, especially when used towards those less privileged, we can admire and perhaps adopt the better aspects of her particular brand of masculinity: a fierce commitment to protecting the honour of women harmed by men; an unabashed approach to loving fiercely, regardless of gender; and a certain fluidity in gender expression, allowing more freedom to move between feminine- and masculine-coded modes of being.

For most European women of Maupin's time, two possibilities for a stable, respectable life loomed large: marriage, or the convent. Although these social institutions appear in Maupin's story, they utterly fail to hold her—indeed, she uses them both to further her independence.

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[57] Rowe, "Examining the Chaotic Legend of Julie D'Aubigny."
[58] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 46.
[59] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 46.

Similarly, Maupin's life appears to have been so unruly that for over two hundred years it has stymied even the best efforts of authors to contain it. Joan DeJean writes that inflammatory depictions of violent women, motivated by anxieties surrounding female cooption of patriarchal power, often coexist with an actual reality of extreme violence against women.[60] For better or for worse, Maupin was able to harness the power of such violence in order to carve a space for herself outside of the usual bounds of womanhood. Without taking on the mantle of manhood, she stepped fluidly between worlds, participating in both the male economy of duels, chivalry, and honour, and the feminine economy of seduction, intrigue, and sexual power. She shows us clearly that the rules of society are neither insurmountable nor inevitable, and that even within a system of extreme oppression, new routes to freedom can be found.

Valerie Traub suggests that historians should find ways to "insist on the relative autonomy of the past while admitting the necessity of making rather than revealing history."[61] With Maupin, it seems that scholars have little choice but to acquiesce to this reality: so much of her story is lost to time, censorship, and perhaps a fierce sense of privacy, that there is no other option than to speculate. As I have learned intimately in the process of reconstructing Maupin's story, the past will remain autonomous and, as Traub suggests, fundamentally unknowable. Still, I hope that both my dissertation and the cantata it inspired will join the ranks of the more nuanced re-tellings and discussions of Maupin's life by allowing space for interpretation. As Winnicott writes in his psychological study of play, "the significant moment is that at which *the child surprises* [themself]. . . . *This playing has to be spontaneous, and not compliant or acquiescent*."[62] If my cantata can give rise to such playful surprises for others, as it certainly did for me during the process of creation, preparation, and performance, I will be more than satisfied.

When I first stumbled upon Maupin's story while travelling down an internet rabbit hole several years ago, I could barely believe my luck. As a bisexual, genderqueer mezzo myself, the opportunities for identification seemed almost too perfect—especially since she had lived at precisely the moment in musical history I was most interested in studying. When I uncovered

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[60] DeJean, "Violent Women and Violence Against Women," 118-120.
[61] Traub, *Thinking Sex*, 136.
[62] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 68.

more about Maupin's life, including the less savoury aspects, I was forced to let go of some of those feelings. Yet even as I lost or relinquished some elements of my personal connection with her, I gained a deeper knowledge of her complexity, and the complexity of her own relationship with her surroundings. While I was unable to fully and unproblematically identify with Maupin, I was able to form—as Carolyn Dinshaw puts it— a "partial, affective connection."[63] In the end, perhaps the clearest reflection of Maupin's life I can find in my own is that we both have moved through a world and a society which is alternately hostile and celebratory, simultaneously shaming us for our very existence, and fascinated by our apparent exceptionalism. It is my hope that with this dissertation, along with the accompanying cantata, I can make my story a little less exceptional—a little more solidly within, as Rancière calls it, "the field of the possible."[64]

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[63] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 21.
[64] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 49.

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Appendix I
Estimated Timeline of Julie D'Aubigny Maupin's Life

1673 - born, likely in Paris, to father Gaston d'Aubigny

1682 - moves to Versailles

1685 - becomes mistress of Comte d'Armagnac
- Marseille Academy of Music founded by Pierre Gaultier

1687 - marries Jean Maupin
- travels to Marseille with Séranne
- employed as a singer at the Marseille Académie de Musique under name Mlle d'Aubigny

1689 - condemned by the Parlement of Aix for kidnapping and arson

1690 - hired by Académie Royale de Musique under name Mlle Maupin
- December: debuts as Pallas in Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione*

1694 - d'Albert returns to Paris, affair with Maupin rekindled

1695 - d'Albert departs Paris

1696 - February: incident at Monsieur's ball
- flees to Brussels
- employed at court theatre
- becomes mistress of Elector of Bavaria

1698 - possibly travels to Spain

- returns to Paris, resumes work at Académie Royale de Musique
- November: plays Minerve in Lully's *Thésée*

1700 - September 6: landlord incident

1701 - husband returns to Paris

1702 - February 23: performs in Campra's *Omphale* at Trianon for the court

- March 7: premiere of Campra's *Tancrède*, with Maupin as Clorinde

1703 - October 14: performs in Destouches's *Carnaval et la Folie* at Fontainebleu for the King

- begins affair with Marquise de Florensac
- December: replaces Mlle Desmatins as Armide in Lully's *Armide*

1705 - May 26: La Barre's *La Vénitienne* opens (Maupin's last opera)

- July 2: death of Marquise de Florensac
- leaves Académie Royale de Musique

1707 - November: dies, likely in Paris, or possibly in Provence

Appendix II
Maps of Important Locations

Fig. 13. Map of France and surrounding area.

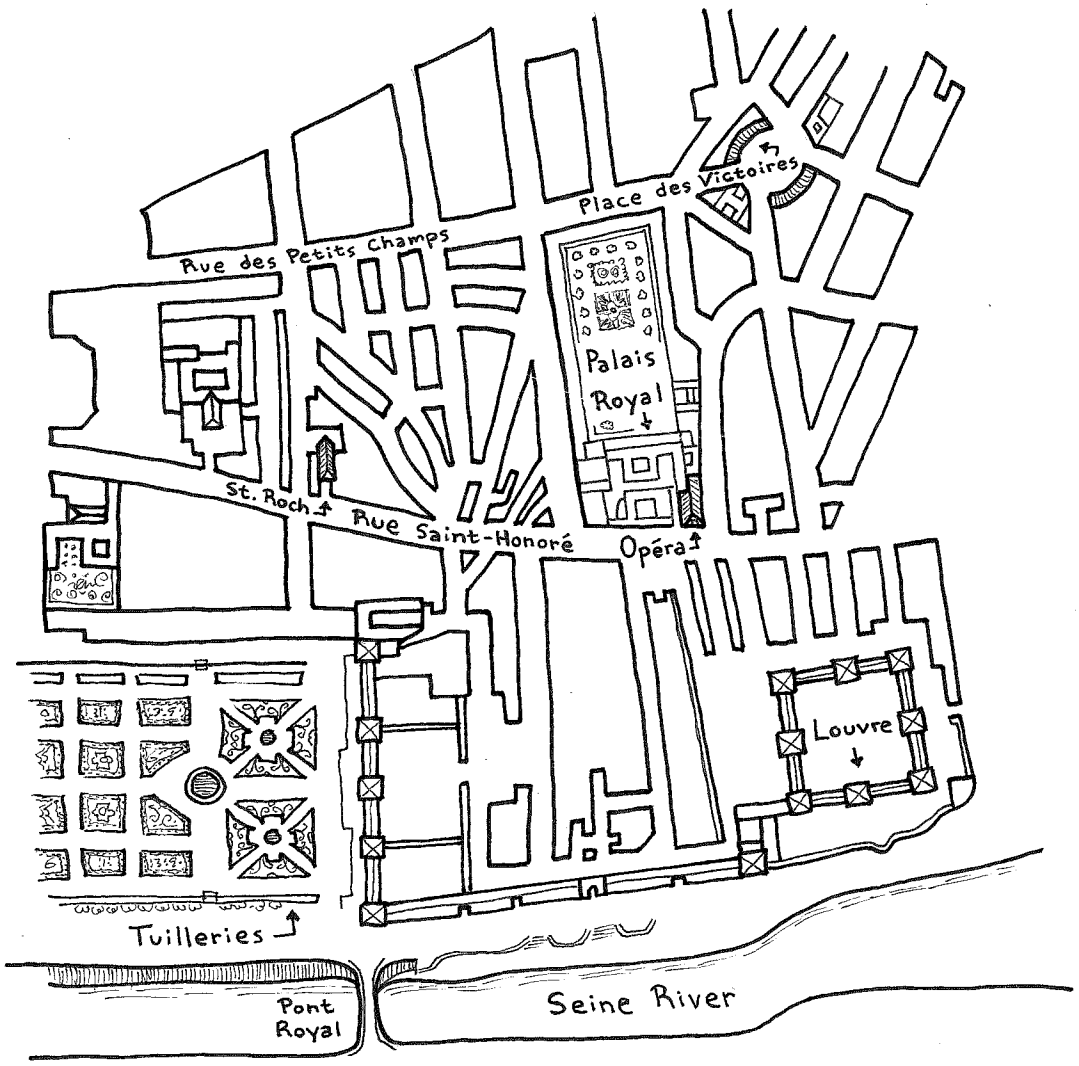

Fig. 14. Map of Paris in 1700, area surrounding the Palais Royal.

Appendix III
Diagram of Pitch Names

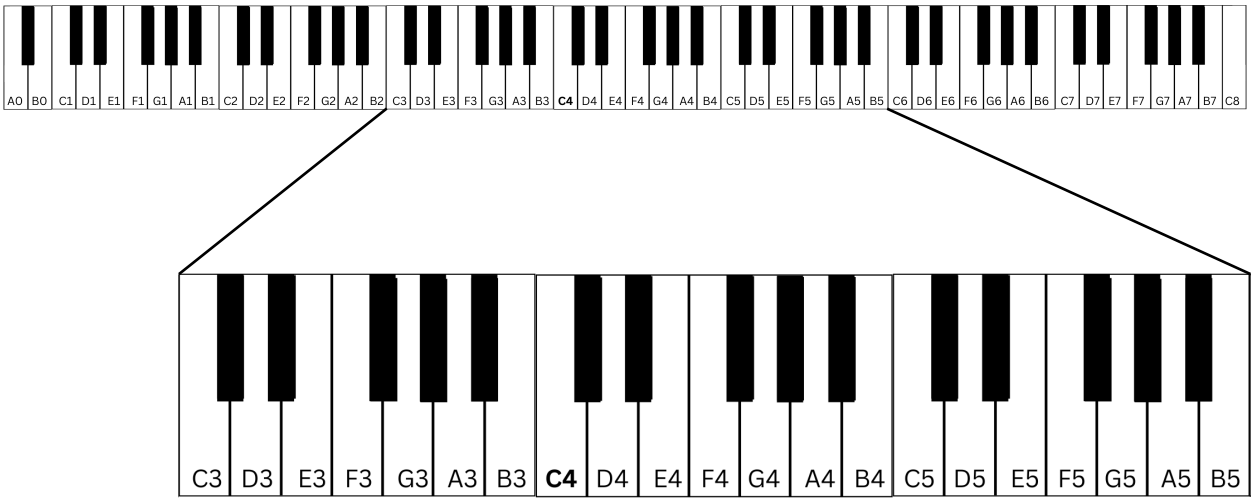

Fig. 15. Diagram of pitch names on a piano keyboard. (C4 = Middle C).

Appendix IV
Text from *La Maupin* by Camille Rogers and Colin McMahon

I. PROLOGUE

PERFORMER: *(as themself)*

> Fair lovely maid, or if that title be
> Too weak, too feminine for nobler thee,
> Permit a name that more approaches truth,
> And let me call you, lovely charming youth.
> This last will justify my soft complaint,
> While that may serve to lessen my constraint;
> And without blushes I the youth pursue,
> When so much beauteous woman is in view.
> Against thy charms we struggle but in vain
> With thy deluding form thou giv'st us pain,
> While the bright nymph betrays us to the swain.
> In pity to our sex sure thou wert sent,
> That we might love, and yet be innocent:
> For sure no crime with thee we can commit;
> Or if we should—thy form excuses it.
> For who, that gathers fairest flow'rs believes
> A snake lies hid beneath the fragrant leaves.

II. INTRODUCTION

(The PERFORMER puts on costume pieces, transforming into MAUPIN, who proceeds to introduce herself to the audience.)

MAUPIN: *(spoken)*
Bonjour mesdames, messieurs, and the rest of us.

MAUPIN: *(sung)*
They call me La Maupin,
la nouvelle Sappho.
They say I am an exception to my sex,
one of those errors of nature:
in the same body the grace of a woman,
the energy of a man.

I wore breeches with swagger,
my long silk doublet hid my breast.
When I passed, so proud, so handsome,
my hand on the hilt of my sword,
all the women turned their heads, smiling,
provocations which delighted me–
and gave rise to many stories, true or false:

> "After her debut she received thirty amorous letters…"
> "She stabbed herself on stage with a real knife,
> just to revenge herself on an unfaithful lover…"
>
> "She had a siren's voice, yet read not a note of music…"
> "She ran three men through with just one blow from her sword…"
> "Physically, as morally, she was a dragoon;
> she handled the blade like a fencing master;
> her tongue no less audacious."

My sorriest defect was passion for my own sex;
which led me into scandalous excess.

III. THE FIRST AFFAIR

MAUPIN: *(spoken)*
For example: I was in Marseille, working as an actor.
One day I decided I was sick of men in general
and of my current lover in particular.

MAUPIN: *(sung)*
What delightful contrast
if a virago such as me were to show herself about town
in the company of some blonde-tressed maiden.
That evening at the theatre
I stopped suddenly in my soliloquy,
full of admiration for a radiant young lady.

During the whole performance I played only for her;
the next day I wrote her the most passionate letter;
two days later I met her,
I managed to tell her,
I felt as if I was her sister
and I couldn't live without seeing her.

She answered my letters;
allowed me to talk with her an hour at church;
she promised to attend all my performances.
It was a scandal in the city.

> Oh love! that stronger art than Wine,
> Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine,
> Though we of Tyranny complain,
> We are all better'd by thy Reign.

Everyone was embarrassed
to define the nature of our attachment,
forbidden as they were to reveal the secrets of Lesbos…

> Oh love! that stronger art than Wine,
> Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine,
> Though we of Tyranny complain,
> We are all better'd by thy Reign.

The girl's parents,
wanting to guard against the stirring of ridiculous scandal,
made her enter a convent in Avignon.

I followed my admirer and,
resuming the feminine robes which I had discarded,
applied to be received as a novice,
determined to carry off the young lady.
An opportunity soon presented itself.

One of the nuns died, and was buried in the convent;
with my own hands I disinterred the corpse,
laid it in the bed, and set fire to the chamber.
In the confusion we made our escape.

> Oh love! that stronger art than Wine,
> Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine…

MAUPIN: *(spoken)*
I don't remember what happened to that sweet girl.
The end of the story is lost.
Somehow I escaped the long arm of the law,
and found myself, once again, alone.

MAUPIN: *(sung)*
For some time I lived by singing in the towns I passed through.
At length I arrived in Paris,
and after two months succeeded in making my debut at the Opéra.

IV. THE ARTIST

(MAUPIN exits the stage momentarily to make a grand entrance befitting a tragic opera)

MAUPIN: They say I had the finest voice of anyone;
no woman has been found to equal me.
But my bearing made me an ingenue lacking gentleness,
a lover too skillful to pretend sincerity;
they liked me best either as a warrior or a madwoman.

Wearing helmet and breastplate,
as a fierce and resplendent Amazon,
my voice was heard in all its splendour:
Campra used my lowest notes beautifully.

(MAUPIN makes a long indulgent curtsey)

V. THE DUEL

MAUPIN: Among those who frequented the green-room
is a certain vain, conceited baron:

(Maupin sings as the Baron as well, acting out both sides of the dialogue)

BARON: I should tell you about all the fair ones
who have so sweetly fallen victim to my passions.
One particularly succulent dancer
just waiting for me to pluck her from the chorus…

MAUPIN: *(interrupting)* Truly,
I admire the patience of these worthy gentlemen.
Your insolent falsehoods demand not only refutation,
but prompt chastisement.
You are an infamous liar.

BARON: *(gasps)*
And, pray, might I ask who you are, sir?

MAUPIN: *(aside)* Dressed in my doublet and hose,
I looked a tall, imposing young cavalier.
(to BARON) A better gentleman than you,
and one ready to give you a useful lesson.

BARON: I'll see you regret that challenge, sir!

MAUPIN: *(pacing out the distance for the duel)*
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen.

PIANIST: Make ready! Fire!

(piano keyboard lid slams, simulating gunshot)

MAUPIN: My lesson was effectual.
The baron left with one arm broken by my pistol-shot.
When he discovered that a woman had vanquished him
he quietly retired from Paris to his estate.

VI. THE LAST LOVE

MAUPIN: *(spoken)* At the height of my fame,
many great lords aspired to have me at their musical soirées.

(MAUPIN sees the Countess)

MAUPIN: The desire to hear me,
to see me, to approach me,
seized the Countess de Florensac;
she was troubled by my boyish appearance,
and I admired her grace.

They said the number of our former lovers
would jade us for ordinary love;
yet I had no difficulty in training Madame de Florensac
in the curiosity of promised delights…

Joys which were everlasting,
And every vow inviolably true:

Not kept in fear of gods' religious cause,
Nor in obedience to the duller laws.

For two years we lived in that tenderness,
ideal, ethereal,
out of reach of the defilement of men;
we isolated ourselves,
enamoured with each other.

Ideal, ethereal, enamoured…

MAUPIN: *(spoken)* My retirement from the stage
was occasioned by the sudden death of the Countess.
I bitterly mourned the loss of this sweet lady
who had honoured me with her friendship,
and I asked for my leave to retreat to a distant district.

VII. EPILOGUE

(PERFORMER removes costume pieces to become themself again)

PERFORMER: *(spoken)*
It's unlikely that all these stories are true.
But it's possible, and my heart clings to that possibility.
Because if someone wrote it down, that means someone dreamed it up.
I'm no more or less correct than the dusty Victorian historians,
pulling their hair out over the sheer scandal of it all.

In the end, I get to decide what I believe.
The Maupin I know may not be real,
but I still reach out to her, across the centuries.
I have to believe in her,
so I can believe in myself.

PERFORMER: *(sung)*

Fair lovely maid,
Against thy charms we struggle, but in vain.
Justify this soft complaint,
That we might love, and yet be innocent:
For who, that gathers fairest flow'rs believes
A snake lies hid beneath the fragrant leaves.