

THE DEVELOPING MASCULINE IMAGE AND ITS  
RELATIONSHIP TO STAGE COSTUME IN  
ENGLAND AND FRANCE 1660-1830

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the evolution of masculine costume on the stage in England and France from 1660 to 1830, a 170-year period that saw Europe move from the rule of absolute monarchs through the Age of Enlightenment and into a period of revolution that would forever alter the face of the world. Within this period the image of maleness was also changing, as evidenced by the changes in men's clothing. This concept is important to note because male actors were not only members of the dominant gender in society, but they naturally maintained their superior position in the theatre.

The goal of the dissertation is to chart a progressive parallel course between men's fashion trends and how theatre costuming both reflected and helped lead those trends. It is difficult if not impossible to state categorically the source of most fashion trends, but because theatre draws on the world around it, costuming is affected by society's expectations of what is appropriate for both the gender and age of an individual. As this dissertation will show, male actors chose their costumes within a complex system of social mores, historical interpretations, and personal preferences.

The first chapter discusses the importance of costume in the theatrical event and its role in allowing both audience and actor to take part in the illusionary process drama requires. It introduces some basic theories of fashion as a social construct and sets up the emerging battle for a clearly defined masculine ideal in the midst of what, to our day, seems to have been a very flamboyant era in terms of male clothes. Chapters II, III, and IV examine three more delineated periods within the 170-year span of the dissertation as theatre moves from very traditional imagery to more of an emphasis on historical

accuracy in setting and costume. Chapter II moves into the first period, 1660 to roughly 1700, which includes the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne and the height of Louis XIV's reign in France. Chapter III covers the eighteenth century, which is perhaps best known for its theatrical personalities, many of whom made strong impressions on costuming practices. Chapter IV ends the dissertation's timeline by covering the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, through Romantic movement. In general, the dissertation examines how fops, rakes, tragic heroes, famous actor/managers, playwrights, and social evolution affected the ways male actors chose to present themselves on stage.

The purpose of this study is to provide actors, directors, theatre historians, and designers with an overview of a period that saw a major evolution in an important aspect of theatre production. It is important to note how various influences have affected costuming, including acting theory and practice, social mores and taboos, scientific discoveries, and political and moral philosophy. All these aspects are mentioned to varying degrees as part of this study with particular emphasis on masculine costuming trends.

# CHAPTER I

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLE OF COSTUMING IN CHARACTERIZATION

One of the most obvious ways an audience comprehends character in a theatrical performance is by observing the clothing worn by the actors. Even outside the theatre, in our everyday lives, we are immediately struck by what people wear; and on the stage, along with the lighting and the set itself, the costume can be one of the most visually stimulating and enlightening elements of the theatre. Some theatre purists may say that costume is not a necessity – for drama you merely need actors and something for them to enact – but once we begin to add visual and aural layers to a performance, we make it a richer and more appealing experience. Costuming is an integral part of the theatrical experience, and through it audiences and performers gain valuable insights into the characters.

Marvin Carlson, in his book Theatre Semiotics, cites early nineteenth-century critic Charles Lamb's assertion that reading a Shakespeare play is preferable to seeing a production of it because the reader's full imagination is engaged while the audience member is subjected to the results of someone else's imagination. Carlson, however, recalls the etymology of the words we associate with theatre: "The roots of the words 'theatre' (*theatron*, a place for seeing), 'spectator' (from *spectare*, to watch), and 'auditorium' (from *audire*, to hear) all reflect the necessary physicality and presence of the theatre experience" (97). All this points to the importance of the visual image,

including the element of costume, to the fully realized theatrical experience. Costume is obviously only a part of the total equation, but it deserves special attention because of its value to both actor and audience. As J.L. Styan states in Drama, Stage and Audience, “In puzzling out the playwright’s complex intentions, costume is primary evidence, to be supported by a host of other signs which point to the play’s experience” (42).

A basic principle of modern costume design dictates that a costume should reflect the personality of the character and that it fit his/her socio-economic standing within the play. To do this, costume designers must understand the psychological motivations that contribute to character. For example, Broadway costume designer William Ivey Long, speaking at the 2001 Southeastern Theatre Conference in Mobile, Ala., said that most of a costume designer’s formal education should consist of courses in psychology. He made a clear connection between his work in the theatre and the psychology of real life, which governs how we choose what we wear.

Much has been said over the centuries about clothing and its role in society, especially in terms of how we perceive others and ourselves. Clothing on stage, as in real life, is highly symbolic and represents not simply a covering for the actor but also our everyday interpretation of the social function of what Marilyn J. Horn calls the “second skin” (her book is titled The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing). J.C. Flugel writes in The Psychology of Clothes, “In ordinary life, we scarcely ever refer to, or even think of, clothes without in some way or the other evaluating them; nearly always the clothes in question are beautiful or ugly, modest or immodest, healthy or unhealthy, cheap or expensive, suitable or inappropriate, fashionable or dowdy, well or ill designed

and executed” (181). His comments are obviously applicable to theatrical costume because audience members immediately evaluate a theatrical character as soon as he or she makes an entrance onto the stage, and as stated earlier, one of the quickest ways to make assumptions about a character is by examining the character’s clothing for clues.

Lawrence Langner begins his book The Importance of Wearing Clothes by discussing various theories of why we wear clothes, and one of the theories he advocates is that we have long sought to cover our own feelings of inferiority to the world around us. Clothing enabled early man to assert a superiority that our minds allowed us but our bodies denied us. When compared to many of our more powerful fellow mammals, humans are generally a puny species, but clothing gave man the chance to illustrate his dominance over the earthly forces around him (10). It also gave him the chance to illustrate within the human group that some individuals were somehow superior to other members of the group by body decoration and/or more decorative clothing. Even monkeys, Langner says, enjoy parading about with brightly colored ribbons to adorn themselves “like some of our better-known betters” (11). Dressing up in finery, no matter how simple, has become enjoyable. The invention of clothing, he continues, was rooted in material concerns, but he mentions one result of its development that is especially relevant to this dissertation’s purpose:

One of these was the self-importance which clothing imparted to man in the wearing and the pleasure he derived from this, as well as from the admiration of his fellow man. [...] His new skin gave him a sense of security and importance such as naked he had never felt. For most of his waking day he was able to travel over the face of the earth wearing his newly devised integument (which improved his appearance) buoyed up by the illusion that he was superior to members of his own and other tribes,

whose admiration he craved, and also to the creatures of the animal world. (14-15)

This approach to the development of clothing leads us back to the importance of costume as symbol. Just as in real life, theatre audiences make quick assumptions of character and personality based on what they see. Langner says theatrical costuming must “telegraph to you, almost in shorthand, all that can be learned of a person by his immediate appearance and his clothes” (241). As Horn says, clothing is part of what Edward Hall has called “the silent language,” a series of visual, not verbal, cues revealing how an individual views himself and how he wishes to be treated by others (109). Gordon Allport says in his book

Personality – A Psychological Interpretation:

With but the briefest visual perception, a complex mental process is aroused, resulting within a very short time, thirty seconds perhaps, in judgments of the sex, age, size, nationality, profession and social caste of the stranger, together with some estimate of his temperament, his past suffering, his “hardness,” his ascendancy, friendliness, neatness, and even his trustworthiness and integrity. With no further acquaintance many impressions would no doubt prove to be erroneous, but the exercise serves to call attention to the swift “totalizing” nature of our judgments. (500)

Flugel echoes this sentiment in emphasizing the importance of clothes to the general human process of social recognition and understanding.

Apart from face and hands – which, it is true, are the most emotionally expressive parts of our anatomy, and to which we have learnt to devote an especially alert attention – what we actually see and react to are, not the bodies, but the clothes of those about us. It is from their clothes that we form a first impression of our fellow-creatures as we meet them. (15)

Because we understand how important visual impressions can be, in particular first visual impressions, we can also address the importance of appearance in establishing social role, and in the case of this dissertation, in establishing the relationship between

social fashion concepts and their representation on the theatrical stage. By examining specifically the male actor's clothing choices, we may understand how those choices have both reflected and helped to advance changes in the social concept of masculinity. How male actors saw themselves as representatives of the dominant gender in society, as well as in the world of the theatre, has been a relatively neglected part of theatre history. This dissertation will attempt to rectify that by charting a progressive parallel course between men's fashion trends and how theatre costuming both reflected and led those trends. In the introduction to his book The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity David Kuchta says that the thrust of his study is to examine how male dominance in the political world of 1550-1850 was reflected in the growing concern over acceptable masculine behavior, and by extension, acceptable masculine and feminine fashion. He writes, "What was obvious to contemporaries was not that only men held political power, but that, like femininity, masculinity was a conspicuous construction, one that needed constant reinforcement against the threats posed by women and 'effeminate' men" (10). This dissertation draws the same conclusion, but it will illustrate how it was specifically applied to the theatre: men dominated and constantly reinforced that dominant position partly through their costuming choices.

Assigning a definite cause-effect relationship in the world of fashion and costuming may be an impossible task, but a survey of some of the most popular fashion styles and trends from 1660 through 1830, along with an examination of the evidence for male actors' costume choices during the same period, demonstrates that the

fashion/costume kinship was more fluid than systematic. What follows is an examination of influences and processes rather than absolutes.

### Methodology

This study will begin in 1660, the point at which Charles II is restored to the English throne and the English theatre gets a much-needed shot of energy and royal support. Beginning with character types of Restoration theatre, which include the fops and rakes, this study will proceed through 1830 – near the end of the Romantic period in theatre – and will feature an examination of masculine stage character types across that 170-year period. By tracking the evolution of the masculine ideal as it appeared throughout the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth century – particularly by focusing on fashion trends – and by drawing parallels with the theatrical representation of these ideas and their corresponding costuming trends, I plan to illustrate the relationship between society and what was, for that period of history, media.

A common acting exercise is called the Mirror. One actor starts a slow and deliberate movement. The other actor follows the first until it is difficult to tell which person is actually leading the exercise. This study will approach its topic much as an observer of a mirror exercise. There is little evidence to prove which comes first: real-world fashion or theatrical innovation. By the conclusion of this dissertation, that question will be answered, or at least examined until the question itself becomes moot. Do media lead their audiences or merely follow their audiences' leads? Alison Lurie

states the case for a communication loop inherent between theatre audiences and performers:

Theatrical dress [...] is a special case of sartorial deception, one in which the audience willingly cooperates, recognizing that the clothes the actor wears, like the words he speaks, are not his own. Sometimes, however, what is only a temporary disguise for an actor becomes part of the everyday wardrobe of some members of the public. Popular culture, which has done so much to homogenize our life, has at the same time, almost paradoxically, helped to preserve and even to invent distinctive dress through a kind of feedback process. (25)

Critics and historians have written much in the past generation concerning the role of the media in social development. In our own time, we have broad mass media to examine, but for the people of the period covered by this dissertation, there were no televisions, radios, films, or heavily saturated advertising conduits to influence their lives. What they did have was live theatre, which provided them with objects of emulation and ridicule, philosophical discussion, and social criticism. Despite the radical social upheavals that occurred in Europe and England during this 170-year period, theatre always maintained a close connection to its audience's taste. The rise of commercial theatre meant that a manager and his company had to pay careful attention to the public's likes and dislikes or it would be bankrupt in no time. This dissertation will examine one aspect of this give-and-take relationship by looking at costuming/clothing choices and how the theatre chose either to reflect social constructs or to comment on them through those costumes.

As early as 1583, at least one man publicly blamed the theatre for causing lower-class citizens to wear clothes outside the theatre that hid their social status, a style this particular irate citizen of the day, Philip Stubbes, said was in imitation of the lowly actor

who could play a lord on stage and then wear the costume outside the theatre to continue the illusion (Cox and Kastan 269). The relationship between fashion as clothing in society at large and fashion as costume inside the theatre was both antagonistic and symbiotic. It could be antagonistic because to someone as class-conscious as Stubbes, it seemed to encourage persons of the lower classes to attempt to improve their station simply by wearing the clothes of their betters, clearly a habit that circumvented the social customs of the day. At the same time, it could be seen as symbiotic because for centuries theatres had used the clothing of the outside world to costume the characters on their stages, a move that had been acceptable to society at large because its members understood they were in a theatre watching fiction.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, French and English audience members could sit on the stage within inches of the actors. In paying a little extra for these choice seats, these patrons also paid for the chance to put on their own personal shows. Playwright Thomas Dekker said that a proud young audience member sitting on the stage – and such confident young gallants were never shy about offering loud opinions as to the quality of the play, actors, or costumes – gains “a conspicuous eminence [...] by which the best and most essential parts of a gallant – good clothes, a proportionable leg, white hand, the Persian lock, and a tolerable beard – are perfectly revealed” (Cox and Kastan 284-5). This parading of one’s own personage while critiquing the actors could be a double-edged sword because by intruding into the playing space, the spectator could bring upon himself heaps of ridicule for his own performance from both audience and irritated actor.

After the Puritan years of the mid-seventeenth century in England, the upper classes were ready to return to a vibrant social life in which their privilege and status were appropriately recognized and appreciated. Life revolved around acceptable social roles. In the early Restoration period the strongest form of drama was the comedy of manners. The usual plot involved a set of clearly defined social types interacting with each other in a complicated dance of wit and sexual innuendo. Of these character types, two of the most easily recognizable were the fop and the rake. While these characters were based on real social types who could be found in just about any court circle in Europe, on the stage they took on magnificent proportions as they illustrated the two extremes of what would later be characterized as proper masculine behavior. A member of polite society sitting in the audience would have easily identified either of these types of men outside the theatre; as a member of the theatre audience, he or she would still be able to recognize them on the stage, partly because of their visual presentations.

Another type of dramatic character I will include in this study is the tragic hero. While rakes and fops paraded about the stage as clearly recognizable social stereotypes wearing contemporary clothing, the tragic hero was not so easily identified with a real-world counterpart. Part of this study will look at the way costuming styles helped identify these historical characters for an audience while maintaining a connection to the current fashion styles. Rakes and fops looked like people in the audience, but the great heroes were hardly contemporary fashion plates. In Fashion as Communication Malcom Barnard discusses the concept of anti-fashion, which is perfectly applicable to the tragic hero's costume. Anti-fashion is not subject to the fluctuations of social fashion; this is

specifically illustrated in Barnard's book by reference to royal coronation robes that seem to be a throwback to the costume of centuries past and bear little or no connection to contemporary fashion. They provide a link to the past, and perform as much a symbolic function in the crowning of a monarch as the words spoken and the ceremony observed in the process (15). At the dawning of the eighteenth century men's coats were narrowing, waistcoats (vests) were shortening, decoration was diminishing, and wigs were decreasing, but the tragic hero was still characterized by his standard costume, consisting of a hat with a profusion of plumes, stiffened coat skirts, and anachronistic thick, curly wig. While comedy concerns itself with contemporary manners, including clothes, old habits die slowly in the world of the tragedy; still, the tragic hero had to be seen as a man, and a very powerful specimen at that.

By beginning with these character types of the Restoration and analyzing their stage images as variations on the theme of masculine behavior and style, the dissertation will have a base from which to examine the subsequent changes in the masculine image as it developed further into the eighteenth century, along with corresponding changes in the drama as dictated by changing audience expectations. I will examine existing firsthand accounts of period productions, as well as visual records (often limited to idealized engravings, sketches, or theatrical portraits, but all useful nonetheless). The comparison of this theatrical representation with actual historical fashion information leads to a better understanding of how life mirrors art and art mirrors life.

Part of this dissertation will, therefore, be an examination of the emerging concept of masculinity as it developed from the mid-seventeenth century and on throughout the

eighteenth century – particularly in England – using male fashion and its stage costuming counterpart as a visual gauge of that development. These masculine fashion trends include those that demonstrate the outrageousness of clothing styles and include the fops and macaronis of the seventeenth and later eighteenth centuries, social types who were ridiculed for their excessive attention to clothing and manners and their subsequently questionable masculinity; however, as society embraced a more controlled view of masculine behavior, these trends and those who perpetuated them came to be looked upon as abnormalities, and a character possessing these behavioral traits was usually played for pure comic effect. Outside the theatre, men's fashion moved toward a cleaner, less ostentatious look, and theatre followed suit by changing the way it characterized masculine behavior on the stage and, therefore, how it costumed men on the stage. As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the Romantic movement influenced theatre with a revival of an idealized sense of love, duty, honor, and freedom. No doubt influenced by the heat and fervor of the French Revolution, masculinity took on a restrained flamboyance, which was reflected in the characters created by dramatists and visualized by actors through their costume choices.

In the development of masculine behavior, the late seventeenth century stands out as a prime starting point for a discussion of the social concept of appropriate conduct, and by extension, appropriate appearance of a man. Mark David Ensberg in Fashioning Men of Fashion: The Fop and the Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Masculinity identifies a creation he calls the Sober Gentleman of Merit, a social concept he claims replaced existing aristocratic ideals of masculinity. He claims that this creature evolved over the

course of 169 years, a time period roughly covering the same span of theatrical history that this dissertation will survey. Ensberg begins his study by pointing out two portraits, both of aristocratic gentlemen. One, the portrait of John Hay, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Tweeddale, was painted at the height of Charles II's reign in 1670, while the other, of Alfred, Count d'Orsay, a French nobleman who settled in England, dates from 1830. Simply by comparing their appearances, Ensberg notes a drastic difference in the physical embodiment of aristocracy and masculinity. Whereas the Marquess wears flamboyant, colorful, and highly decorated clothing, d'Orsay displays a restraint in his clothing that on the surface would belie his aristocratic nature.

In the span of just 169 years, the image of masculinity had undergone a radical change – from depicting privilege and emphasizing the exalted and separate sphere to which the Marquess belonged, to revealing a conformity with a new middle-class standard of modesty in masculinity exemplified in the portrait of d'Orsay. Both men would have been considered fashionably dressed and coiffured in their respective time periods. Both men would have been thought by their respective contemporaries to appear eminently masculine “men of fashion.” (Ensberg 2)

What Ensberg chose to do through a variety of literary paths, I chose to do by specifically focusing on theatrical paths. The path is clearly one of movement from aristocratic ideals and leadership to one of middle-class standards. Ensberg is astute in pointing out that portraiture charts this path well, for it is through the artwork of this period that we may observe the progression from flamboyance and obvious self-aggrandizement during the Restoration and Louis XIV eras to the more sober and much quieter elegance of the early nineteenth century. Both men Ensberg describes were among the most fashionable of their day, and his depiction of D'Orsay as a more sober,

less ostentatious figure makes clear the point that the heights of fashion had moderated over the years between the portraits.

What better character to observe first in this nearly century-and-a-half progression than the Restoration fop? Fops were men who dressed in the finest silks and satins from the Continent, men who felt compelled to carry the banner of masculine beauty. They appeared in nearly every court in Europe and, as a result, appeared on nearly every stage as comic characters. To portray the fop accurately, however, we must compare him to another masculine image, that of the rake. Rakes were equivalent to today's Hollywood leading men; handsome, gallant, brave, and very interested in the conquest of women, rakes showed less interest in ostentatious clothing, although they did take care to be meticulously dressed. Adding to the contrast will be the tragic hero, a purely theatrical type who actually mirrored the fop in his use of costume to draw immediate attention to himself and to separate himself from other characters in the play. Although the fop and rake would not be so out of place in a non-theatrical setting, the tragic hero would look quite ridiculous when taken out of his dramatic milieu, but in their own distinct ways these three character types clearly illustrate the expectations and influences that passed from their audiences onto their stages. Chapter Two will examine these three types and will also examine contemporary fashion trends to illustrate how stage costuming either mirrored them, rejected them, or bent them to suit theatrical purposes.

One of the difficulties of a study such as this is that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, there were few true theatrical costumers. Ballets and masquerades did sometimes boast costumes designed by a single person, usually the scenic artist himself, but most

theatres from the Renaissance to this time were left to their own devices in the costume realm. Commonly, actors would provide much of their own wardrobe, and theatres lucky enough to secure some form of royal patronage – such as Molière’s troupe under Louis XIV and the first two London theatres of the Restoration – could count on royal loans or cast-off clothing to supply their actors with some very fashionable items. For example, Charles II loaned Betterton, the leading actor of his day, his actual coronation suit (which reportedly cost £2,027 in 1661). The king’s brother followed that lead and loaned out his coronation costume, and the Earl of Oxford loaned his. This meant that Betterton’s actors were wearing what were very likely the most expensive costumes donned by actors up until that time; however, Diana de Marly mentions that Charles’s suit was hardly the height of fashion. In fact, it was a form of trunk hose and doublet (popular in the previous century), so it was actually an inadvertent attempt at historical costuming (Costume 35). There are several accounts of actors hiring tailors and dressmakers to create costumes specifically for them to wear, but without a single person serving as a theatrical costumer, documentation on costuming is sometimes hard to locate. Sketches of actors as they supposedly appeared in certain productions are available, but the reliability of such works is questionable.

Without the technological benefit of photography or videography we are limited in visual evidence of costuming from the Neoclassical and Restoration theatres. This poses the greatest challenge in this type of study. Ronald Vince, in Neoclassical Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook, points out that several works of art traditionally viewed as pictorial evidence of Restoration and eighteenth-century actors have very questionable

pedigrees. For example, one print that purports to show David Garrick in a theatre green room has been proven to be a re-interpretation of an Italian artist's drawing and is now thought to have no relation to Garrick or any English theatre (70).

Allardyce Nicoll in The Garrick Stage offers the following warning: "All that can be said with assurance is that the colourings serve to reflect in general the diverse and often startling hues displayed on the stage: the ordinary civil dress of the period was rich in tone, and the costumes worn by the actors are likely to have outdone the bright variety to be seen among the spectators in the house" (156).

Nicoll elaborates on the problems facing anyone who puts too much faith in these works of art. He says there are basically six concerns that must be considered:

- 1) There may be a lack of proof that an actor shown in a painting or engraving ever actually played that role.
- 2) Some illustrations may be deliberately misleading, as in the case of one purporting to show Nell Gwyn delivering a prologue but dated more than 100 years after she had lived and performed.
- 3) Some artworks show actors in plays that were never actually produced during the period in question, as in the case of a picture of Thomas Weston in Love's Labour's Lost, which was never produced in the eighteenth century. Another drawing shows Garrick as Demetrius in The Brothers in its 1777 edition, but the play had not been revived since its premiere in 1753.

- 4) Accuracy of the images is suspect considering the number of times the artists might have altered them between printings, or the number of times the actor might have changed his costume from one production to another.
- 5) Images might have been changed during repeated copying and reprinting by colorists and engravers. How original might our present copy be?
- 6) Some of the larger and more complex paintings seem to show more marks of the artist's imagination than actual theatrical practice. (145-156)

Nicoll ends his caveats by saying that these concerns are not valid arguments for disregarding the value of any piece of theatrical artwork; instead, an informed viewer may still see something of value in the work.

No doubt an imaginative painting can have no value as a direct piece of evidence; on the other hand, it may, on closer scrutiny, be found to derive its inspiration from a scene witnessed by the artist, revealing not what was present as a reality upon the stage, but the impression made upon the spectators by what they saw and heard. And, even if this quality is not present, the picture may have value in another way, since still further scrutiny may indicate that the particular artist's fancy itself influenced the costuming of later productions. (156)

In Pictures in the Garrick Club, a catalogue of the nearly one thousand theatrical portraits, scenes, and sculptures in London's famous theatrical gathering place, Geoffrey Ashton writes:

Contemporary fashion in both male and female dress was reproduced on the stage, but often using unusually bright colours and large quantities of braid, sequins, and other variegated glitter – all the better to create an

effect in the subdued and somewhat unsatisfactory lighting of the theatre. Theatrical portraits, therefore, often have a slight feeling of caricature about the costume, as well as the sitter's person. The heightened pose of gesture is paralleled by the heightened costume. (xxviii)

Further in his book, Ashton's descriptions of the original colors of the black and white reproductions illustrate more problems with assigning complete accuracy to any costume portrait. Several of the illustrations are different versions of the same pose (maybe a pencil sketch of an original oil painting), and while the costume may look basically the same in each version, occasionally his color descriptions vary. In one such instance, two illustrations of Charles Lee Lewes in the role of Bobadil from Every Man in His Humour varies in the color of his breeches (grey or buff), trunk hose (pink or purple), slashing (purple or pink) and his cloak (purple or pink with either grey or black lining) (233).

This then is the problem facing anyone who wants to see what the actors actually wore in their productions. In spite of this warning, Nicoll's opinion that such drawings or paintings can be useful is a valid one. Anything short of a purely photographic record is bound to contain at least some subjectivity on the part of the artist, but as long as the historian accepts this fact the examination of theatrical evidence may proceed.

In any case, actors who appeared in plays set in their own time were taking their costuming/character leads from contemporary fashion because the clothes they wore were, for the most part, street clothes that either belonged to them personally or had been donated by a wealthy patron. Some alterations would have been required to be sure, but a male actor in the theatre would surely have felt compelled to present his character

according to the most contemporary views of masculinity – or he might want to flout those views and use his costume to make a political or social statement.

### Divisions of the Study

From the initial discussion of the importance of clothing, and by extension, costuming for the stage, this dissertation will take a chronological approach to the topic of masculine imagery on stage. The chapters will cover the three basic divisions of the era – Restoration, eighteenth century, and early nineteenth century. This is, at best, a simple timeline, but as Robert D. Hume comments succinctly in The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, “The history of drama, closely considered, is infuriatingly untidy” (9).

Chapter Two will begin the study with the Restoration era, roughly 1660 through the very beginning of the eighteenth century. Theatrical historians debate how the Restoration period is best defined, and as Hume points out, there is hardly ever a clear point of distinction from one period of dramatic activity to another. Obviously, Restoration playwrights did not all die out in one year, and a new crop of sentimental playwrights did not spring up immediately to take their places. Given that this dissertation examines general social trends and the corresponding developments on the stages of the time, such a general outline should suffice.

The main focus of the chapter will be the portrayals of fops and rakes and the ideal man on the stage. It will include discussion of how fashion influenced the costume

choices made by actors of the day, as well as how French theatre under Louis XIV reflected the French attitude toward masculinity and the leadership of the Sun King.

Chapter Three will pick up the development of masculine stage imagery from 1700 and continue through roughly the end of the century. This chapter will include comparisons of the tragic costuming practices to comedic costuming trends to illustrate the fact that because comedy reflects ever-changing social mores and manners more than tragedy, the comedic costuming underwent more constant change during the century. Costumes seen in the tragedies changed more slowly because the subjects of the tragedies were seen as more enduring types which stand the test of time. The traditional costumes of these characters also changed little in nearly a century. Eventually, however, we will see how the scientific and artistic rediscovery of the ancient world, mixed liberally with a dose of revolutionary spirit, forced gradual changes in the imagery used to convey the grand character of the tragic hero.

This chapter will also examine the changing concept of masculine fashion style as it relates to the accompanying changes in the view of a proper masculine behavior. This aspect is of particular concern in illustrating the fop character, which undergoes a fairly abrupt alteration early in the century, as the character becomes more of a symbol of deviant or deficient masculinity than a mere comic representation of excessive behavior.

Chapter Four will end the study's timeline by examining the Romantic theatre and its influence on masculine stage imagery from the latter part of the eighteenth century through 1830. As Romantic literature and theatre evolved in the late eighteenth century, influenced as it was by philosophy and political changes on both sides of the Atlantic –

the two revolutions in America and France effected profound changes in social theory and practice – costuming adapted to accommodate the new sense of masculine style as the male fashion wheel turned sharply toward a celebration of the masculine form and away from the voluminous Restoration/Louis XIV silhouette that had actually obscured the shape.

The dissertation's conclusion will provide an overview of these changes and attempt to put them into a more compact perspective. As Douglas Russell says, "Dress or fashion thus serves the social system by acting as both an agent and as a symbol of changing social attitudes" (xii). The dissertation will endeavor to be a written mirror acting exercise: it becomes difficult to tell which side (fashion or theatre) is leading and which is following.

This study examines this meshing of masculine theatrical costuming and fashion during a period of great change across Europe. Political upheavals, social strife, and scientific discoveries, all of which affected both the man on the street and the man in the theatre, are important to create a complete picture of the era. We will see how these historical developments are reflected in the drama of the day, particularly in the visual style of male actors. Did they hold up a mirror to reality? If so, how much of the era's reality can we gleam from the evidence available? These are questions that may be impossible to answer completely, but this study will examine them to draw some conclusions about the two-way street that male fashion and costume traveled from 1660 to 1830.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RESTORATION:

### FOPS, RAKES, AND HEROES

It is a warm summer evening in 1676. We are standing outside the Drury Lane Theatre in London, awaiting entry to the latest comedy from Sir George Etherege. We have seen the playbills and heard reviews from acquaintances. We expect a full evening of entertainment, but we know full well that the entertainment will come not only from the stage. Depending upon where we sit, we expect to see members of all London social levels jostling for the best vantage point. Some want to see the play, but for others, seeing the play is actually a secondary benefit from a visit to the theatre. It is really an opportunity to be seen, to flaunt their latest suits or full powdered periwigs, to bask in the glow of public adoration, and to claim as much attention as possible for themselves. As Thomas Shadwell says succinctly in the opening scene of The Virtuoso: “Such as come drunk and screaming into a playhouse and stand upon the benches, and toss their full periwiggs and empty heads and with their shrill unbroken pipes, cry ‘Damn, this is a damn’d play. Prithee, let’s to a whore, Jack.’” (1.1.49-53)

In Audience, Playhouse and Play in Restoration Theatre, 1660-1710, Allan Botica refers to this passage as an example of how a playwright catalogues nearly every vice of young men, especially as it concerns their behavior in the theatre (254). Even Molière saw fit to ridicule such behavior in Les Fâcheux (1661) by attacking a man who enters a theatre late, shouts for a seat, sits where he blocks the view for most of the audience, and

then ruins the performance by gossiping loudly. These examples serve to illustrate the exhibitionist sense of seventeenth-century audiences and the sense that in these theatres, a give-take mentality governed both audience behavior and dramatic production.

Audiences competed with actors for attention in the verbal sense, to be sure, with lots of vocal interplay between individuals in the pit and actors struggling on the stage to continue the play. Such a theatre also serves as a prime example of this dissertation's main focus.

From 1660, the beginning of what we call Restoration Theatre (the return of the monarchy to England), through the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, English and continental theatre proved to be an influential factor in one particular social development: the portrayal of masculine behavior and most particularly the fashion/costume of masculinity. In this atmosphere in which the world outside the theatre's doors was often reflected in the dramatic action on the stage, the two most popular forms of drama were witty social comedy and lofty historical tragedy. In both forms, playwrights paid careful attention to their audiences' likes and dislikes, and they tried to give the audiences not mirror reflections of themselves but expanded, often extravagant interpretations of heroes, heroines, fops, rakes, antique ladies, and saucy servants. Within these interpretations lay kernels of truth with which the audience members might identify.

In any theatrical venue, the framing of the event is important in understanding the relationship between audience and actor, or maybe more appropriately in this sense, between spectator and object. The seventeenth-century French and English audiences

understood that they were in a theatre; from the production values and styles in use at the time, it is clear that total verisimilitude was not a goal. The theatre would have to wait nearly two more centuries for that to develop; however, the audience could see scenic backdrops and shutters painted with representations of either real or imagined settings that would permit some sense of reality. The theatre facility itself, however, would support the audience's sense of its own existence and importance, mainly because the lights were not extinguished during a performance, allowing at least the audience members down front the opportunity to show off to everyone else. The audience could say that what it was watching was not real but that it was at least representative of reality.

Adding to this sense of spectator-as-object, many British playwrights included references to the theatres of London in their plays, pointing out the audience's own behavior in dialogue – usually derogatory commentary, to be sure. As Botica points out, contemporary testimonials of actual audience behavior verify these dramatic references. He states, “The interdependence of audience and play within the playhouse is complete: audience behavior authenticates the plays; the plays, in turn, recognize the audience’s actions as legitimate imitations of stage actions” (261). This relationship meant that audience and actor shared the dramatic experience, a relationship that would be somewhat stifled later in the nineteenth century with the advent of realism and naturalism and the darkened auditoriums and devotion to realistic characters, settings, and actions. In Restoration theatre “no single controlling gaze regulated the space of performance,” writes Lisa Freeman, who continues to say, “The power of performance was routinely shared and exchanged between audience and performers” (5).

What then does this mean in terms of the give-and-take of image and fashion style? Sociological studies, such as Philip Carter's excellent Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800, Robert B. Shoemaker's Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres? and Elizabeth A. Foyster's Manhood in Early Modern England: Honor, Sex and Marriage track the evolution of a masculine image that attempted to clarify the distinction between men and women by defining polite behavior as practiced by true gentlemen of the eighteenth century. Although these books focus on the development of the British masculine image, it is clear that within the geographical and social confines of Western Europe, no single country's national identity – and most particularly those countries' identities of gender – developed in a vacuum. As political enemies and partners, England, France and, to some extent, Italy, have impacted and reflected each other's fashion sensibilities.

An important facet of maintaining a consistently appropriate behavior for a gentleman has been his personal sense of style. By beginning this dissertation in 1660, I focus on what was no doubt the high point in extravagant masculine couture – the fop. In France, Louis XIV was commanding his court at Versailles with a sense of extravagance and luxury hardly equaled before or since in Western culture. The decadent joy with which Louis and his courtiers embraced fashion would influence Englishmen when the British theatres were revived with a burst of French *joie de vivre*, thanks to the returning of Charles II to Britain from France. However, although Charles's initial fashion influence was generally accepted by his subjects, with time – and some negative political developments – French and, by extension Italian, style would become equated with the

image of degraded masculinity. Such negative attitudes would fuel changes within English society to create a distinctly English masculinity, which would be reflected in its theatre.

With their extreme fashion sense and effete mannerisms, Frenchified fops were easy to spot at both court and theatre (in the pit, as well as on the stage), but as the waning years of the seventeenth century suppressed the fluffiness of Charles II's French sartorial sensibility, the ideal man adopted a more sober style. The regimes of Charles II and James II, following the model of Louis XIV, associated their political leadership with their leadership in the world of fashion, particularly men's fashion, but once the leadership dynamic changed with the accession of William and Mary, this emphasis on high fashion began its slow evolution into the sartorial equivalent of political conservatism (Kuchta "Fashion" 56). The theatre reflected this gradual shift in the masculine ideal throughout the century as the increasing influence of middle-class audiences forced playwrights to change their offerings.

Although excitement over Restoration theatre often focuses on the fact that women made their first forays onto the English stage after 1660, this study focuses on the men and the visual representation of characters who either reflected or opposed the emerging masculine ideal. English simplicity had long opposed continental flashiness, and despite the relatively brief period of French influence imported by Charles II, once his brother James was ousted and the more sober Protestant sensibilities were re-asserted, men's clothing illustrated a restraint that continued throughout the eighteenth century. Actors throughout this period followed the lead of their audiences in terms of showing

themselves in public. Actors adjusted their costume practices to reflect an emerging sense of simplicity of design and the gradual reduction in slavish attention to theatrical tradition. The theatre could be considered a barometer for social change, while it also served as an agent of that change. Just as spectators of the period were careful to present the desired ideal when they ventured out in public, so too actors chose their wardrobes carefully for maximum positive effect. As Botica states, “The audience judged actors not only by the standards of dress set within the play, but by the standards set by the spectators around them” (292). Clothing, therefore, must be seen as an important element in the Restoration theatre, as Styan comments: “The clothes called such attention to themselves that they spoke eloquently of character and attitude as soon as the actor stepped on the stage, and the actor’s knowledge of how, or how not, to wear them provided a regular source of satirical comment in the dialogue” (Restoration Comedy 45).

An examination of actors’ costumes during this 170-year period helps to clarify how theatre functioned as the earliest of the mass media. In contemporary society, film, television, and print media have most influenced fashion trends. Not only does overt advertising tell us what we should wear; modern society is personality-centered. Peruse the shelves of any magazine seller and note how many covers feature celebrities and entertainers. Inside these covers, writers and photographers show us the latest styles of clothing, makeup, hair, and accessories. We are inundated with images of fashionable celebrities, from in-depth analyses of award show participants’ fashion choices to MTV videos featuring cutting-edge clothing. Where could the public look for fashion guidance 300 years ago? Of course, they would look to the same kinds of trendsetters; kings and

queens were at the top of the list, but with the re-opening of the English theatres in 1660 and the re-establishment of theatre-going as a socially acceptable activity, actors and actresses assumed a new role as fashion leaders. With this sense of fashion leadership, actors, whether consciously or subconsciously, also adopted a role of reflector of a public taste that was undergoing a noticeable change. Even when the costume worn by the actor was not historically accurate – as was usually the case in historical tragedies of this period – it reflected the attitude of the actor toward a projected masculinity, and that actor's attitude was influenced by a greater social sense of appropriateness and symbolism.

### The Theatrical Milieu of the Late Seventeenth Century

Before looking at the English theatre of the late 1600s, we should look across the English Channel to France, which had provided a home in exile for the British royal family during the Cromwell years. Charles II was exposed to the court of the most splendid and powerful ruler in Europe. Louis XIV was nicknamed the Sun King because his brilliance overshadowed all others at the time, and his court exemplified the highest standard to which all aristocrats aspired. This king controlled nearly every aspect of life at his court, including the theatre, which operated at the king's pleasure, as it would later in London under Charles II.

Louis XIV had inherited a theatrical legacy based heavily on Italianate principles. During the reign of Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu had promoted Italian ideals of writing

and scenic extravaganza, and this in turn had stressed Renaissance ideals of dramatic theory and production. Thanks to this influence, France became the home of Neoclassicism and produced some of the best-known tragedies of the era. This period also saw the popularization of opera in France (due mainly to the efforts of Richelieu's Italian successor, Cardinal Mazarin) as well as the continued development of ballet as both a dance form and a new form of spectacle. Louis XIV performed in these often lengthy works, and had a particular fondness for *comédies-ballets*, many of which were written by Molière and Jean-Baptiste Lully.

Most historians characterize the 1660s and 1670s in France as the best years for both tragedy and comedy. Pierre Corneille, his brother Thomas, and Jean Racine carried the banner for tragedy, while the master comic actor/playwright was Molière. Following the Neoclassical pattern already established, tragedies of the period took as their subjects the great myths and stories of ancient civilizations. Molière, on the other hand, moved away from the earlier emphasis on Roman and Greek comic models and shifted his comedies indoors to drawing rooms, while still paying homage to his commedia dell'arte roots with characters and situations based on that improvisational form. His characters are contemporary people dealing with contemporary social mores and deviations.

French and English theatre architecture illustrated the gradual stratification of the spectators from the egalitarian medieval audiences who crowded public squares to watch the latest morality play into more easily identifiable social groups sitting in various loges and boxes, paying different prices for different vantage points within the theatres. Such changes also became apparent in the dramatic material these audiences expected to

observe in the theatres. Moving away from the sacred and toward the secular, dramatists became more aware of practical limitations on time, place, and action. As Peter D. Arnott says in An Introduction to the French Theatre:

Aesthetically, and in terms of stage dynamics, the change is similar to what occurred in the English theatre when the open, fluid and scenically unrestricted Elizabethan stage gave way to the pictorialised representations of the Restoration and later. In France, the stage picture now became more localized and more realistic, aided by the advances in illusionistic false perspective inspired by Italian designers and increasingly available for study. [...] Spectators grew accustomed, at least in tragedy, to a succession of classically inspired palaces in which characters of high stature sought to resolve their problems. Even in comedy, upper-class houses or places of smart social resort provided the bulk of the settings. [...] On stage the actors, instead of being able to select and dictate their own environment by moving from one locale to another, were now confined within the environment which had been imposed upon them. (24-25)

This is an important point because it addresses the gradual emphasis on a more realistic stage picture, which in turn forces actors to consider how their own performances – including their physical appearances – match the more identifiable settings in both English and French theatres of the seventeenth century.

As part of the flowering of Neoclassical French tragedy during the century, playwrights chose to follow Aristotle's observation that the most appropriate characters for a tragedy were people of superior social status. This observation, they concluded, referred to kings and queens and other high-ranking members of the nobility. This emphasis also gave rise to the style of playwriting and acting that promoted overwhelming passions. Arnott discusses the dramaturgical problems this emphasis can create for modern actors and directors who try to present these Neoclassical tragedies in a more modern, physical style. A traditional performance of one of these plays, done in the

style of the seventeenth century, could be “an electrifying experience,” he says, owing to its verbal, rather than physical, power (65). Neoclassical rules of decorum would never have allowed an actor to subjugate the words to his on-stage actions. The importance of this point in terms of costuming will become clearer a little later in this chapter in the discussion of the tragic hero’s costume.

In 1660, from the ashes of the pre-Caroline theatre, there arose a new spirit of dramatic activity with the restoration of Charles II to the English throne. Theatre historians would be quick to point out here that dramatic activity had not died an absolute death during the Cromwell years, but it did appear to slip into a public coma. Actors, fearful of Puritan scorn, suddenly found themselves with no plays to play. As Oscar Brockett explains, a law from 1642 suspended public performances for five years, but as is often the case with laws, making public acting illegal did not extinguish it altogether. After the law expired in 1647, play-acting returned; it was shortlived, however, as a new law in 1649 designated all actors criminals, and most of the surviving Elizabethan playhouses were demolished. Acting continued surreptitiously until the restoration of the monarchy became imminent. Up to that point, Sir William Davenant’s musical/operatic entertainments had been the major theatrical activity in England because the Puritans had not outlawed that style of performance (233-34).

Once Charles II was ensconced as king, he re-issued two pre-civil-war theatre patents, one to Davenant and the other to Thomas Killigrew, another holdover playwright from Charles I’s reign. Killigrew renewed his leadership of the King’s Men, while Davenant took control of a new company sponsored by the king’s brother, James, Duke

of York. Now that Davenant and Killigrew had royal patents – and the accompanying royal patronage – they faced the problem of finding plays to perform. For a while they tried pre-civil-war plays, including works by Jonson, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher, but audiences had changed and they made new demands on the theatres. Shakespeare was admired, but his plays were altered to fit the new tastes, and eventually many of them proved to be too outdated for contemporary tastes. Heroic tragedy rose to take the pre-eminent place in English theatre, borrowing heavily from Spanish and French models; both of these countries had enjoyed this dramatic form for decades before the English latched onto it. The most commonly referenced dramatic form of this era, however, was the comedy of manners, similar in purpose to Molière's scintillating studies of the frailties of human behavior, but very different in tone. Within the theatrical framework, playwrights took as their subjects their audiences – their foibles, loves, vanities, vices, and virtues – and turned the mirror outward so that the audience might see itself placed on the pedestal of the stage.

A clearer understanding of this reflective principle is necessary to appreciate fully the profound influence that the audience had on drama and the influence that drama then had on the audience. Botica draws the conclusion that the theatrical and the real world were inextricably connected: that the upper-class society of the Restoration was innately theatrical, observing as many rules of proper conduct and style as would an actor of the day playing upon one of its stages. He states, “The close relationship between stage and street had become one of the cornerstones of Restoration dramatic practice” (267).

Part of this relationship is evidenced by the very architecture of the playhouses. Today's proscenium theatres reinforce a separation of audience and actor. We are used to sitting in a space in which all seats face the stage and which usually is darkened, allowing only the playing space on the stage to be illuminated. These design concepts direct our attention to the stage action and away from each other. Symbolically, we are told to stay in our seats, keep quiet, and pay attention to what is occurring on the stage in front of us. Restoration theatres were vastly different. Although the movement to indoor theatres allowed for more control of the illumination of the stage and audience, it was still impossible to darken the audience space completely; extinguishing and relighting hundreds of candles in chandeliers would have been impractical. This meant that the audience was basically as well-lit as the actors.

Another holdover of the Elizabethan playhouse was the large apron stage on which most of the action took place. The proscenium was a welcome innovation, to be sure, but it was used primarily to frame and display beautifully painted backgrounds. Acting still took place in front of the proscenium arch, only a few feet or sometimes inches from the audience. The placement of doors in front of the arch as entrances and exits for the actors again put them in close contact with the audience, who would be sitting in some cases directly beside or over the door. Spectators were also allowed to sit on the stage. This practice would fade in the next century, but for now it was a popular amusement for some of the vainer spectators who preferred to be part of the action on the stage. As the Tailor states in John Vanbrugh's The Relapse: "I hope, my lord, your lordship will please to own, I have brought your lordship as accomplished a suit of

clothes as ever peer of England trode the stage in, my lord" (1.3.31-34). Peers of England were not actors, but obviously they joined the actors on the stage, often becoming more entertaining than the play itself. In the third-day prologue to The Relapse, the actress Mrs. Verbruggen comments on the apparent readiness of the beaux of the pit to take the stage in their attempts to impress the ladies in the side-boxes:

Before the play's half ended, I'll engage  
To show you beaux come crowding on the stage,  
Who with so little pains have always sped,  
They'll undertake to look a lady dead.  
How I have shook, and with trembling stood with awe,  
When, behind the scenes, I've seen 'em draw –  
A comb (that dead-doing weapon to the heart,)  
And turn each powdered hair into a dart.  
When I have seen 'em sally on the stage,  
Dressed to the war, and ready to engage, [.]  
They'll show you twenty thousand airs and graces,  
They'll entertain you with their soft grimaces,  
Their snuff-box, awkward bows, and ugly faces.  
In short, they're after all so much your friends  
That, lest the play should fail the author's ends,  
They have resolved to make you some amends.  
Between each act, (performed by nicest rules,)  
They'll treat you – with an interlude of fools;  
Of which, that you may have the deeper sense,  
The entertainment's at their own expense. (20-29, 36-45)

William Wycherley, author of two of the best-remembered plays of the period, The Country Wife and The Plain Dealer, made explicit reference in The Plain Dealer preface (1676) to the apparent attitude of the spectators to plays. Here he speaks directly to the loud-mouthed and obviously opinionated pit-dwellers:

Next you, the fine, loud gentlemen o' th' pit,  
Who damn all plays, yet, if y'ave any wit,  
'Tis but what you here sponge and daily get – [.]  
Now, you shrewd judges, who the boxes sway,  
Leading the ladies' hearts and sense astray,

And, for their sakes, see all, and hear no play –  
Correct your cravats, foretops, lock behind;  
The dress and breeding of the play ne'er mind [ . . . ]. (11-13, 19-23)

This give-and-take relationship is further strengthened in the many references in the actual texts of the plays to theatre attendance and the behavior of people at a theatrical performance – the play within a play, so to speak. For example, in The Relapse Loveless tells his wife, Amanda, that he was distracted at a play the previous night by a lovely woman sitting nearby, but he was further distracted when he noticed a character in the play which he believed represented himself. Numerous prefaces to the comedies make reference to taking the audience members as models for characters on the stage.

Thomas Shadwell even sets one scene of his 1678 comedy A True Widow in a playhouse and satirizes the conduct of audience members who are apparently relatively unconcerned about the play they are about to see but instead focus on more social aspects of playhouse behavior. In this scene once the actors do actually begin the “play,” the spectators pay attention for a few minutes, lose themselves in personal comments about the action and actors, and then begin a swordfight in the pit, which frightens one actress so badly that she swoons and the play is stopped. Edward Langhans sums up this attitude to the theatre by saying:

For many Restoration spectators, theatre was a game, like the games played out in so many plays of the period, and patrons enjoyed watching these imitations of immorality that were comfortably (or uncomfortably) like the game of life they played themselves. How frequently spectators disrupted performances we cannot tell, but the conventions of playgoing and performing in the 1600s provided ample opportunities for the fops and ruffians to misbehave, especially if a play was poor enough not to warrant polite attention in the first place. In a period when characters frequently spoke lines to the audience, it should not be surprising if the audience talked back. (15)

## Clearer Gender Identity Evolves

### From New Assumptions

When asked what differentiates man from woman, most people would probably first mention the obvious physical differences. Although some men and women are either subconsciously or purposefully androgynous, it is easiest to start with the anatomical facets of gender identification. However, prior to the eighteenth century, according to Foyster, such a distinction was not so universally understood. Naturally people knew men and women were constructed somewhat differently, but she says men of the period saw the difference as humour-based, following the then-popular theory of the four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Heat and moisture, as determined by the relative strength of these four elements, made all the difference. Men were hot and dry, while women were cold and moist. Foyster states that because women were colder, their penises and scrotums were “inverted inside their bodies as the uterus and the womb. [ . . . ] Men and women, according to this line of thinking, were not different, rather the female body was an inferior or imperfect version of the male” (28). She goes on to say that because men thought themselves to be of basically the same physiological design as women, their gender identities had to be constructed socially rather than biologically, with reason and strength being assigned as dominant male characteristics (29).

This line of thought fits neatly into the discussion of fashion because it illustrates the male concern about masculine versus feminine behavior. To display feminine behavior would negate the man’s honor and reputation as a gentleman. Because manhood was not considered simply a biological given, it had to be acquired socially and reflected

in the man's social interactions. Excessive attention to one's clothing and appearance fit the feminine character, so that any man who displayed this characteristic laid his masculinity open to question. Carter sums up this problem by saying:

The predominant image of late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fops [ . . . ] was of figures whose fascination in dress undermined manliness, resulting in the very effeminacy gallants dressed up (or down) to avoid. [ . . . ] What was commonly regarded as women's natural predilection for vanity was deemed unacceptable among men. (143-44)

What immediately distinguished the Restoration era fop from every other character either on the stage or in the audience was his appearance: flashy, beribboned, and laced to the gills, and crowned with an abundant wig that Lord Foppington in John Vanbrugh's The Relapse explains thusly: "Far [sic] a periwig to a man should be like a mask to a woman – nothing should be seen but his eyes" (1.3.120-122). The fop posed and flaunted his obvious superiority in sartorial matters. He might have drawn massive criticism from other characters who saw through his idiocy, but he knew for himself that his style was the goal to which all others should aspire.

Carter continues his examination of the fop's questionable manliness by discussing several historians' opinions that the public began to equate the fop's effeminate behavior with sodomy, which in turn gave birth to the concept of a full-fledged homosexual male. Sodomy was, of course, a well-known and generally detested crime, but until the late seventeenth century, homosexuality as a social/psychological concept did not exist. Carter makes a clear distinction between this portrait of the fop as a sexual deviant (or sodomite, in the terms of the day) and the fop as a social fool. Carter settles clearly with the social fool type and not the sexual. After all, in the comedies,

there are no hints of fops entertaining sexual dalliances with other male characters. On the contrary, fops are ardent – if ineffectual – lovers of women. They pursue heterosexual love, forever declaring their desire for unresponsive ladies, which Carter points out must have been for the ladies a welcome respite from the animalistic advances of the rakes and gallants (146). It is obvious from most of the plays that the fops seek the company of women because they believe the women provide convenient mirrors to reflect their own vanities. Everything the fop does is designed to impress the lady, and while the fops are quite proficient in the outward machinations of romance, their actions are seldom rewarded with a lady's affection.

The comic attraction of the fop began as a way of criticizing a purely social character type – the man who simply tried too hard to fit into society's ever-expanding rules of polite behavior; but throughout his book Carter describes a society that was, during the early years of the eighteenth century, redefining what it meant to be a man within what he calls polite society. Slowly but surely, these new ideas of appropriate masculine behavior colored the audience's perception of the fop. The rising middle class affected this perception immeasurably, prompted by the political ramifications of the Glorious Revolution (1688-89) and the subsequent ascension of William and Mary to the English thrones. The new monarchs promoted a less ostentatious lifestyle, tempered by their Protestant convictions, and as England continued to prosper through the growth of its overseas empire, increased trade pushed the merchant class into a more powerful position from which to exert its sobering influence. This new class of citizen – and by extension a new class of audience member – was no longer content to see the fop as a

mere fool to be ridiculed for his generally harmless attempts to impress other characters with his clothes, wit, and style. These audiences began to apply their new sense of masculine appropriateness to this character type, which was already classified and condemned as a social misfit. Now the public had even more reason to criticize the fop and more reason to heap disdain on anyone outside the theatre who even faintly resembled him.

The introduction to this study stressed the importance of outward appearance as an indicator of social status, as well as self-image. Clothing immediately telegraphs the wearer's attitudes toward the prevailing social mores and, as we have discussed, more importantly to the prevailing gender expectations. Much has been written about gender assignment through what would be considered appropriate clothing; parents have been warned about confusing children by dressing them in clothing that does not follow clear lines of socially accepted gender identification. Lawrence Langner prophesizes that parents who do not wear clearly gender-specific clothing will be responsible for later sexual identity problems in their children, specifically homosexual tendencies (65).

Considering the issue of clothing as signifier from the viewer's perspective, we can see why ambiguous fashion choices have long evoked harsh criticism. Mark Breitenberg points out that as early modern England developed a more unified system of gender identification, affronts to conventional gender roles, as identified by clothing choices, became more and more important in identifying the emerging sense of masculinity. Breitenberg specifically addresses the issue of women wearing men's clothing by stating that men could become quite defensive when they saw women

appropriating their masculine clothing items, thereby upsetting the “natural, God-given or anatomical difference” between men and women (150). This argument, however, can logically be reversed to include men who adopted feminine qualities. By combining apparel and language as important codes to signify gender, Breitenberg’s argument may be used to accuse dandies and fops of gender ambiguity. Demonstrations of such unclear gender-specific behavior had become a serious social concern in the late seventeenth century.

As we have seen in a number of texts, highly rhetorical language is linked to the “feminine” for its capacity to mislead and misrepresent. The effeminate courtier, for example was doubly guilty of gender ambiguity for wearing French fashions and for his smooth, honey-tongued phrases. Like apparel, language offers a code for self-representation in which “correct” self-identification sustains and guarantees gender differentiation. But the capacity for using the code to confuse this differentiation is an intrinsic part of the code itself – if apparel names identity it can also misname it. (152)

Although this study does not concern itself with cross-dressing *per se*, the concern does become relevant when one looks at the styles of fashion in the latter half of the seventeenth century. As an example, actor Simon Callow, in his book Acting in Restoration Comedy, states that a contemporary actor faces a particular problem in playing a fop role: How does a twenty-first-century actor play an extravagant fop in full curly wig, billowing coat skirts, and a ton of ribbons, bows, and laces without looking like the epitome of effeminacy (51-52)? We can naturally expect that fashion and manners have changed drastically in the last 330 years, so that such a character would symbolize a different type of man in today’s world, but this study concerns itself with the fact that well before these 330 years had passed, such a change was already in progress.

Outside the walls of the theatres of Restoration London, this change was manifesting itself in the image of the gentleman.

As mentioned previously, once Charles II returned to the throne, the aristocracy eagerly adopted the fashionable styles of France as directed by their new monarch. Although the post-civil war Puritan government had discouraged flashy clothing, it never passed any sumptuary laws dictating fashion do's and don't's. The black clothing so commonly connected to the Puritans was popular but not *de rigueur* for everyone. Toward the end of the 1650s French influence began appearing in details such as exposing more of the shirt, shortening of the doublet, and wearing of fluffy petticoat breeches, not to mention the addition of multitudes of ribbons. John Evelyn complained in Tyrannus or The Mode in 1661 that one young fashionable fellow he observed wore enough ribbons to fill six shops and resembled a Maypole. De Marly further states that although Evelyn asked the king to reform men's clothing, Charles apparently had no such inclination: "After the poverty of exile Charles II was delighted to have money to spend on fanciful clothes, and as Louis XIV was his cousin he did not wish to be put in the shade by the Bourbon branch of the family" (Fashion 53-55). Petticoat breeches had grown to exorbitant widths, accompanied by high-heeled shoes (with the heels painted red for emphasis), which de Marly says was a French fad because Louis's brother was short and needed a boost (Fashion 55). At the other end, men became enamored of periwigs, full and curly, another import from France where they had been available since the mid-1650s. Wigs were tall, sometimes adding several inches to a man's height, and expensive, and they became a clear indication of social rank because only a man of

wealth could afford to buy a good one. The coat had already reappeared over the doublet, but Charles asserted his own fashion sense when he decided to elongate the doublet into the waistcoat or vest. As the petticoat breeches disappeared (they would be invisible under these new long vests and coats), the basic three-piece English suit was born – coat, vest, and narrower breeches or pantaloons.

De Marly says the French court was not pleased with these fashion trends across the Channel and that the French disdain actually increased the new clothing's popularity in England itself: "The fact that it annoyed the French court ensured the success of the vest (waistcoat) in Britain where it quickly became a gesture of national defiance; vests were anti-French and anti-Catholic" (Fashion 57). Although this new suit featured cleaner lines and less ostentation than the French originals, decoration refused to die out altogether. Lace and wigs lived on for a while longer, but their days were numbered by the political changes that followed Charles II's reign and that of his brother James II.

After the Catholic James was deposed in 1688, his daughter and son-in-law, William and Mary, brought a Protestant sensibility to the throne. Neither paid much attention to issues of fashion, and they also followed through on a threatened ban of imported French fabrics. With a less aristocratic attitude and more sober spiritual nature, the English monarchy placed far less emphasis on elaborate dress and more on Protestant restraint. As Kuchta writes: "When the Glorious Revolution transferred power from James II to William and Mary [...] it expelled a political culture of conspicuous consumption and installed a new regime which embraced the opposition principles of modest masculinity" (Three-Piece Suit 93).

While King Louis was enforcing his control over the nobles by requiring their installation at Versailles with its glittering, fashionable court life, which required constant attention to one's wardrobe, English aristocrats continued to develop a quieter sense of fashion. De Marly recounts a story of the English Duke of Bolton being pushed off the sidewalk by another duke's liveryman because Bolton was wearing a plain coat and simple wig and was, therefore, not identifiable as a nobleman (*Fashion* 59). This demonstration of restraint is the beginning of a development Flugel will later call "The Great Masculine Renunciation" toward the end of the eighteenth century, in which men reject elaborate dress and choose simple and more uniform fashion styles. Kuchta makes this connection in his essay on masculine clothing and class by saying that it is at this point in history when men's and women's concerns for decorative clothing show the first hints of divergence into different evolutionary paths, although elements of the aristocratic passion for fashion persisted well into the eighteenth century: "Promoters of this new male modesty criticized the court's conspicuous consumption in masculinist terms – and thus tended to see modesty as a particularly masculine activity" ("Making" 60).

What this emphasis on clothing and appearance tells us about men of the late seventeenth century is simple: generally men wanted to be seen, observed, and desired. Whether it was by women in a sexual context or by other men in a sort of imitative context, they obviously took great care in making their fashion decisions. Malcolm Barnard says that the penchant for silk stockings, curly wigs, cosmetics, and petticoat breeches reverses the current theory of what he describes as active/male and passive/female roles in the gaze. According to this train of thought, men are supposed to

be lookers, deriving satisfaction from observing women; women, in turn, are passive objects of that observation; but when men pay an inordinate amount of attention to their appearances, as they were doing in the late seventeenth century, that theory is turned upside down: “Wearing things like this would seem to mark men out as pre-eminently exhibitionist, at least as much as women. If this is the case, then, the active/male and passive/female distinctions must also come into question, and one must ask how ‘traditional’ these roles are” (Barnard 115).

This exhibitionist tendency and the connection with a traditionally feminine role fueled the condemnation of elaborate clothing. This in turn led to charges of effeminacy and anti-British sentiment, since extravagant fashion was equated with Catholic France. One of the worst insults one Englishman could hurl at another was to call him a “French dog” or some other Francophobic epithet as a reflection of his Continental appearance. Therefore, France was equated with effeminacy and weakness, and an Englishman who paid too much attention to his clothes was ripe for ridicule, which we shall see when we look at the plays of the English Restoration. It was part and parcel of the satire of the plays to ridicule such Frenchified fops. Amanda in The Relapse seems to be voicing this opinion when she says: “Besides the town would be robbed of one of its chief diversions, if it should become a crime to laugh at a fool” (2.1.189-191).

Opposing the fop was the rake, also known as the gallant and later as the beau. Usually a man of high social standing – at least he never seemed to work for a living – the rake represented a more subtle interpretation of the masculine ideal. His goal was the conquest of one or more of the play’s female characters, and his approach is naturally

more predatory than the fop's. The fop wanted to be seen for the sheer fun of being seen, while the rake had less interest in a full frontal assault. Although the rake wore more conservative clothing and exhibited more subtle mannerisms to attract his prey, he differed from the fop mainly in his attitude toward clothing manners. There was no doubt that a rake was concerned about his appearance and certainly didn't want to be seen wearing anything unfashionable, but he made less noise about these issues than did the fop. Dorimant from George Etherege's The Man of Mode typifies this approach to style in that, while he tells his valet that he prefers to be well-dressed, he does not exhibit the excessive preoccupation with clothing we see in his foil in the play, Sir Fopling Flutter. As Carter explains, "[...] the gallant was prepared to be seen in states of undress, used clothing to impress and seduce women, and despite being eager to look modish, rarely entered into detailed discussions about the quality of particular fabrics" (144).

So if the fop was to be criticized for his extravagance, the rake or gallant was to be praised for his restraint – at least in his clothing choices. Rakes, like fops, populated both stage and pit, but the rake would be harder to spot in a crowd. He was just as eager in love as the fop, but his goal was total seduction and usually multiple seductions. Etherege's play provides a succinct but complete snapshot of the rake as Dorimant dresses for the day's activities. During the scene, his servant notes that his master is obviously proud of the perfect fit of his clothes, and the rake responds, "I love to be well dressed, sir, and think it no scandal to my understanding" (1.1.393-394). He then declares he will not wear cologne because he thinks his personal aroma will be "no offence to the ladies" (1.1.397-398). Whereas Sir Fopling brags about his own best qualities as the ideal

gentleman, Dorimant is content with his own opinion of his fashion sense and seems to be much less concerned about other people's opinions of his clothing. He accepts a compliment from Young Bellair concerning his fashionable suit, but does so modestly. The rake was conscious of his appearance, but he did not let such concerns rule his passions.

Styan analyzes the Dorimant morning *levée* scene for clues to ways in which the element of costume reflects the character of the rake. Fresh from his bed, Dorimant dresses for the day, but a servant interrupts this morning ritual with a pathetic letter from one of Dorimant's female conquests in which she begs for his attention and a little money to attend the theatre. He ignores her pleas and actually laughs about the whole situation as he nonchalantly gets dressed. The entire scene, Styan says, is a perfectly compact portrait of the rake:

The little piddling details of dressing have been going on throughout the act, and not much seems to have been accomplished for twenty minutes' playing time. Yet the endless background chatter is not merely there to accompany the ritual of dressing; it is the ritual of dressing that dominates the chatter, with the comic effect of reducing Dorimant's management of his women for his pleasure to the level of putting on his clothes. The image of the egotistical lover planning his amours of the day is set in piquant counterpoint with the manner of his fussing with his clothes. Thus costume comments on character in a richly theatrical way, and the fine clothing with which Dorimant exhibits himself signals his preposterously selfish attitude to life. (Restoration Comedy 59)

We can take it as another hint at the difference between these two character types that in most plays containing a flamboyant fop, such as Sir Fopling or Lord Foppington, the playwrights include at least one lengthy discussion of the fop's costuming, but in the

case of the rakes/gallants, we see no such detailed descriptions. Obviously the fop's costume was more important to note than the rake's.

In either case, properly wearing clothes constituted a major portion of a gentleman's reputation during the Restoration period. Actors were, after all, gentlemen who wanted to be seen in the best light, so their choices in stage costume reflected the accepted standards for socially prominent men. Styan catalogs many of the sartorial concerns for either Restoration rake or fop; the main difference between them would be mainly in degree. He says the clothing made certain demands on the gentleman's behavior, posture, and attitude:

His wig insisted that he hold his head high at all times; the lace on his sleeves required him to hold his arms away from his body, and toying with his cane or flourishing his handkerchief gave his hands thus poised something to do; the weight of his coat required a swinging stride that came close to a swagger, or, with the shorter steps of a fop, a mincing walk. He would have to sit forward on his chair, carefully balancing, but never crossing, his legs, and making no violent movement which might strain his breeches. [ . . . ] All in all, a Restoration gentleman had to know how to wear his clothes, and not let them wear him. (Restoration Comedy 65-66)

Hats, ostensibly designed to cover the head, were usually carried under one arm, devoid of their original purpose. Styan adds that gentlemen did this "not daring to convert 'em to their intended use, lest it should put the foretops of their wigs into some disorder" (Restoration Comedy 64).

From the era of the fop and rake, the public began making increasingly direct connections between clothing and gender. That is not to say that society had not done this in previous centuries; naturally it always had associated certain styles with men and certain styles with women, but fashion rarely took on such a symbolic role in such a

broad social evolution as it did in the 170-year period covered in this study. At the height of Charles II's reign, men adopted the traditionally feminine attributes of laces, flowers, bows, and other decorative elements. Men's attire actually exceeded women's in terms of decoration and impracticality. The man's coat featured skirts that billowed to outrageous extremes, his pants puffed widely from side to side, his hat sported massive plaumes, and his neckcloth flounced in cascades of lace. He was a sight to behold, obviously, but this was a costume that overstated the point that this individual did not need to work for a living, that his movements would be slow and leisurely, and that posing was his main concern, not lifting, carrying, or using his arms for practical work. Alison Lurie writes, "Such clothes proclaimed, indeed demanded, an unproductive life and the constant assistance of servants" (139).

Male and female clothing began to diverge more than ever before as society tried to make sure that men and women could be differentiated immediately. Langner states this attitude forcefully:

The history of civilization has many examples of great nations which became effeminate and were destroyed by more virile but less civilized races which conquered and overran them. In all such effeminacy, clothes played a leading role. Thus the wisdom of the ages, which is on the side of sex differentiation in clothes, is based on realities of which most of us do not actually become aware in the short experience of our life span. (67)

Apparently eighteenth-century society was becoming aware of that attitude, and it made every effort to make men and women as different as possible. Langner further states that the male's greatest goal in creating different clothing for each sex is to illustrate his superiority over the female, and that this obviously was becoming increasingly difficult to do when men's and women's clothing had become so similar in

style. Because the middle class did not hold to the same principles of conspicuous leisure and consumption, men's clothing evolved to exhibit a more practical and distinctly masculine style. Anne Hollander points to an event of 1675 as the moment when men's and women's clothes began to diverge. In that year, she says, a group of French seamstresses asked Louis XIV for permission to create a female tailors' guild for the making of women's clothes. Hollander claims this marked the split between respectable clothing for men and frivolous fashion for women, although the full blossoming of this development would take another 125 years to become most observable:

The moment marked the beginning of a fundamental divergence in the clothes of the two sexes that affected the whole eighteenth century, reached an extreme in the nineteenth, and still persists. And from it also began the unique and remarkable development of the modern masculine suit with its distinctive abstract looks, which were so much at odds with all the women's clothing designed during the suit's long ascendancy. (66)

From the teachings of France's John Calvin and Germany's Martin Luther arose Protestantism. Because these new religious teachings emphasized individualism and de-emphasized the authority of the Catholic Church in Rome, they promoted lower- and middle-class values. Members of these classes had always worn darker clothing, because more colorful clothing had for centuries been the legal right of the aristocracy (thanks to sumptuary laws that prohibited members of lower classes from wearing certain colors and/or rich fabrics and trimmings), because such fabrics were out of their economic reach, and lastly because they were impractical as clothing for a working man (as dark colors more easily hide wear and tear, as well as stains).

Carter cites several comments from Addison and Steele's The Spectator concerning clothing, but he qualifies their comments by pointing out that these two astute

social observers were not interested so often in specifics, but rather in what Carter calls the ethos of polite behavior, including the polite man's clothing choices. Carter focuses on the developing standards of polite society, so The Spectator's emphasis on neatness and presentability are most important to his study. The paper's city correspondents often compared city fashions to those of the country, a comparison often used to great comic effect in the plays of the time. Within these comments, Carter states, the correspondents clearly supported the "superiority of urban styles of comfortable, informal clothing which, by permitting unselfconscious and relaxed movement, served practically and metaphorically as a means to acquire a superior brand of easy and polite sociability" (62). This illustrates the beginnings of change in masculine style from ostentatious display to an acceptance of social limits on fashionable excess. Clearly, the fussily dressed fop had been swept out the door of polite society.

Men who wanted to be counted among the most gentlemanly of gentlemen were learning that while outward appearances set the tone for their acceptance or rejection in social circles, an important corollary to that concern was an alteration in their behavioral patterns. Carter discusses the apparent disagreement among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists of this polite society about the emphasis being placed on external manner. Historically, Carter says, the criticism of excessive affectation was leveled at the Puritan leaders during the Cromwell years and consisted of accusations that these religious leaders sought a "Godly synthesis of manners and morality" which their Cavalier critics thought the height of hypocrisy. He states that while the later critics of the 1700s might seem to agree that external manners could be the most obvious indication of

a true gentleman, such arguments are probably best seen not as a decline in the argument for true internal motivation for behavior but rather as “undergoing redefinition, from that earlier equation with religious hypocrisy to new preoccupations such as the effects of men’s foreign travel to French and Italian centers of ostentatious, and hence false, refinement” (127).

In England in 1660, Charles II had brought a French sensibility, particularly evident in his sartorial choices, but there was obviously no love lost between the French and English for the rest of the century and on into the next. Despite this Anglo-French rift, it still became necessary for a young man who wished to be well-educated to tour the Continent, where he could observe the best that European civilization had to offer. Travels to France and Italy were *de rigueur* for such budding aristocrats, and it was this emphasis on the perceived superiority of Continental life and manners that helped drive an even greater social wedge between the aristocracy and the middle classes, who saw little practical use in such frivolous adventuring. In one pre-Restoration play, The Late Lancashire Witches from 1634, the playwrights Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome offer an early criticism of such travel abroad. One of its characters, Sir Edward, sounds a patriotic note when he condemns those Englishmen who, upon returning from a trip abroad, apparently choose to ignore their own natures: “I reverence the memory of ‘em: But our new-fashion’d gentry love the French too well to fight against ‘em; they are bred abroad without knowing anything of our Constitution and come home tainted with Foppery, slavish principles, and Popish religion” (quoted in Owen 191).

The political divisions between France and England were personified in this English demonization of French and Italian manners and styles, which would appear later in the eighteenth century in satirical treatments of the macaronis (who rejected the growing simplicity in men's clothing and wore outrageously tall wigs, carried tiny hats, and revived the bows and ribbons of the previous century) and national concerns over the French Revolution.

Kuchta says that these fops and macaronis seem to receive an inordinate amount of attention from both their contemporary critics and fashion historians but this is merely because they served as such obvious exceptions to the new fashion rules.

The contemporary attention to these sartorial extravagances demonstrates not their cultural preeminence, but the contrary: they were objects of rapt attention precisely because they scandalized, and thus confirmed, the dominant culture. Fops abound in eighteenth-century literature, for example, but their dramatic function is more one of deplored foil than of admired protagonist. In the new aristocratic culture that emerged after the Glorious Revolution, the overdressed male played the role of social foil; renunciation of luxury was central, and it marked elite men off from social upstarts, from the effeminate French, and from women. (Three-Piece Suit 124)

#### Actors Make Costumes Choices

#### for Contemporary Expectations

With a better understanding of what was happening outside the walls of the theatres, now we may enter the theatre itself and examine stage costume to see how it coincided with these larger social concerns. As mentioned earlier, the two dominant forms of drama in the late seventeenth century were heroic tragedy and comedy of manners, and because they differed greatly in subject and convention, each developed its

own costume style. By looking at evidence from the plays themselves and at surviving art from the period, we can draw some conclusions about what the actors of the day chose to wear and what effect those choices had upon the drama itself.

One of the more interesting and overtly theatrical elements of theatre production concerns the traditional costume of the tragic hero. This costume was the product of many decades of dramatic theory and artistic interpretation, combined with the practical concerns of the actor's personal preferences. Most tragedies were based on classical Greek and Roman subjects such as myths, legends, and some historical personages. In Shakespeare's theatre there had been little attempt at historically accurate costuming, even for plays set centuries earlier. Actors might attempt some element of period style in a costume, maybe a drape for a Roman senator, but most plays were performed in contemporary clothing.

Beginning in France with the rise of heroic tragedy in the early seventeenth century, there also arose an attempt to recapture the glory of the Greek and Roman characters now routinely borrowed for the tragedies. As a result of the Renaissance interest in archeology and art, statues and frescoes gave some clues to the clothing of the ancients, but we must remember that historical accuracy was not a clear goal. Just as the legends and myths borrowed for the new plays were altered and presented from a seventeenth-century mindset, so would costuming be adapted in accordance with contemporary fashion rules. Obviously, the hero needed to look heroic. This meant his costume would be the most extravagant on the stage so that everyone in the audience

would be clear about who was who. Over the early decades of the century a form of conventional hero's costume developed which was to last well into the next century.

Roman costume was imperial and powerful, and it was the most appropriate for illustrating to a seventeenth-century audience a character's power and high status. (Napoleon would revive this train of thought a hundred years later and have himself painted as a classical emperor complete with laurel wreaths on his head.) Because the Neoclassical rules of drama required that attention be given to proper decorum, the tragic hero had to appear more glorious than any other character. Certain elements of the imperial costume became standard, and audiences came to expect to see their heroes appropriately arrayed in the contemporary interpretation of Rome. Armor was definitely heroic and supplied the necessary martial flavor, so it became a standard element of the *habit à la romaine* in France and later in England, where it was simply called a Roman "shape" (another term for costume). Traditional Roman military garb consisted of chest-covering armor worn over a short tunic with a skirt of metal-tipped tabs of leather hanging to just above the knee. One drawing of an Inigo Jones costume for a 1611 masque shows the Prince of Wales as Oberon wearing not a fairy costume but a Roman warrior's costume. The costume's accuracy is suspended slightly, however, in that the prince wears mid-thigh-length trunk hose striped to resemble the Roman leather overskirt (De Marly Costume 10). This is an example of compromise between the real and the socially acceptable.

Later in the century the *habit à la romaine* took the skirt to a new level by pouffing it outward until it most resembled a woman's skirt, only shorter. This was not

unreasonable when one looks at the typical man's coat of the period with its stiffly wired tails radiating out around the wearer's hips. This paralleled the trend for wider hoops under women's skirts, a contemporary fashion development that had also found its way onto the stage. Men had to compete for attention on stage, so size did matter.

For headgear, the hero wore plumes of ostrich feathers, very expensive items, with the most plumes going to the leading man and lower ranks of characters taking fewer and fewer plumes to indicate their relative importance. Lily Campbell attributes the fad for feathers to Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2, in which Hamlet asks if a "forest of feathers" would help him gain membership in the acting troupe (109). James Laver, on the other hand, traces the plume craze to Florentine operatic productions of the early seventeenth century, as seen in the costume designs of Stefano della Bella, who later went to France to design for the court (Costume 121). In any case, such plumage, while not historically supported as true Roman headgear, did offer a bit of dramatic spectacle: "The one essential for a tragic hero was feathers on his head, for these would quiver very effectively in scenes of 'rant'" (Londré 25). De Marly quotes journalist and critic John Addison, who gave an especially witty criticism of such high headpieces:

The ordinary method of making an hero, is to clap a huge plume of feathers upon his head, which rises so very high, that there is often a greater length from his chin to the top of his head, than to the sole of his foot. One would believe, that we thought a great man and a tall man the same thing. This very much embarrasses the actor, who is forced to hold his neck extremely stiff and steady all the while he speaks; and, notwithstanding any anxieties which he pretends for his mistress, his country, or his friends, one may see by his action, that his greatest care and concern is to keep the plume of feathers from falling off his head. (21)



For most of the eighteenth century, Roman “shapes” consisted of stiffened or hooped skirts, long cuffed sleeves, contemporary wigs, and plumed helmets. Short breeches were worn for modesty’s sake. The Roman Father (above) from 1750 featured Spanger Barry (center) in such a costume, while David Garrick (to his right) wore a more relaxed version. James Quin (left) offered another version of the “shape” as Coriolanus from 1749. (Folger Shakespeare Library and Harvard Theatre Collection)

One engraving of a performance by Molière in the role of Sosia shows another actor playing Jupiter – a grand character to be sure – wearing the typical *habit à la romaine*. His tunic boasts heavily brocaded skirts that flare from the waist; the typical ruffled shirtsleeves peek from underneath his shorter tunic sleeves; a lacey neckcloth reaches halfway to his waist; his knee-high laced boots feature non-traditional high heels; and of course, his head is topped by a helmet blessed with a profusion of ostrich plumes (Altman 147).

Even though the height of the tragic hero's plumes would increase his stature, apparently some actors needed even more assistance. Tragic actors also often wore buskins, in imitation of the rustic boots worn by ancient Romans and Greeks, and one play from 1737 pokes fun at an actor who was allegedly too short – his buskins had to be made higher than usual so he could finally reach five feet tall.

Wigs have already been discussed as necessary elements in the seventeenth-century gentleman's wardrobe, but most of us could hardly imagine any Roman hero appearing on the stage wearing a full, thick, periwig spilling over his shoulders. This is the very image provided by another portrait of Molière as he appeared in The Death of Pompée. According to Brockett, a typical *habit à la romaine* for a French actor would include such a wig, and the entire costume could cost about 2000 livres, about one-third of an actor's annual salary (205). The wig was another of the compromises between historical accuracy and contemporary social convention. These heroes were gentlemen; as it would be shocking for a gentleman to appear in public without his wig, it would have been inconceivable for an actor to appear before his public in the theatre without

one. Besides, the wig was a contemporary indication of social superiority, as we have already discussed, and the hero is the most superior character in the play. Actors in each era of theatrical activity make such compromises, and as de Marly says, “Each was using his own period’s vocabulary of fashionable superiority, to re-emphasize in contemporary terms that the Roman hero was an exalted character” (Costume 23)

In addition to plumes and wide skirts (also called *tonnelet* in France), social status was indicated by the use of rich fabrics and trims, again an echo of the real world of fashion in which only the wealthy could afford the velvets, silks, brocades, and gold and silver threads that characterized the most affluent wardrobes. After all, if attendees at a real court such as those of Charles II and Louis XIV spent extravagant sums on rich fabrics and trims, so should the courts portrayed on the stage. Just as gentlemen in Paris or London wore the best and most glittering clothes to impress, actors wanted to look equally magnificent. Molière’s wardrobe consisted of the most stylish of costumes, and because his comedies featured contemporary settings, he wore costumes that were in reality the most fashionable suits money could buy. De Marly lists some of his costumes as follows:

There were the clothes he had worn in Monsieur Pourceaugnac, red damask breeches, garnished with lace, a coat of blue velvet decorated with artificial gold, a fringed sash, green garters, a grey hat decked with a green plume, a scarf of green taffeta, a pair of gloves, a skirt of green taffeta trimmed with lace, and a cloak of black taffeta, and a pair of slippers, valued at 30 livres. Molière’s costume in Le Sicilien consisted of breeches and cloak of violet satin, embroidered with gold and silver, and lined with green silk, the skirt of golden moiré, the sleeves of silver stuff, decorated with embroidery and silver, a nightcap, a periwig and a sword, valued at 65 livres. (Costume 28)



For Molière's comedies, contemporary dress was always appropriate, as shown in the engraving of the playwright/actor as Arnolphe from *The School for Wives* (far left). He did act in tragedies occasionally, and as Julius Caesar (near left) he wore the standard Roman costume of the day – cloak, curly wig, fake armor and stylish moustache. (Harvard Theatre Collection)

Even without colored drawings or paintings of these costumes, the descriptions themselves communicate the sheer brilliance of the costumes – and these were only two costumes from two of his plays. They also indicate the high contemporary style with which Molière performed his comedies, and although it is true that he was usually required to debut his comedies before the king, he obviously paid attention to everyday fashion outside the walls of his theatres.

Apparently these richly decorated costumes were too much a temptation to some actors. Why would an actor steal a costume if it were not desirable as street fashion? De Marly recounts how Killigrew fined one actor for stealing a French suit of clothes, and in another case how the Dorset Garden Theatre was robbed of costumes worth £300, and although they were recovered, all the real gold and silver trims had been stripped from them (Costume 31).

Fops, as previously noted, were expected to wear outrageously stylish costumes. Etherege chose to hold the entrance of his title character in *The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter* until the third act, and his first scene offers in relatively few lines not only

a complete portrait of Fopling's fashionable appearance but also a character profile that clearly identifies where Fopling's affinities lie. The scene features a catalogue of fashionable French tailors and accessory-makers, and even though there is no known illustration of the actor playing Sir Fopling, the scene offers a description of what he considers stylish as the other characters poke fun at him without his realizing that he is the butt of the joke. They praise his pantaloons, his tassels, and his coat, which he vainly admits makes him appear long-waisted. As for his gloves, they are large, fringed, orange-scented (a perfume which the rake character Dorimant had earlier declined to wear) and "graceful," but of course he admits to always being "*bien ganté*" or well-gloved. As the other characters would probably deliver their lines in a sarcastic tone, Sir Fopling would bask in the glory of what he incorrectly perceives to be praise. There follows a listing of the best clothiers in Paris, the only source of truly fashionable clothing and accessories, he claims. Later Dorimant compliments Sir Fopling on his very fine Brandenburgh, an overcoat that, according to Milla Davenport, had been introduced from a German province through France in 1674, only two years before Etherege's play debuted (533). This is another example not only of Etherege's (and by extension, Sir Fopling's) attention to current fashion trends, but also of the character's fascination with French clothing.

Although the playwright follows the tradition of the time in not giving an explicit costume description in any stage directions, the dialogue brings Fopling's costume to life. Styan says that without stage directions to coach the actor in playing the scene, the clothing becomes its own stage direction: "He is all innocence in his vanity, and so inseparable from his clothes that they seem the only proper extension of his personality;

the actor playing Sir Fopling will *act* his costume. The author does not describe the performance for fear of usurping the image the actor presents" (Restoration Comedy 76).

Exactly twenty years later, Sir John Vanbrugh would include in his play The Relapse a scene that would recall Etherege's precise portrait of a fop, but in this later case the audience would see the fop not as a product but as a process. Whereas Fopling was already dressed and parading himself through the park, Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington is a work in progress as he has just awakened and summoned his various decorators to work their sartorial magic at his *levée*. Styan says the scene makes effective use of costume – or lack thereof:

Straight from sleep, he is of course in his nightgown and wearing a nightcap over his wigless, shaven pate. This is the Restoration fop without the adornment of his ostentatious dress, a fat man strutting across the stage in slippers or bare feet: a social joke in itself, and Vanbrugh devotes the next ten minutes to the absorbing business of transforming him back into full fop, full-bottomed wig and all. But first the joke of the undressed fop is played for all it is worth with an exquisitely conceived address to the audience; one apt for the character, exploiting the sheer conventionality of the soliloquy, a perfect moment of incisive theatre. [...] He struts and pomps about the stage like a plucked turkey, receiving his imaginary underlings in all his imaginary finery, every pretension grotesquely revealed to his delighted audience by his nakedness. By the agency of costume, or absence of it, theatre plays a game by which we may measure nobility against its travesty. (Drama 38-39)

As further described by Styan: "Thus the audience sees him as he is, and before he is reconstructed little by little to become a magnificent figure of arrogance and conceit. Here is altogether a brilliant and hilarious case of appearance contrasted with reality, and dramatized by slow degrees before the spectator's eyes" (The English Stage 244). Instead of merely hearing a catalogue of the fop's clothing sources, we see those sources at work. First, Foppington argues with his tailor because the coat pocket is too

high, so the new lord orders a new suit. He then praises his seamstress for making his lacy steenkirk (neckcloth), but the new shoes the shoemaker has brought are too tight, and he complains, “I tell thee they pinch me execrably” (1.3.100). After a brief argument about who is better to determine if the shoes hurt – the wearer or the maker – Foppington agrees to suffer and sends the shoemaker away.

From the feet, his concerns move up to his calves, which are covered with padded hose provided by the hosier; such padding was a common practice of the day to allow the male to show a shapelier leg in the constant posed postures required by high society; however, these hose are padded too thickly, his lordship complains, so the hosier is instructed to make the next pair “a crownpiece” thinner. His wigmaker next comes under fire for not making his periwig full enough. Although the wigmaker claims to have “crammed twenty ounces of hair into it,” Foppington sees much less and complains that too much of his face will show. Throughout the scene, Foppington asserts his belief that the refined people of society will notice all of the fashion imperfections of which he has complained. Pockets should draw attention to the man’s knee; the thick stockings will make his calves look as muscular as a common litter-bearer’s, while thinner stockings will cause rumors that his health is failing from some amorous intrigue; and his wig shows such full vigorous cheeks that someone might mistake him for a trumpeter. Vanbrugh provides more detailed reasoning behind the fop’s fashion consciousness than Etherege, but both plays paint vivid portraits of men obsessed with appearance and what they see as the laws of fashionable society. Styan sums up the Restoration actor’s attitude toward his costume and costume props:

The actor's props, like those of the beaux in the audience, were extensions of himself, effective instruments to display his behavior in society. His hat and sword he wore indoors and out, and it was a test of his social aplomb for him to manage them so that they did not manage *him* – as when his hat disarranged his peruke [wig] or his sword plucked at a lady's skirts. [...] As the peruke grew bigger, so it acquired a life of its own: when Colly Cibber played Sir Novelty Fashion in his own comedy *Love's Last Shift* (1696), the audience applauded wildly when footmen carried his wig on stage in a sedan chair. (*The English Stage* 245)

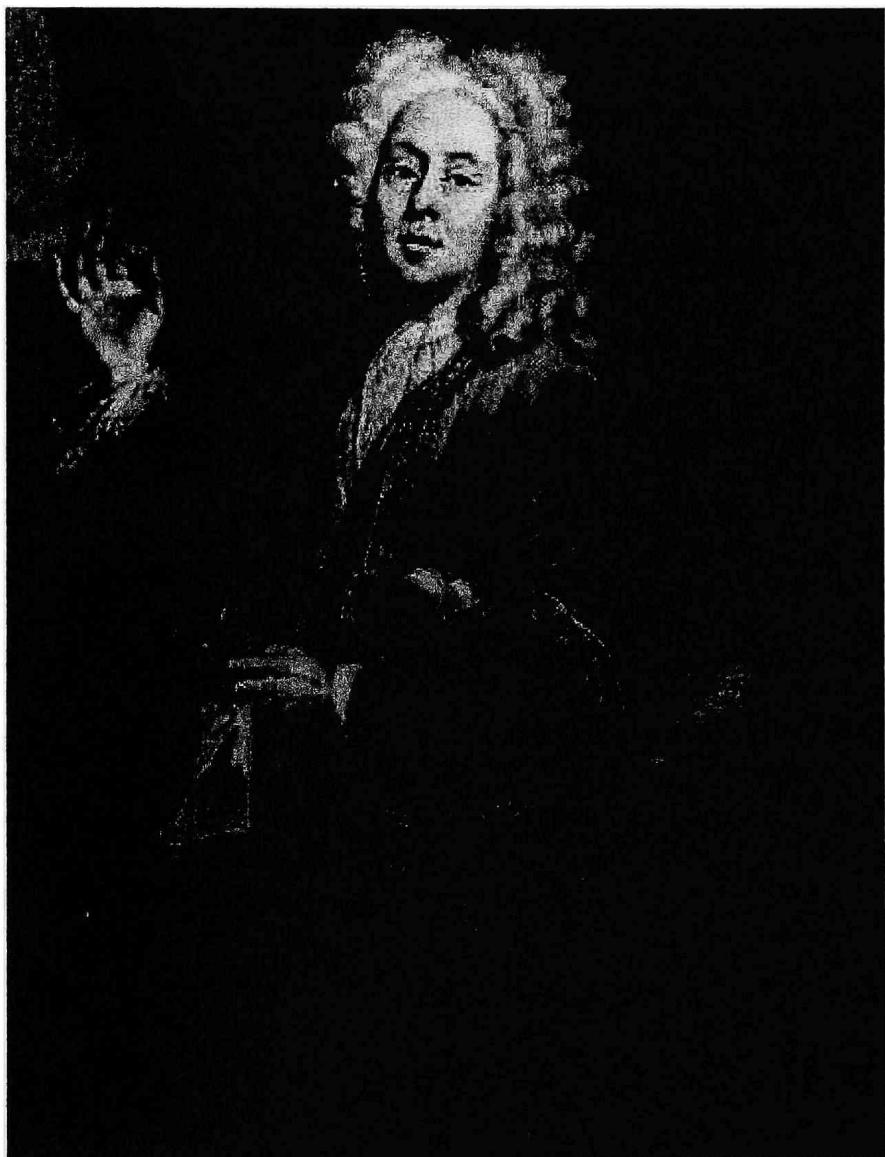
In both cases, we can be sure that the actor followed the playwright's directions and provided the appropriate costume to correspond with the dialogue. In each case, the playwright has provided appropriate clues to what was fashionable in his day, and although the fops' dialogue exaggerates the imperfections and minute details of their costumes, we would expect to see the actors playing them to be dressed in what would have been the height of fashion. Audiences would know what was fashionable; all they had to do was look around the theatre. The comedies were produced with more of an illusion of reality than were the tragedies, as we have already briefly discussed.

Cibber, the actor and manager who played Foppington in 1696 and made it his signature role, complained in his *Apology* that some tragic actors felt betrayed when they saw comic actors wearing costumes either better than their own or at least on the same level from a cost perspective. George Powell was one such actor, who Cibber claims was very upset when he first saw Cibber's Foppington costume. Powell apparently complained bitterly that this was unfair because he believed that tragedies deserved the best costumes, not comedies.

I remember Powell, upon surveying my first dress in the "Relapse" was out of all temper, and reproached our master in very rude terms, that he had not so good a suit to play Caesar Borgia in, though he knew, at the same time, my Lord Foppington filled the house, when his bouncing

Borgia would do little more than pay fiddles and candles to it; and though a character of vanity might be supposed more expensive in dress, than possibly one of ambition, yet the high heart of this heroical actor could not bear that a comedian should ever pretend to be well dressed as himself. (126-27).

In this case, Cibber's dramatic sense that his character should be dressed better than a tragic hero was augmented by his own professional vanity; his character drew a bigger crowd, which in his mind helped to justify the added expense of his fancy costumes.



Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington wore the height of fashion, but his costume is not overdone. His wig is fashionable, his hat is trimmed with feathers, and his suit is elegant velvet. He probably used characterization to achieve the fop's full comic effect. (British Museum)

French theatre, apparently unlike its British counterpart, paid greater attention to true-to-life costuming in the comedies, at least as far as the distinction between servants and their masters were concerned. Several accounts indicate that because British actors and actresses chose their own costumes, even those who played servants might choose a costume much more appropriate to the actor playing their master or mistress. More than a few critics condemned this bit of vanity because it strained the audience's understanding of the social roles being staged. According to Jean Emelina, French actors/managers made these distinctions clearer. He cites an illustration from a production of Molière's The Miser that shows the fake manservant Valère, Harpagon (the miser), and Maître Jacques, the coachman-cook. Valère wears a fashionable wig, and his costume boasts ribbons and lace at the neck and cuffs, which Emelina says is a clear sign of distinction. He also carries a sword at his waist, tucks his hat neatly under one arm, and holds his legs in a precise ballet posture. All in all, he cuts a very gentlemanly figure. On the other hand, Jacques wears no wig but lets his natural hair flop carelessly. His shirtsleeves are rolled up past his elbows, a loose scarf is draped around his neck, he wears an apron, and he carries a sort of floppy hat. Between them stands the miser himself, wearing a plain dark doublet, large white collar, and simple large-brimmed hat, which Emelina describes as correct, if not elegant, for a miser (390-91). The author comments that looking at such illustrations, one is struck by the clear difference between masters and servants and even between the levels of household servants themselves. This attention to such social reality would have made such characterization immediately discernible to the audiences (396).

At least in terms of the comedies, this illustration serves to prove that costume allowed the audience to make necessary assumptions of character.

The dominant trend in theatrical costuming for men in the late seventeenth century was a heightened reality and careful attention to fashion. Although theatre was a place to present imaginary occurrences, the actors and audiences could not allow their imaginations to be stretched too thinly. Audiences knew they were seeing fictional characters on the stage, but those characters had to retain a connection to their own society, and the easiest way to do this was through costuming. By making sure that the costume bore at least some relation to contemporary fashion (as in the wigs and hats of the *habit à la romaine*), the audiences could then allow the drama to work its magic upon them. It would take some daring individuals in the next century to challenge those costuming assumptions and to move the clothing worn on the stage a little closer to the drama and a little farther from the realm of the audience. For the time being, however, costuming would remain the domain of the actor and was accordingly subject to individual tastes, a supposition supported by the many accounts of actors buying their own costumes to wear for a particular role. Lily Campbell says that the ignorance of the audience, critics, and actors concerning historical fashion perpetuated many of the costuming trends well into the next century:

The significance of such accounts [actors' personal costume purchases], however, lies not in the prevailing meagerness and inappropriateness which they reveal as having characterized stage dress during the century after the Restoration, but in the fact of the utter failure of critics and actors alike to recognize the aesthetic principles upon the basis of which theatrical costumes might be chosen. The individual taste of the actor was the only artistic law known. The expense incurred was the only managerial consideration. (109-110)

In taking this attitude, Campbell faults the Restoration and eighteenth-century theatre for making what she deems to be mistakes. To be sure, historical accuracy was not a strong point at this time, and a present-day audience would probably reject the apparent incongruities and lack of organized design we would witness in productions of this earlier time, but to condemn them is to apply current standards of criticism to a distant historical period. For their day, actors and the theatres that employed them provided the audience with exactly what it expected. If the audience accepted Roman generals in the period's *habit à la romaine*, the actor succeeded. Maybe it would not succeed today, but it did then, and that is all that matters. We will see that as the audience changed in the next century, actors proved that they could read those changes and adapt their attitudes accordingly.

Styan says that it might be hard to believe that dramatic forms as divergent as heroic drama and comedy of manners could exist on the same stage. While the former would prove to be a passing type, not surviving much beyond the Restoration era, the comedy of manners would provide the basis for nearly all future British comedy. He concludes that comedy of manners "used the proscenium frame as a mirror to reflect a common humanity" (272). It would be this mirror that would allow the stage performer to adopt and adapt contemporary fashion as a dramatic tool, one he could manipulate throughout the next century to present the most acceptable image of masculinity.

CHAPTER III  
A CENTURY OF CHANGE  
FOR MEN AND THEIR CLOTHES

The previous chapter discussed the basic differences between the late-seventeenth-century fop and the rake as stereotypical characters in both society and stage performance, but as this study enters the eighteenth century, we must acknowledge that society itself was refining these stereotypes, particularly that of the fop. The eighteenth century was a time of social sobriety in comparison to the vivaciousness of the Restoration years, and an understanding of this political and social conservatism helps put the outward changes in fashion into necessary perspective as we look at how male clothing and costume underwent dramatic alterations.

This conservative attitude began, as we shall see shortly, with a change in the political situation, as well as a gradual shift toward a middle-class moral philosophy. This philosophical shift was, in fact, led by William and Mary, and it reflected the ever-growing separateness of England from continental Europe. Leading the list of faux-pas for these middle-class men, in particular, was overt emotionalism. As mentioned earlier, society often characterized feminine behavior as an exhibition of too much emotion, whereas a real man contained his feelings and presented a facade of strength and control. In his book on the English national character Paul Langford says that this stoic attitude was common in this period.

A horror of emotional display was not thought of as a particularly English phenomenon between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth century, though the subject figured in the literature of gentility to which the English made a notable contribution. But by the early nineteenth century, not only

had the English model of the gentleman come to reveal an almost overwhelming preoccupation with composure, impassivity and self-control, but the national character itself was taken to embody it. (250)

This requirement of emotional control was commonly cited in reference to fop characters and any other male figure who exhibited an overly emotional – read “feminine” – pattern of behavior.

In his dissertation on the development of the masculine ideal in the eighteenth century and, in particular, the fop character, Ensberg discusses at length the historical development of the homosexual (generally known in the eighteenth century as a *molly*). By citing the opinions of several social critics, including Randolph Trumbach, Alan Bray, Cameron McFarlane, Philip Carter, Gary Kates, and Michel Foucault, he tries to differentiate the contemporary definition of homosexuality (an exclusive attraction to members of one's own sex) from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century concept of effeminate behavior, which might or might not refer to actual sexual activities. Ensberg states:

Making a distinction between the eighteenth-century fop's persona and current stereotypes of homosexual men is difficult for many, which explains why Kates, Bray, and others urge readers to separate twentieth-century notions of sexuality from our understanding of eighteenth-century sexuality, and from concepts of eighteenth-century masculinity and femininity. (93)

As an example, he says his own research proves that although some contemporary writers claim that terms such as *macaroni*, *fribble*, and *pretty gentleman* should be considered distinctions between various stereotypes of sodomites during the eighteenth century, in reality “none of the synonyms for *fop* carried with them associations with sodomy or any other homoerotic behaviors, even at mid-century when prejudice against same-sex acts

was well established” (102). The general idea, then, is that there was effeminate behavior and there was sodomitical behavior, and the two did not necessarily go hand in hand.

As a matter of fact, Trumbach claims that the rake/libertine stereotype takes as its models numerous well-known men of the day, and that their bisexual natures were common knowledge. These men obviously enjoyed sexual dalliances with both women and boys, but he says, “what is missing in all this material is the adult, effeminate, exclusively homosexual male who seeks an adult male partner” (133). Sodomy was a broadly defined term that included many sexual practices that were deemed deviant, and sodomy itself was not the express province of any one type of person. During the heyday of Restoration comedy, the fop’s effeminacy was not an automatic symptom of sodomitical behavior. It was usually the rake who made some mention of sexual attraction for either young boys or, as was the tradition in the comedies, a woman dressed to look like a boy. Trumbach makes a distinction between the fop, the rake, and a new character type that emerged in the 1680s called the beau, who bridged the sexual gap between the two earlier extremes, and “he made it possible for foppish effeminacy by the end of the 1690s to become associated with sodomy” (135).

Rakes and fops, as mentioned earlier in this study, both sought the company of women, but for obviously different reasons. Rakes were predatory and controlling, as demonstrated by the Dorimant *levée* scene already discussed, while the fop enjoyed the same pastimes as the females and felt his ego could be best stroked in such company. That differentiation between rake and fop had begun to blur at the end of the seventeenth century. Trumbach tracks this change:

In the three generations between 1660 and 1750, public attitudes toward the fop changed dramatically by generation. Between 1660 and 1690, Restoration drama firmly rejected the fop in favor of the rake. After 1690, however, the rake himself fell to the power of romantic marriage on the stage, and the fop's more domesticated interests came to be more highly valued. But between 1720 and 1750 the fop's effeminacy came under a new kind of criticism [ . . . ]. After 1720 the fop's effeminacy, in real life and on the stage, came to be identified with the effeminacy of the then emerging role of the exclusive adult sodomite – known in the ordinary language of his day as a *molly*, and later as a *queen*. (134)

For the new century, Bray says, there is no evidence of any actual increase in the social dislike of homosexual behavior. He cites many “vitriolic condemnations” from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as proof that previous attacks were no more prolific than in the eighteenth century. What apparently was different, Bray claims, is that the homosexual subculture was becoming more visible and basically made itself a more obvious target for these attacks. This was a result of the development of particular buildings where exclusively homosexual men could meet and socialize. Raids on such houses increased the visibility of this subculture and brought it to the attention of more of the society at large. As Bray says, “In contrast, the socially diffused homosexuality of the early seventeenth century was far less obtrusive, and violent condemnations of it rarely had any significance outside of a world of symbol and myth” (92).

What this meant in terms of the debate over masculinity and femininity in the new century is that male fashion became more important than ever as a clear indicator of a true gentleman or at least of a man's true masculinity. While a fop of the previous century did take fashion/costuming trends to the extreme, the degree to which extra bows, ribbons, and laces could be carried was not so far from the accepted standard; every man wore them to some extent. Fops merely accessorized their clothing to the point that they

looked ridiculous to society at large. As these extremes reached their farthest point toward the end of Charles II's reign, we see evidence of a pulling back from the fashion precipice, a move away from the Restoration excesses.

Part of these excesses included the general mien of a gentleman, which of course included his clothing. Behavior in general came under scrutiny, and as this homosexual character became more defined, general masculine behavior moved away from flamboyance to distance itself from any hint of homosexual activity. Christopher Breward analyzes this development by saying:

Extreme bodily gestures, affected mannerisms in speech and contrived magnificence in costume had come to indicate sexual preference. It was against these standards that mainstream masculinity evolved a system of restrained etiquette, handshakes and bows on greeting rather than kissing, and unobtrusive clothing, the sexual and patriotic associations of which remained beyond question. (123)

Society and the stage had moved away from merely laughing at a man who was concerned with his clothes; such a man could be considered foolish in the Restoration and very early eighteenth century, but Hollander says that by the middle of the century his behavior carried too many negative connotations to be ignored:

By the nineteenth century [...] men who concerned themselves less with the basic fit and suitability of their garments and more with its surface effect could be despised as effeminate, although such an association would never have been made about Henry VIII or any other gentleman in Renaissance days. It was also not yet automatically made in the last half of the seventeenth century; the diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn are full of uninhibited personal interest in the details of masculine fashion. But by 1714 Shaftesbury was already saying that serious art was compromised by too much interest in surface decoration. This was not so revolutionary a view; but he also said that a whole society with more taste for decorative than for serious art could rightly be called "effeminate." (69)

These developments are important as part of an introduction to the eighteenth century, a time in which the concept of masculinity was undergoing a considerable renovation. As we will see, the clothing of the new century reflects the gradual redefinition of what was appropriate masculine behavior. We will see the fop slowly fade as a dominant character in English theatre, but at the same time, contemporary dress will dominate the stages – with the exception of the tragic drama, which continues to march to its own traditional drummer.

### Change Is in the Air

Obviously fashion does not always recognize the changes in the yearly calendar and does not necessarily undergo drastic changes when we rip off December to expose a new January, even when that January begins a totally new century. Because of this, actors of the newly hatched eighteenth century continued to wear basically the same styles as they had worn in the previous era. Even before the new century had begun, however, there were hints of change, which would affect not only what the audience wore, but how men dressed their characters on the stage.

The previous chapter briefly discussed the political changes that were slowly altering the social landscape in England. After the flamboyant reign of Charles II, his brother reigned as James II, but he only held the throne for three years before rising anti-Catholic tensions forced him out, and Parliament called his daughter and son-in-law Mary and William to rule England. This political maneuver considerably restrained the power of the monarchy and increased the influence of Parliament. Naturally, these political changes brought about social changes, which would affect clothing and the

English fashion sense. A combination of events intensified what had become an innate distaste for French style. As a result English fashion continued its own independent development, which would later in the century endear it to Europe's clothing market.

In 1688 William and Mary finally approved a ban on all French fabrics, a move that had been urged by British clothing manufacturers for many years after Louis XIV had put heavy taxes on English cloth. Because Charles II and James II had secretly maintained close political ties to France, however, that ban could not have happened during their reigns. The anti-Catholic sentiment so prevalent in England in the late 1600s fueled this anti-French attitude, and the fact that William and Mary were staunch Protestants meant that the seeds of persistent English protests fell onto more fertile ground. De Marly says that William was a soldier and not very interested in clothes, while his wife was so deeply religious that fashion was of little concern to her. Following them came Queen Anne, often ill and usually pregnant, and therefore another monarch with little concern for trendy fashions. Another soldier, George I, came next, so for nearly 30 years, de Marly says, England was governed by rulers who had no desire to set the style (Fashion 58).

Meanwhile, French fashion was still following the lead of its Sun King. Louis XIV ruled for 72 years until 1715. France continued in the eighteenth century to be the leader in European politics and culture. French was the standard court language throughout Europe, and through political marriages and machinations, much of the ruling power in Europe had very noticeable French connections; Philip V, King of Spain, was Louis XIV's grandson, and Louis XV married the daughter of a dispossessed Polish king. The influence of Louis XIV – and by extension, that of France in general – was so

widespread that by the middle of the eighteenth century most European courts had adopted French styles and manners. If you wanted to know the proper way to act, dress and speak, you looked to Paris. As Aileen Ribeiro says in Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe 1715-1789, the French aristocracy exuded a sense of supremacy, particularly in terms of fashion and how to wear it. She comments that wearing fine clothes did not automatically grant a person of the lower classes admission into high society because that person would probably lack the understanding to carry himself appropriately on the French model, but it was a definite signifier of class: “The correct dress, elegantly worn with a kind of nebulous grace and even a carelessness of deportment was part of the seemingly effortless aristocratic superiority, as taught by the French, and admired from St. Petersburg to Madrid” (17). The French claim to fashion superiority endured throughout the century until the last two decades, when the English approach of restraint and simplicity overtook it and dominated the end of the 1700s.

The general development for male fashion during the eighteenth century was simplification and refinement. This can be observed most readily by starting at the top – at men’s heads. Wigs had become an absolute necessity during the latter half of the previous century, and as their importance grew so did their grandeur. Powdered mountains of curls, piled higher and higher and parted like the Red Sea into two large mountains of hair, were still popular at the beginning of the new century. However, as de Marly says, there are limits to extremes, and the wigs were symbolic of a directional change in men’s clothing:

There are four basic ways fashion can go. It can be wide or narrow, and tall or short. A lot of variations can be played on those four themes, but they are the only alternatives. Having worked the tall theme for 50 years,

the only way to go was down again. Accordingly heels were reduced, and wigs grew flat on top, while coat skirts began to be flared out to increase the horizontal look. The inevitable happened. Having resolved on width and lowness, fashion took it to the extreme point, pushing width as far as ingenuity could take it. (Fashion 59)

Louis XIV may still be seen in a family portrait from 1710 wearing the high, center-parted periwig from the previous century, as does his eldest son. However, his grandson's wig looks to be only a fraction of the height of his royal grandfather's, showing the beginnings of the simplification that would characterize the rest of the century (Davenport 661). The wig would face its greatest challenge from the military because young fighting men complained that the full periwig blew across their faces, obscuring their vision. As a remedy, they began to tie them back, and eventually the ends of the wig were gathered into a little black bag at the nape of the neck. This bag-wig slowly grew in popularity with the average citizen, and when Queen Anne's young secretary of state appeared in her presence wearing a bag wig, she allegedly dismissed the style as too informal, commenting sarcastically that he would next appear in his nightcap (Davenport 652). The curls on the sides decreased and were fluffed into tight rolls called pigeon's wings. As wigs decreased in size, and because this style leaned more toward a natural appearance, men of the latter part of the century could grow and style their own hair into something resembling this new smaller wig, a practice that Davenport claims worried wigmakers of the mid-century who apparently saw their livelihoods threatened (652).

Coats gradually swelled from side to side, mirroring the expansion of women's skirts during the first half of the century. Buckram, horsehair, and whaleboning helped the coat skirts flare, but it is obvious that the basic three-piece suit created by the English

had taken hold and would survive with minor changes through the present day. Changes were basically in degree, not in substance. Coat tails gradually decreased in flare after the mid-century point, and the swept-back lines prompted the cutaway style of the latter half of the century. The waistcoat so beloved by Charles II gradually shortened through the first half of the century as the coat opened and sloped toward the back. English simplicity was best seen in this development because the coat and breeches were generally made of a solid-color fabric without the elaborate trims and decorations of the previous era. The waistcoat, however, remained a man's chance to show off his decorative side. Rich brocades, satins and intricate embroidery characterized the waistcoat, which was now more visible than ever. Outside of royal birthdays, coronations, and other state celebrations, the man's appearance slowly took on a more regulated and refined quality.

Interestingly enough, art influenced fashion through a rebirth of ancient art prompted by the new science of archeology. Discoveries in Italy and Greece had provided marvelous statues of Greek and Roman interpretations of the human body, and fashion took note. Generally speaking, these examples of art were praised for their apparent glorification of human anatomy, and although many eighteenth-century artists believed them to be perfectly natural, they were idealizations of human beauty. Nevertheless, this interest in half-naked (or sometimes completely naked) figures prompted an increased interest in allowing men's clothing to follow the natural bodylines. As de Marly says, "The new interest in statuary had an impact on men's wear, for it meant that bodies were back in fashion" (Fashion 69).

The rise of the waistcoat hemline was one result of this trend. For nearly a hundred years, it had concealed the man's groin, but now men's fashion saw a tendency

toward overt masculinity, much as it had seen during the highest period of the Renaissance when the man's doublet/tunic had risen so high so as to practically expose the male sexual organs and raise cries of indecency from many in polite society (and give birth to that most impressive sign of masculinity, the codpiece).

English country costume had been making inroads into city social circles for many years, and riding wear was a perfect complement to this new attention to the male figure. After all, a man riding needed freedom of movement from the waist down, so the riding coats had been cut back farther than ever, and the high boots and tightly fitted breeches allowed him to sit astride his saddle in perfect control of both himself and his horse. Male fashion across Europe adopted this look, and with soft colors of buff and white for the breeches and a practically minuscule waistcoat, from a distance the male looked almost naked – but not completely. Instead of hiding their limbs beneath voluminous coattails and ruffles, men let their natural shapes be seen and admired. Exact tailoring took on an even greater importance as these new gentlemen tried to practice inconspicuous consumption. As Kuchta says, “In an age of uniformity, the difference was no longer what one wore, but whether one took one’s clothing seriously.” In the same paragraph, he writes that many so-called “courtesy manuals,” which instructed young men in proper gentlemanly behavior, told young men to avoid affectation and too much concern for appearance and performance by basically telling them how to “assume an appearance of masculine modesty” (Three-Piece Suit 177). The clothes themselves might have changed, but apparently the principle of appropriate appearance remained the same.

This is not to say that affronts to the simple approach to fashion did not occur. As men’s clothes lost much of their decoration and extravagant lines, a small group of

English fashion protesters tried to stage a brief revival of some of the previous era's sumptuousness, as did a group of French dandies after the Revolution. The macaronis, a small group of London beaux, believed that the recent trend toward simplified English country style was dull, and in the 1770s they adopted several fashion eccentricities designed to set themselves apart and advance their more liberal philosophical views. Suits that had been simplified in color and decoration were augmented with tassels, braids, and ribbons; wigs grew to heights even more ridiculous than those worn at the turn of the century, topped off with an unbelievably tiny hat called the Nivernois. De Marly says they revived the high-heeled shoes with the red heels of Louis XIV and even dangled small handbags from their wrists. She says, "Not surprisingly they were damned as feminine absurdities" (*Fashion* 71). Obviously, they appeared quite laughable when compared to the sober English gentleman they wished to oppose.

Macaronis essentially adapted the popular male dress and, much in the same way as their forefathers, the fops, they exaggerated the qualities most associated with its feminine aspects. Colin McDowell describes them thus: "The macaronis wore the fashionable lace – but wore too much of it; they chose satin and silk – but at its shiniest; in an era when wigs were becoming simpler, they piled theirs to rococo heights" (45). With this kind of description, it is easy to justify Carter's direct comparison between the fops of the late seventeenth century and these macaronis of one hundred years later:

In his vanity, posturing and pursuit of things fashionable, the Restoration stage fop differed little from the macaroni a century on. To this list we might also add fops' enduring association with effeminacy, which derived in part from their abandonment of traditional male attributes such as moderation and reason, but also, and more topically, from their irresponsible and inadequate pursuit of refinement. (155)

He continues by saying that the fop/macaroni type appeared weak, effeminate, and childlike not because he consciously strove to appear so, but because he misdirected his efforts at integration into polite society. He wanted to appear manly but chose the wrong route to manliness. This meant that, as a type both on the Restoration and eighteenth-century stages and in the streets of the cities, the fop's comic appeal lay in the spectator's ability to compare the unnatural measures the fop was willing to take to appear refined and manly with the behavior of genteel men of society (Carter 156).

Although we may see in the maraconi the same blind fascination with fashion and style seen a century earlier in the fop, some writers argue that the eighteenth-century incarnation of this figure of ridicule was intentional. Macaronis did what they did, it is argued, to achieve one goal: to illustrate the silliness of men's fashion. By distorting the feminine qualities of male clothing, they held the mirror up to society and showed its folly. It was at this point in history that men's clothing was to take its road to simplicity, toward Flugel's Great Masculine Renunciation, because as McDowell says: "Nothing kills a fashion – especially for men – as effectively as ridicule" (45). We might say that the macaroni helped kill the very aspects of masculine clothing he seemingly tried to promote. McDowell adds that the ridicule was effective: "The macaronis highlighted the fact that extravagance was ridiculous and conspicuous consumption vulgar, and that both were open to the charge of effeminacy. The effect of this was to drive underground the show and swank previously given to clothes" (45). The macaroni's impulse toward outward decoration might even be considered a last hurrah for men's fashion before the Renunciation. Hollander attributes it to a small but noticeable fit of jealousy over what was becoming an increasingly feminine territory: "Such brief but bright manifestations,

in a general climate of increasing male simplicity, look from a distance like a trace of envy for the new female latitude in fashionable display. Powerful men were on the verge of having to give up all that for good, leaving it to vain women, actors, fools, and children" (78).

In France, a close cousin of the macaroni was the *incroyable*, who wore a bastardized version of the English riding coat (called a *redingote* in France) with a high waist and tails nearly to his ankles, accompanied by a profusion of neckcloths and an obsession with striped fabrics. The coat's collar had been blown up to such outrageous proportions that the man's head seemed to float on a sea of linen. As de Marly states, "It was said that the *incroyables* were buried in their cravats, as half the face seemed to disappear" (Fashion 78). McDowell offers a relatively blunt description:

Whereas the appearance of the muscadins [a group he says were predecessors of the *incroyables*] was based on an amalgam of French taste and the dress of the English gentleman, the dress of the *incroyables* looked as if a macaroni had been dragged through a hedge and then trampled on by his horse. The results did not win universal praise. (48)

While the *incroyables* took the wrapping of the neck to an extreme, men's fashion in general began to focus on the head. Much as the ruffs of Elizabethan fashion displayed the head like an entrée on a platter, men's collars and cravats of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries presented the man's head and face for prominent display, but freedom of movement was limited to full body swivels because the head was so restrictively wrapped.

### Costuming Presents a Confusion of Images

Theatrically speaking, while these fashion trends had little effect on classical tragedies, they did affect costuming in the comedies because actors continued to wear contemporary fashions. In the 1730s, according to Luigi Riccoboni, an Italian actor/manager in Paris, whatever the actor – sometimes including the tragic actor – wore, it was most likely something he owned, as actors were still expected to provide their own costumes at their own expense. The same was true of actors in comedy, although Riccoboni admits that they got off more easily in terms of expense because their costumes were not nearly so decorated as those of the tragedians. Occasionally, however, he says a comic actor might have something made for him, but this seems to be more the case for the female comic performers. Riccoboni believed that the actors took a fashion lead when this occurred: “Often, indeed, these actors create new fashions, which are soon adopted by the audience” (qtd in Howarth 517).

On the stages of the early eighteenth century, some old traditions still held sway. In roles of Greek or Roman origin, some tragic actors felt compelled to wear the plumes and flared skirt of the previous era. One engraving of the fiery Irish actor James Quin as Coriolanus in 1744 looks remarkably like an earlier engraving of a French actor of the 1680s. Both actors wear stiffened brocade skirts cut just above the knees and plumed bonnets over contemporary wigs (Altman pls. 146 and 211).

Outside of Roman- and Greek-based plays, tragic actors avoided this stylized costume and chose something closer to contemporary fashion. This is particularly true in the case of Shakespearean productions. Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 collection of Shakespeare’s works is often cited for its illustrations of the plays, including Macbeth

with the witches and King Henry VIII with Wolsey. In the Macbeth engraving in Volume V, while the witches wear shapeless and timeless robes, the leading actor is shown wearing what appears to be a contemporary English officer's uniform, complete with tricorn hat and full wig. He stands elegantly posed with his legs in a precise ballet position, as would befit a well-mannered courtier (2298). In another engraving in Volume IV, Henry VIII and Wolsey wear costumes that appear fairly accurate historically, but behind them gossip a group of fashionably dressed Restoration dandies, also standing in defined ballet poses (1717).



These two engravings are frontispieces from Hamner's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works. They illustrate not actual productions but the practice of dressing some characters in fairly authentic costumes and others in contemporary clothing. Henry VII (left) is dressed from the famous Holbein portrait of the king, but the men in the background are dressed as Restoration dandies. Macbeth (right) is dressed as a British general, while the witches (always played by men) are dressed in vague, non-descript robes. (British Library)

Both of these engravings reflect what were common costuming practices in eighteenth-century productions of Shakespeare's works. An actor could wear either the stylized Roman costume or jump forward to an interpretation of the Tudor style of Henry VIII, but between those periods there would be no attempt at historical costuming. Everything else would be dressed in either a pseudo-Van Dyck style (based on the works of the early seventeenth-century painter) or contemporary clothing enhanced with added decoration. According to Vince, Rowe's engravings were made by Elisha Walker from drawings by French artist François Boitard (68). In a later edition of Rowe's work, edited by Sir Thomas Hanmer in 1744, Volume VI includes a scene from Othello with one male character, probably Lodovicio, in 1744 gentleman's garb – full-skirted coat with wide cuffs, tied-back wig with a large bow at the nape of the neck, and a plumed tricorn hat carried under one arm (437). These later illustrations, Vince says, were drawn by scenic painter Francis Hayman from engravings by another Frenchman, Hubert-François Gravelot. Did any of these reflect an actual English stage practice from a production? Vince admits that such an assumption is not easily supported, but he comments that the illustrations probably reflect costuming practice (69). These drawings, then, support the idea that an eighteenth-century audience would readily accept a fashionably dressed actor playing a character from the distant past.

An interesting example of how costuming of a tragic hero changed with the actor is the role of Coriolanus. In his book Coriolanus on Stage in England and America, 1609-1994, John Ripley tracks the development of Shakespeare's Roman hero through his many incarnations, and it is enlightening to note how changes in the character's costume apparently reflect not only the changing attitudes toward the portrayal of the tragic hero

but also the individual personalities and acting styles of the various actors playing the role. Ripley includes the aforementioned engraving of Quin, whose costume for the role was fairly conventional for the day (see the illustration on page 55). The costume makes him appear very stiff and formal.

Ripley's next illustration is that of Thomas Sheridan from a 1755 production. Sheridan's costume is more flowing and natural than Quin's stiffened skirts and high plumes. Sheridan wears a long flowing cloak, softer skirts with what appear to be leather tabs, and a larger helmet with softer plumage (although the helmet looks more Greek than Roman). He still wears a wig under his helmet, but it is less obvious than Quin's flowing locks (107). Ripley quotes one spectator of the day as saying that while Sheridan lacked the obvious physical impressiveness of other actors in the role, he more than made up for that lack with a "ferocity," adding that the spectator claimed that in watching Sheridan in the role, he gained a clearer impression of what a Roman warrior would have been like than he had ever gained from written descriptions, paintings, or statues (106).

The third actor Ripley describes is Henry Mossop, another Irishman. Mossop's costume from 1754 might be described as almost bizarre when compared to Quin's and Sheridan's. He wears an undertunic and short cloak, both trimmed in fur, and a tunic skirt that does not resemble Roman armor. No helmet, plume, or wig graces his head, but instead his own short natural hair is crowned with a simple laurel wreath (113). Ripley says that people generally criticized Mossop's acting for a lack of carriage and dignity, but he made up for these shortcomings with "rough militarism, vehemence and rage" in such martial roles as Coriolanus (112).

The last actor of interest to this study that Ripley mentions is John Philip Kemble, who appeared in the role around 1811. His costume apparently included elevator shoes, which added about two inches to the actor's height, as well as a scarlet cloak (a very appropriate color for a Roman general), which flowed around his body like classical statuary. Ripley notes that this grand and eye-catching costume complemented Kemble's fiery romantic interpretation of the character (137).

This progression of actors' costume choices illustrates a gradual shifting of the attitude of both actor and audience toward appropriate costume for a strong, masculine character in the eighteenth century. As we will see shortly, this also proves that the masculine body image was moving away from artificiality and toward naturalness, a move that reflected corresponding changes in acting technique.



John Phillip Kemble was one of the first British actors to attempt drastic reform in the costume of Roman or other classical characters. When compared to the previous illustration of James Quin in the same role about 40 years earlier, it is obvious that the old Roman "shape" has given way to more authentic classical drapery. (Guildhall Art Gallery, Corporation of London)

It would not be hard to justify the costuming of Shakespearean characters in fairly contemporary clothing. After all, Shakespeare and his company's actors would have performed his plays in clothing of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The illustrations of the early eighteenth century indicate that while it was common for the leading actor to wear something fairly historically accurate for the role, because such a costume would have cost quite a hefty sum there would have been little money left to create costumes for the rest of the cast. The leads wore the special costumes, while the supporting actors wore what they could scrounge from the theatre's stock. De Marly comments succinctly: "It was historical costuming, but on the cheap" (Costume 49).

She also recalls two particularly persistent costumes that endured for nearly 200 years. From Shakespeare's day, the standard costume for Richard III consisted of doublet and trunk hose (whose hemlines rose and descended with contemporary tastes) and a gown trimmed in ermine to indicate the royalty of the character. She says that because this role was such a popular one with each era's leading actors, the costume became a sort of theatrical icon. It survived with only minor changes until Edmund Kean played the role in 1833. In each incarnation, however, the character's floppy bonnet sported the obligatory tragic character's ostrich plumes (Costume 43-45).

Another example of persistent costuming convention was Falstaff, a notoriously fat and jolly character who, according to the play's historical setting, should have been costumed in fifteenth-century doublet and trunk hose. If the actor was not portly enough, padding would have to be added, so theatrical convention permitted some historical license to make sure that the actor's relatively skinny legs could be padded like his stomach. This meant that trunk hose were out of the question because they were too

short. Kneebreeches and riding boots solved the padded leg problem, and the costume became a standard for nearly 200 years (Costume 46).



Edmund Kean as Richard III (above left) illustrates the standardized costume for that famous character. The costume might have undergone some slight alterations to fit current tastes, but Shakespeare's villain had looked like this for nearly a century. The same tradition was true for Falstaff (above right). Robert Ellison as late as 1826 was wearing the usual costume – lace collar (or sometimes a ruff), bonnet with plume, doublet and baggy breeches. The pants allowed for extra padding. (Folger Shakespeare Library)

Charles Macklin (left) as Shylock made great changes in the character by dressing him in Jewish gabardine, long coat, curiously baggy long breeches, and a 1770s waistcoat. (Huntington Library and Art Gallery)

These costumes illustrate the practice of melding historical interpretation with contemporary tastes and practical concerns, but those contemporary tastes in masculine imagery often held historical accuracy at arm's length. While it would have been more appropriate to put Macbeth in a kilt or some other approximation of the much earlier Romanesque period, apparently current fashion sense would not have allowed it, even if the actor or producer had known what a historically accurate Macbeth would have worn. The modern military uniform reserved for this character reinforced the military/warrior qualities of Macbeth in terms the audiences readily accepted. Even when Charles Macklin changed the costume for his production in 1772, he did not go too far. De Marly says, "Macklin probably wore a tartan jacket and trews [tight-fitting plaid leggings] or else tartan kneebreeches and stockings – a kilt and bare knees on the London stage in 1772 would have been the height of impropriety" (Costume 51). In the same vein, because a man of quality in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries would never have shown the upper part of the leg, an accurate costume for Richard III, which would have consisted of a short, nearly thigh-baring doublet and hose, would have been unthinkable. The trunk hose could be lengthened to accommodate current fashion. To be a true man on stage, actors and audiences allowed just enough historical accuracy to make the character recognizable but not enough to violate good taste.

Macklin is probably best known for his radical portrayal of Shakespeare's Shylock in 1741, in which he attempted to play the character as a tragic figure, not as a clown as was previously the style. There are two engravings of Macklin in the Shylock role; both illustrate the actor's belief that the character should be portrayed realistically, although the costume he wears is that of a Jew of the mid-1700s, not of the

Shakespearean era. Other actors in the pictures wear obviously contemporary clothing, including the lawyers in the stylish black robes and curly wigs (de Marly Costume 50 and Brockett 234).

To his credit, Macklin promoted a greater sense of realism in costuming, which was to influence later actors. One of his students, Sir John Hill, writing in 1750, complained about the same problem mentioned in the preceding chapter in Emelina's comments about the appropriate costumes worn by French actors playing servants. British actors, especially the women, seemed to wear whatever they felt would be most flattering, regardless of appropriateness to their characters. Hill complained about this practice, saying that the costume not only needed to fit the character's psychological profile, but should also fit realistically into the dramatic situation. He did, however, forgive Spranger Barry for entering Act IV of Romeo and Juliet with a newly fluffed periwig; it was perfectly believable that because Romeo has been sent off to Mantua, he could easily have had his hair done during his absence (Campbell 118). Hill's comments are aimed squarely at the vanity of actors, especially female actors. He claims that in some plays a footman or a valet may be a more central character than his master, "yet we have never found the absurdity carried so high among men as to see the Lying Valet dressed better than his master" (qtd in Thomas 326). Hill's writings show that at mid-century an interest in increased realism in costuming was blossoming, but this development would not come to fruition until close to the end of the century.

Another important element of stage imagery was actor body type and casting. In Theatre Semiotics Carlson discusses the high degree of correlation between ideals of masculine and feminine beauty in the theatre at various periods in history, and he states

what is probably obvious: actors and actresses are commonly held up as objects of each period's desirable form. This was certainly true in the case of Restoration actresses, most of whom were recruited from the ranks of serving wenches and prostitutes. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, physical stereotypes were firmly entrenched. A French acting treatise by Sainte-Aldine, Le Comédien (1749), remarked that although many physical types were acceptable on the stage, actors, whatever their abilities, should not depart far from audience expectations of the types of roles they are playing. Heroes must have "imposing bodies and lovers attractive ones; actors must look the proper age for their roles and have the natural vocal qualities suitable for their characters" (qtd in Carlson Theatre Semiotics 17).

Cibber includes in his Apology a specific instance from the Restoration theatre of this stereotyping in the case of Samuel Sanford, an actor who had what Cibber describes as obvious physical misfortunes. Because Sanford was "a low and crooked person, such bodily defects were too strong to be admitted into great or amiable characters; so that whenever in any new or revived play, there was a hateful or mischievous person, Sanford was sure to have no competitor for it." Cibber continues to say that when the theatre management took a risk and cast Sanford in the role of a virtuous character, the audience damned the play for upsetting their expectations of the poor man (77). Cibber also recalls a story told to him by Thomas Betterton that Charles II, who had black hair and a swarthy complexion, was a little concerned during a production of Macbeth that "we never see a rogue in a play, but, Godsfish! they always clap him on a black periwig? when it is well known, one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one" (77-78). Cibber himself agreed that the practice of stereotyping was unfair and unrealistic: "For were it

not too gross a weakness to employ, in wicked purposes, men, whose very suspected looks might be enough to betray them? Or are we to suppose it unnatural, that a murther should be thoroughly committed out of an old red coat and a black periwig" (78)? Such stereotyping would not die, however, but would flower even more in the melodramas of the early nineteenth century when black clearly meant bad and white meant good.

The mid-eighteenth century has been called the Age of Garrick, a reference to the best-known English actor/manager of the century, David Garrick. He wielded considerable power over repertoire, actor training, and, naturally, costuming. Most paintings or engravings of Garrick, however, show him in contemporary dress no matter what role he assumed. One eyewitness account of Garrick's performance in The Beaux' Strategem describes his costume as a suit of sky blue trimmed with silver, a hat decorated with ribbon and a red feather, pure white silk-covered calves, and shoes topped with impressive buckles:

Garrick, sprightly roguish, and handsome as an angel, his pretty little hat perched at a rakish angle over his bright face, walks on with firm and vigorous step, gaily and agreeably conscious of his fine calves and new suit, feeling himself head and shoulders taller beside the miserable Scrub. (qtd in Nagler 369)

This is the picture of a confident, masculine character who is aware and quite proud of his clothing, and the actor clearly took full advantage of the costume to reinforce his character's personality.

Garrick was a patron of painting, especially his own portraits, and was a great friend of the famous English engraver/artist William Hogarth. Garrick was one of the first actor/managers to realize the potential publicity benefits inherent in having your image scattered about the public sphere, so he formed close connections with artists and posed

repeatedly for dramatic portraits, both alone and with his co-stars. According to Shirley Strum Kenny, more than 450 known likenesses of Garrick were produced during his career (22).

One 1768 portrait of Garrick as Kitely in Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour shows the influence of what was called the Van Dyck look on his costuming. In their struggle to create a historical costume that was not too far removed from contemporary tastes, actors and managers, as well as most of the age's best painters, turned to the early seventeenth century and Sir Anthony Van Dyck for inspiration. Although costumes rendered in this style were not completely accurate, the style offered just enough historical distance from the mid-1700s, but the basic silhouette could be altered to keep it familiar to their audiences (de Marly Costume 52-53). Oddly enough, Garrick played Hamlet in a French suit even though the Drury Lane Theatre's costume collection surely contained many Van Dyck suits. One German observer wondered about the actor's choice until he saw him turn around after the energetic duel and noticed a diagonal crease running through the back of the suit's coat. The suit's tightness allowed the fabric to show the character's stress, an effect Garrick could not have achieved in a Van Dyck costume with a cloak. De Marly sums it up by saying, "In other words he would not be historical in his dress if it lost him one of the tricks of his craft" (Costume 57).

In general, however, Garrick was no costume innovator. His forte in this area was an ability to create a costume that, while not historically accurate, complemented his performance to render a powerful image in the minds and eyes of the spectators. Cecil Price cites a newspaper account commenting that one of Garrick's late career performances of Lear was more majestic and closer to the old king's true character than

other interpretations. Price says this account is most significant because of its “emphasis on the way in which dress enhances character-revelation, rather than on the correctness of the costume from an historical point of view” (58). This was probably reflective of Garrick’s standard costuming practice, which emphasized not historical accuracy but psychological appropriateness. In a production of Tancred and Sigismunda, he wore a military jacket with decorative frogging trim, knee-breeches, a fur cap, a sash, and a fur-trimmed cape – a pseudo-Hungarian hussar costume, one of the mid-century’s standard costume types. The image was not truly historical, but highly evocative of the dashing soldier (Price 58).



Garrick as Macbeth (left) illustrates the tradition of dressing the Highland warrior in the costume of a contemporary British army officer (as seen earlier in the Hamner frontispieces). Garrick liked the Hungarian-hussar look (right) for the lead role in Tancred and Sigismunda in the middle 1700s. It was dashing, masculine, and militaristic. (Folger Shakespeare Library and British Library).

Despite the century's uneven experiments in mixing historical and contemporary costume, true innovation would have to wait for the right time and some actor/managers with enough clout to force the issue, fueled by revolutionary changes across Europe. The eighteenth century is rightly considered the era of the actor and the actor/manager.

Playwriting was not the century's strong suit, and neither was theatre technology (with the exception of improved stage lighting). Costume reforms would come through the influence of these performers and managers, notably Mlle. Clairon, Lekain, Larive, and Talma in France, and the Kembles and Keans in England.

Clairon had planted the seeds of historical accuracy in tragic dress by simplifying her costumes as a member of the Comédie Française. She began her career as a declamatory actress, but her approach to her craft evolved into a more natural acting style. After displaying her innovative acting and costuming style in one Racine tragedy, she complained that she would have to throw out her entire wardrobe because it no longer suited her: "I shall have to have the right costume now for all my roles; realism in speech demands a similar realism in costume. My splendid wardrobe will have to be transformed immediately, and I shall lose 10,000 écus' worth of dresses" (qtd in Howarth 521).

Her role as the leading costume reformer in France was shared by her devotee, Henri-Louis Lekain, who followed Voltaire's request that costumes for The Orphan of China (1755) be designed by artist Joseph Vernet to closely resemble Chinese clothing but not look so ridiculous as to cause the audience to laugh at the actors. Although the costumes apparently looked more Turkish than Chinese, the experiment was a success, and Lekain and Clairon made even more concerted efforts at historical/regional accuracy in their costumes. Lekain went a bit too far, however, and offended the sensibilities of his

audience when he appeared in Sémiramis with “bare arms, disarrayed hair, and bloodied hands” (Brockett 259-260); the French audience was only able to digest its realism in small servings. Perhaps Lekain also had selfish reasons for abandoning the traditional tragic costume. According to fellow actor Préville, he hardly cut a dashing figure in such a costume. Préville said that his friend was

of medium height; he had short, bowed legs; his face was ruddy and weather-beaten; his lips thick, his mouth wide; in truth his eyes were most expressive, but this was his only natural advantage. All in all, his face presented a disagreeable whole, and the semi-French costume worn at that time in tragedy, the hooped skirts in which stage heroes decked themselves out, in no way helped to diminish even in part the flaws I have just mentioned. (qtd in Howarth 551)

Lekain’s successor, Larive, claimed to make some small reforms, as well, mainly by abolishing hip-pads from under the tragic hero’s *tonnelet* to make the male figure more natural and by wearing tunics he felt were correct for Spartan warriors (Howarth 528).

French ballet and opera companies fared better than their straight theatre counterparts when it came to coordinated costuming. James Laver mentions several men known specifically for both their scenic and costume designs, including Henri Gissy, Jean Bérain the Elder, Jean Bérain the Younger, Giovanni Niccolo Servandoni, François Boucher, J.-P. Martin, and Louis-René Boquet. Their artistic contributions represent what differentiated the musical theatre forms from the regular theatre: a single person overseeing the visual impact of a production. Their costumes, however, generally show a love for decoration and fantasy and not any great innovation. Laver describes their costumes as fantasy interpretations of contemporary fashion silhouettes, “with such minor concessions to character and period as a Turkish turban here and a Roman tunic there. Their fundamental lines changed with the fluctuations of fashion in the outside

world." Because of this basis in real-world fashion, once the audiences gained greater appreciation for historical accuracy, the costume fantasies were no longer acceptable (Costume 136). Such was the natural progression in the regular theatre, too, as the century neared its close.

Even playwrights were beginning to see the light of natural forms and more restrained costuming. Denis Diderot presaged the rise of realism in the next century in his 1758 play The Father of a Family. He argued against the Neoclassical emphasis on noble subjects for tragedy and advocated a form he called the *drame*, or domestic tragedy. In an essay printed with this play, he also urged actors to put aside their ostentatious costumes for simpler and more natural lines, blaming such extravagant displays for the ruination of good plays. "Beneath the garment that is overloaded with gilding, I never see more than a rich man, and it is a *man* I look for," he wrote. He suggested that if an actor wanted to learn how to costume his character in truth and taste, he should visit an art gallery and observe the painter's simplicity (qtd in Nagler 327).

Jean Georges Noverre used his post as ballet master to the Grand Opéra in Paris to attempt the same kind of reforms in the realm of ballet, which he believed should behave more like serious drama. He argued for the abolition of the *tonnelet* and all forms of stereotypical costume. He complained that it was ridiculous to watch a typical dance corps portraying warriors: "Do they bring in their wake all the horrors of the carnage? Is their hair disheveled? No, Sir, nothing of the kind. They are dressed as if going on parade and resemble effeminate men fresh from a perfumed bath rather than survivors of a desperate struggle" (qtd in Nagler 333). Diderot and Noverre were a bit before their time, and their ideas had little immediate effect on theatrical practice in France.

In both England and France, with the exception of Clairon, men took the lead in costume reform and took greater risks in looking less like fictionalized male characters and more like contemporary men. Of course, in comedies, contemporary fashion was, as it had been for many years, still the standard costume, so men on stage looked basically like the men in the audience. In tragedies, however, there was more distance to travel before male actors could look less stereotypical. By the end of the century, the shape of men's bodies on stage was becoming more natural and more discernible as some of these actors chose to ignore certain conventions or at least to bend those conventions slightly to allow audiences to see a more realistic image of the masculine characters they portrayed. These attempts at reform were not always met with approval, but they paved the way for more sweeping reforms in a world that was ripe for changes more massive than any actor could have anticipated.

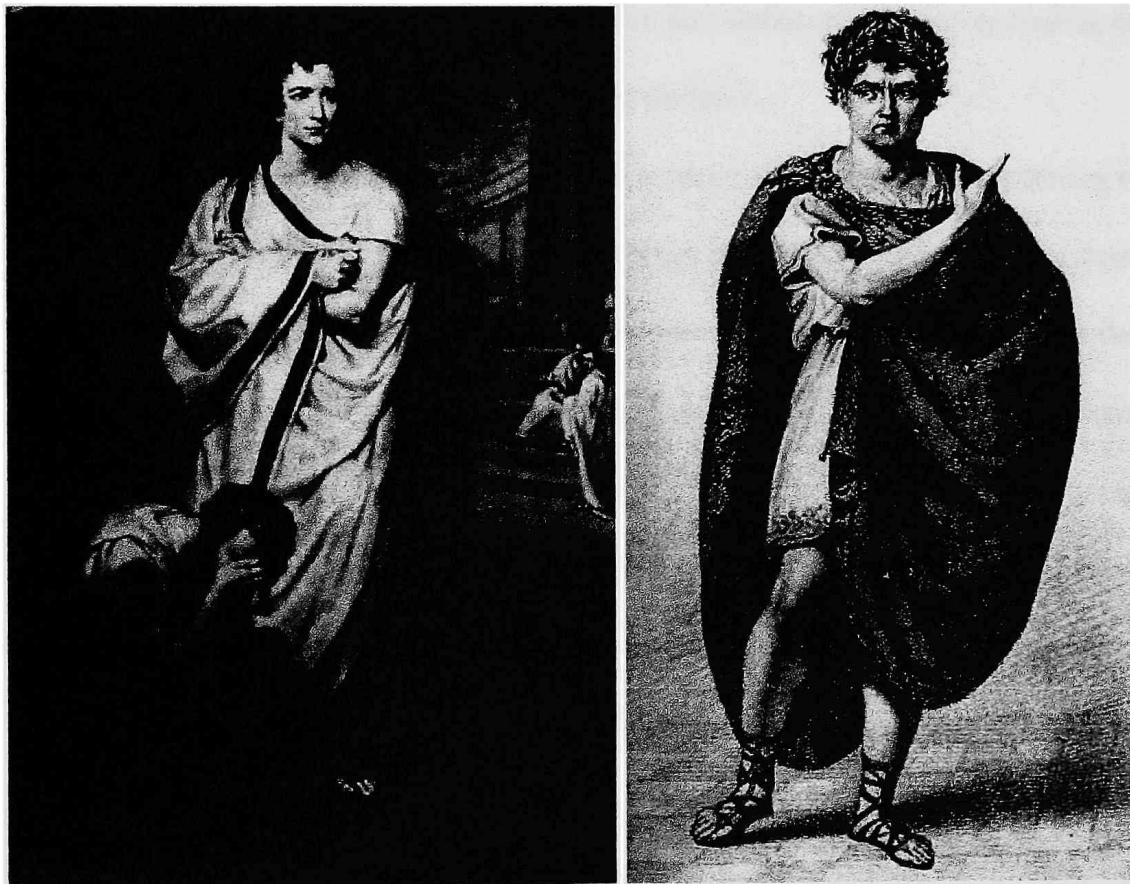
The last decade of the century was a period of upheaval in France as revolutionary forces tried to destroy every vestige of the *ancien régime*. It was replaced by a combination of English country style and renewed interest in classical Rome (the republican version, that is). It could be argued that one of the most recognizable periods of fashion was the decade just before the revolution of 1789. Who has not seen a picture of Marie Antoinette or any other of the French nobility wearing the outrageously wide skirts, sky-high decorated wigs, and all the ribbons and lace permitted by the fashionable rococo style? This, of course, would be a picture of the aristocracy, which would in great numbers lose the heads that had carried those wigs thanks to the new republican spirit and the new killing machine called the guillotine.

In light of the hatred for such aristocratic excesses, it is no surprise that the Revolution spawned a cleaner, more classically influenced fashion sense. English riding fashion had been slowly infiltrating Continental styles for more than a decade, and its simplicity and practicality suited the Revolution. powdered hair was artificial, so it was out. Waistlines in classical statuary were higher than contemporary waistlines, so up went the waist. Men's pants were tight and simple, and women's dresses were softer and more drape-like. Some revolutionary officials even adopted the toga itself as a form of dress, so it should have come as no surprise when François-Joseph Talma, with the artist David's help, wore a toga and bared his arms and legs to initially shocked audiences, but audiences were not the only ones shocked by such daring attempts at costume reform. When Talma later provided his father-in-law, the actor Vanhove, with his first accurate Roman costume, the older actor protested that it did not have a pocket for his handkerchief and that he could not play his part without that necessary prop (Roberts 343).

One engraving of Talma as Hamlet shows that he chose a costume clearly outside of any contemporary style. It is a light-colored, loose-fitting ankle-length tunic, layered with a dark over-tunic. His hair is wild and fiercely natural, but in the same illustration the actress playing Gertrude wears what appears to be a contemporary Empire-style dress (Altman pl 164). Clearly the man could take more risks in his appearance on the stage, but the woman was restrained by contemporary expectations.

Generally speaking, by the 1780s the traditional tragic costume for men had disappeared, replaced by this new classical sensibility. John Philip Kemble introduced the toga to London in his portrayals of Coriolanus and Julius Caesar. Even though the display

of bare arms and legs still shocked some audience members, the gradual simplification of men's clothing throughout the later eighteenth century had paved the way for a more revealing masculine silhouette. At least audiences were now more accustomed to seeing the actual shape of a man's body. Now they saw more bare skin, but the effect was strictly in keeping with the then-popular concept of masculinity. Draped fabric, while commonly seen in women's fashion in shawls, scarves, and flowing skirts, was now accepted for men on stage because of its association with strong heroic figures from the past. No one could doubt Julius Caesar's maleness, and a strong actor could be overtly masculine in this new historic costume.



Edmund Kean as Brutus (left) and Talma as Nero (right) provide evidence of the triumph of the Neoclassical attitude toward the costuming of characters from antiquity. (V&A Images/V&A Museum and Yale Theatrical Prints)

Montague Summers describes two drawings that serve to illustrate the evolution of male costume in the last half of the eighteenth century. Both actors portray Oedipus. One shows Thomas Sheridan from 1755 wearing “buskins with a pseudo-classical short-sleeved tunic and mantle both ornately guarded with ermine. A small crown surmounted with nodding French plumes is upon his hair, which hangs loose and somewhat disheveled.” The second drawing shows Kemble in 1790 in a “short, white tunic; his head, arms, and head are bare. The sandals are loose. In one hand he holds a naked sword, in the other a Pompeian lamp. The gesture is magnificent, and the expression grand and truly awful” (265-66). The change observed in that thirty-five-year period demonstrates how much more receptive actors and audiences were to revealing costumes that owed more to antiquity than to theatrical tradition.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century to its end, male costuming reflected social standards, allowing actors to stand on stage as characters from another century with one foot firmly planted in their own. Because comedy generally concerns the everyday foibles and mistakes of a society, its costume changes as the society changes. Whatever is fashionable on the street usually works well on the comic stage because the action in the theatre mirrors the actions in the drawing rooms and public spaces of the town and country. Tragedy, on the other hand, tends to hold to its conventions for longer periods. Its emphasis on universal themes and larger-than-life characters requires a stricter adherence to unwritten rules, especially in costume choices. From the heroic plumes, stiffened *tonnelet* skirts, and bombastic delivery, tragic actors evolved into a more natural, historically accurate style, which reflected scientific discoveries, social theories, and political thoughts and practices. Throughout most of the century, however,

actors chose their costumes as actors had done centuries before them. They looked for whatever would be most personally flattering, what would be in keeping with the traditional characterization of the role, and, in the most practical sense, what was available. That attitude, however, was about to change.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANCE AND REVOLUTION:

MEN ENTER THE MODERN ERA

By the end of the eighteenth century most of Europe was in turmoil. Although it had witnessed the American Revolution, that fight was distant and something Europeans heard about secondhand. That war, however, was to trigger in France more extensive upheavals, which would spread throughout Europe. As a result of the French Revolution and the subsequent rise of Napoleon, it seemed that the whole world, including fashion and theatre, found itself swimming in a sea of uncertainty. As in nearly every other aspect of society, rules were changing, and the Romantic era was born from this storm of new ideas and new practicalities.

The concept of democracy as demonstrated in the new United States of America's Declaration of Independence and Constitution was revolutionary in itself. It challenged the basic rules under which most Europeans had lived for centuries by placing the individual above the system. Individuals were encouraged to express their opinions, to vote for those opinions, and then to live according to the result. No more should singular monarchs like Louis XIV and his descendants rule unchallenged, at least not until Napoleon decided that republicanism was already passé and should be replaced by another Empire. As part of this new approach to government and manners, everything representing the old ways was scrutinized and criticized. De Marly sums it up by saying: "The *ancien régime* throughout Europe was coming under attack, as the ideals of

liberalism and republicanism spread. The past had failed. The advanced should reject it lock, stock and barrel, and, of course, this included its clothes and its manners" (Fashion 74). Ribeiro confines her book of eighteenth-century fashion to the years between 1715 and 1789, choosing to end her study with the year in which the Bastille Prison fell and the French Revolution began. She justifies that choice on the last page of her book:

The events of 1789 not only quickened the pace of the change in clothing but also men's perceptions of the ways in which dress was linked to the rapidly changing face of politics; from 1789 onwards for the next few tumultuous years, continual change became a normal part of human existence, and contemporaries recognized that the break with the feudal tradition was final. (188)

This emphasis on the individual fueled the Romantic movement in the arts. It was a period of experimentation, much like the periods just after both World War I and II: a time when old views were being challenged on every side because people had lost faith in the ability of those old belief systems to provide them with hopes for the future. It was not necessarily a complete break with the past, but the last two decades of the eighteenth century illustrate this gradual movement into a new era and a new way of thinking.

Significant cleavage [with the past] begins to occur in the late eighteenth century movement toward subjectivity in the arts – and in religion, philosophy, and even government, where a new sense of man's individuality contributed to revolutions (in France and America) and to a subsequent series of reforms (in England) that have determined to a great extent the history of nations since that time. (Donohue 3-4)

As a reaction against the Baroque and Neoclassical periods before it, Romanticism rejected the concepts of order, nobility, and regulation and took as its model not the refined simplicity of Roman and Greek statuary but an era heretofore ignored by writers and artists – the Gothic period. Alicia Finkel states that interest in

Gothic art, architecture, and history grew late in the eighteenth century but grew quickly, and she cites several publications appearing after 1780 which began to feature regular articles and art on Gothic subjects (8-9). In this sense, the rise of Gothic influences mirrored the earlier interest in Roman and Greek archeology, which had given rise to the gradual alteration in the tragic hero's costume. The Gothic craze was new, and in an era that saw the demise of social and political systems that had been in place for centuries, something new and different was definitely appealing.

In the theatre, Gothic influence was most obvious in the visual effects, thanks in large part to Frenchman Philippe Jacques DeLoutherborough, one of the first scenic artists to move beyond the limitations of perspective in theatre painting (Finkel 5). DeLoutherborough also popularized the re-creation of actual locations in scenic design, which would later encourage more historically accurate costumes in plays set in distant times past and exotic locations. During his 10-year employment at Drury Lane under Garrick's supervision DeLoutherborough united the scenic elements (sets, lighting, effects, and costumes) under his control, but this unification of design would not take root until the next century (Brockett 229). By providing specific settings and creating more subtle lighting effects – at least as subtle as possible given the candle-driven technology of the day – he helped pave the way for later attempts at a more realistic stage image and moved the theatre farther away from the Neoclassical/Baroque style of generalized settings. This movement would later coordinate well with the increased emphasis on individualism in the Romantic view.

One of the strongest proponents of individualism was the French actor Talma, discussed briefly in the previous chapter as a leader of costume reform in France. Talma had visited London and witnessed the developments toward a more natural acting style and early attempts at historical costuming as demonstrated by Macklin, the Kemble family, and George Anne Bellamy. Upon his return to Paris and his new position as a member of the company at the Comédie Française, he found himself relegated to minor roles, but he wanted to make his mark even in the lesser roles to which he was assigned. When cast as Proculus in Voltaire's Brutus, remembering a costume he had seen Macklin wear, Talma asked his friend, the artist David, to draw up a costume that would be closer to a real Roman toga than anything the French theatre had seen to that point. Carlson describes the event as a truly theatrical moment:

The artist obliged, and Talma appeared backstage with his hair cut short and in an unadorned cloth mantle. His fellow actors, all in traditional wigs and rich silks, were aghast. 'Good heavens,' said Louise Contat. 'He looks like a statue!' Others tried to dissuade him from going on the stage, but Talma insisted. The audience was at first stunned, but then applauded the innovation. (The Theatre of the French Revolution 27)

Talma had started a wave of classicism that not only signaled a change in the theatre but in French society as a whole. From this point on, French actors had to pay greater attention to at least some semblance of historical accuracy in their costumes. No longer would audiences accept tragic heroes in huge feathered hats or the old Vanhove playing every Roman or Greek character in the same green velvet cuirasse spangled with sequins and designs of cannons, drums, and rifles (Collins 44).

Talma would revive Brutus later in 1791, but he had moved up to playing Titus. Ribeiro credits him as a leading influence in the popular men's hairstyle, which took its

name from that character. She cites a French source from 1880 claiming that within eight days of his initial performance of the role, in which Talma appeared on stage with his short and unpowdered hair, young men all over Paris had cut their hair in the same style; from then on, the style was called the Titus cut (*Fashion* 68). Something as simple as a bold haircut might not seem so shocking today, but in the rule-conscious society of the late eighteenth century, it could create massive tremors. Only a few years earlier, Larive was admonished by an *Intendant des Menus Plaisirs* for daring to appear before the king with unpowdered hair and bare arms (Collins 44).

In the height of revolutionary fervor, clothing took on special significance, and David's connection with Talma was not his only foray into theatrical fashion. Owing to his preference for classical style in his paintings, the revolutionary government commissioned David to design something appropriately republican as a sort of costume for the new regime's leaders. A break with the old way of life apparently would be more obvious if the clothing of the leaders reflected a new spirit that could be associated with the ancient ideals of republican government. David's designs were classically influenced, but Ribeiro says they were just as influenced by his connection with theatrical costumes.

David's designs generally are a curious mix of the classical, the historical, and his own artistic imagination; they are also inspired by theatre costume of the time. The tunics (long or short) and the open-sided mantles are influenced by the costume of classical antiquity, as are the swords and the plumed *toques*; however, as bare legs à la romaine could not be accepted by men long used to knee breeches or pantaloons, those wearing short tunics were to wear tights, which the artist hoped would produce a passable imitation of nudity. These tunics, however, in their design and decoration, occasionally recall the costume of the sixteenth century, a form of theatrical shorthand for the dress of the historic past with which David would have been familiar. (*Fashion* 103-104)

The theatre and the streets of Paris both reflected this interest in classical form, and such a new style went a long way in distancing the new society dominated by citizens from the old society led by aristocrats. Carlson charts the development of fashion during the revolution by looking at the political developments. In its early years, while the king was still popular, fashion followed court styles, but in 1791 the classical influence of David's paintings and Talma's plays signaled a similar shift toward Roman and Spartan styles in both costume and streetwear. The Terror suspected anyone who looked a bit too neat and aristocratic, so ragged and dirty styles prevailed. Dandyism followed, Carlson says, as a reaction against the messiness of the mid-1790s. By the turn of the nineteenth century, classicism had regained a foothold, and the cycle was ready to begin again (The Theatre of the French Revolution 258).

In short, the theatre of revolutionary France provided both a mirror and a guide to fashion, and the men of the theatre, in particular Talma and David, led the masses through the ups and downs of the classical periods during which men's clothing experienced its simplification and democratization. As seen in the popularity of male tragic heroes appearing on the stage in simple classical drapery and men in the streets of Paris appearing in clothes with more uniform lines, sober colors, and dramatically less ornamentation, theatre and fashion were walking the same path in the 1790s. While women's clothing also experienced a simplification, there remained a fussiness and concern with decoration that was disappearing in men's fashions. As Ribeiro states:

One of the results of the French Revolution was to divide the sexes in terms of their clothing. Men's dress becomes plain in design and sober in colour; it is unadorned with decoration. It symbolizes *gravitas* and an indifference to luxury – essential elements of republican austerity; its

virtual uniformity emphasizes the revolutionary ideal of equality. (Fashion 141)

While fashions and theatrical costuming in France endured the revolution, England's theatres and fashionable men continued in the gradual movement away from the complex Baroque forms of the middle of the century toward what was essentially a citified version of country wear. It would be this trend that continental fashion would adopt to replace the extravagance of court clothing. Ribeiro says the revolution simply pushed the changes forward, but they were already well on their way to acceptance all over Europe.

### English Theatre and Spectacle

As audiences in both France and England grew in numbers, theatres themselves grew, which in turn required larger and more impressive settings. Drury Lane and Covent Garden were both expanded in the early 1790s to accommodate ever-increasing audience numbers. Drury Lane could seat between 3,600 and 3,900 spectators, and its stage was a gargantuan 85 feet wide and 92 feet deep with a proscenium arch 43 feet wide and 38 feet tall (Brockett 321). Spectacle, then, became the chief attraction in such mammoth theatres, and newly installed machinery on, below, and above the stage allowed for increasingly extravagant effects. No longer would a simple nondescript street scene be acceptable as playwrights began to call for awe-inspiring stage illusions.

In England John Philip Kemble and his designer, William Capon, led the march toward historical research and accurate re-creation of settings and costumes. Such emphasis on historical accuracy for the scenery required a corresponding attempt in

costuming. With the vague, standard scenery of earlier years, a tragic hero or heroine could wear the standard costume for his or her role and not look too much out of place, but when the actor was standing in front of a massive and realistic painting of a Gothic cathedral, the anachronism of the costume would be ridiculous. Advances in theatrical lighting also spurred changes in costuming. Garrick had brought side-lighting from France to Drury Lane in the 1760s, which was followed in 1785 by new Argand “patent lamps,” all contributing to greater clarity on the stage and ever-expanding spectacle (Donohue 248). These influences pushed the actors farther from the audience and closer to this new stage picture, allowing them to interact with the scenic elements, and as playwrights began incorporating the new complicated stage effects and machinery into their plays, the audience could be drawn more deeply into the reality of the stage.

The dramatic “moment” could now take place in a theatre more extensively equipped for visual effects. The psychological processes that eventuated in these “moments” could now be more fully suggested by the enhanced visibility of the Gothic landscape. In surrounding the distressed heroine or chained hero or agonizing villain on three sides, what had once been an atmosphere background now became more convincingly an environment. (Donohue 67)

The former practice of wearing either anachronistic contemporary or incorrect historical costumes in front of these new stage vistas simply would not do

Once scenic designers began to take full advantage of these innovations, actors and managers could experiment with more historically correct costuming. Kemble made early attempts at historic costume, best illustrated in a Sir Thomas Lawrence portrait of the actor as Hamlet from 1801 as seen in de Marly’s Costume on the Stage (62). He had played the role in 1783 in the standard contemporary court dress with powdered hair (but



John Phillip Kemble as Hamlet wears a Van Dyck costume in black satin and his own naturally unruly hair.  
(Huntington Library and Art Gallery)

no wig). The portrait shows that Kemble had moved away from tradition by wearing the Van Dyck costume, in black satin, naturally, with trunkhose and a slightly upstanding ruff-like collar. He held onto one tradition, however, by wearing a hat with black plumes.

From another portrait as Coriolanus, also by Lawrence, de Marly describes him as wearing “Roman armour without any Baroque or Rococo trappings, a black cloak, and the sensational bare feet and sandals. It went a long ways towards an accurate revival but Kemble’s hairstyle and sideboards are strictly contemporary, for the hair is the last thing to be sacrificed to reform” (Costume 59/62). The hairstyle is a clear sign of a Romantic character. Short, close-cropped hair is an almost universal sign of conservative character, but long, wavy and unkempt hair is a radical look. The young Romantics made their protests against the old social rules clear through their hairstyles; as Lurie comments,

“Daring young men brushed their hair the wrong way on purpose as a sign of their independence from conventional restriction. The loose disheveled curls familiar to us from portraits of English Romantic poets were associated in the popular mind with poetic license” (168).

Kemble is credited with borrowing the toga from France’s Talma and bringing it to the English stage, and he was apparently fairly successful with it. The toga, as demonstrated by both Talma and Kemble, showed the shift from Roman militarism to Roman republicanism. The tragic hero was now a proud republican in flowing toga and natural hair, not a military general in stiffened *tonnelet* and plumed helmet (*Costume* 63). Talma also influenced William Charles Macready, who witnessed the French actor’s performances while visiting Paris in 1822. Macready said he admired and emulated Talma’s preparation and attention to his character, especially to his costume:

It is a custom with many actors purposely to reach their dressing-rooms in just sufficient time to go on the stage, in order to avoid the nervousness which waiting for their entrance occasions. But Talma would dress some time before, and make the peculiarities of his costume familiar to him; at the same time that he thereby possessed himself more with the feeling of his character. [ . . . ] His object is not to dazzle or surprise by isolated effects: the character was his aim; he put on the man, and was attentive to every minutest trait that might distinguish him. (qtd in Nagler 469)

Whatever aspects of Talma’s style Macready might have taken to heart, he apparently had at least one momentary lapse in costuming judgment during a production of Macbeth in the late 1820s. Prince Pückler-Muskau, a German visitor to England, made particular note of how impressive Macready’s Scottish costumes were, with one exception. When, after Duncan’s murder, Lady Macbeth calls to him to put on his nightgown and answer the door, Macready appeared in a “fashionable chintz dressing

gown, perhaps the one he usually wears, loosely thrown over his steel armour ... and in this curious costume drew his sword to kill the chamberlains who were sleeping near the king" (qtd in Nagler 475). Such a glaring anachronism startled the German, but he commented that the fact that no one else seemed to notice called for more criticism of the audience's inattention to the play than to the actor's poor costuming choice.

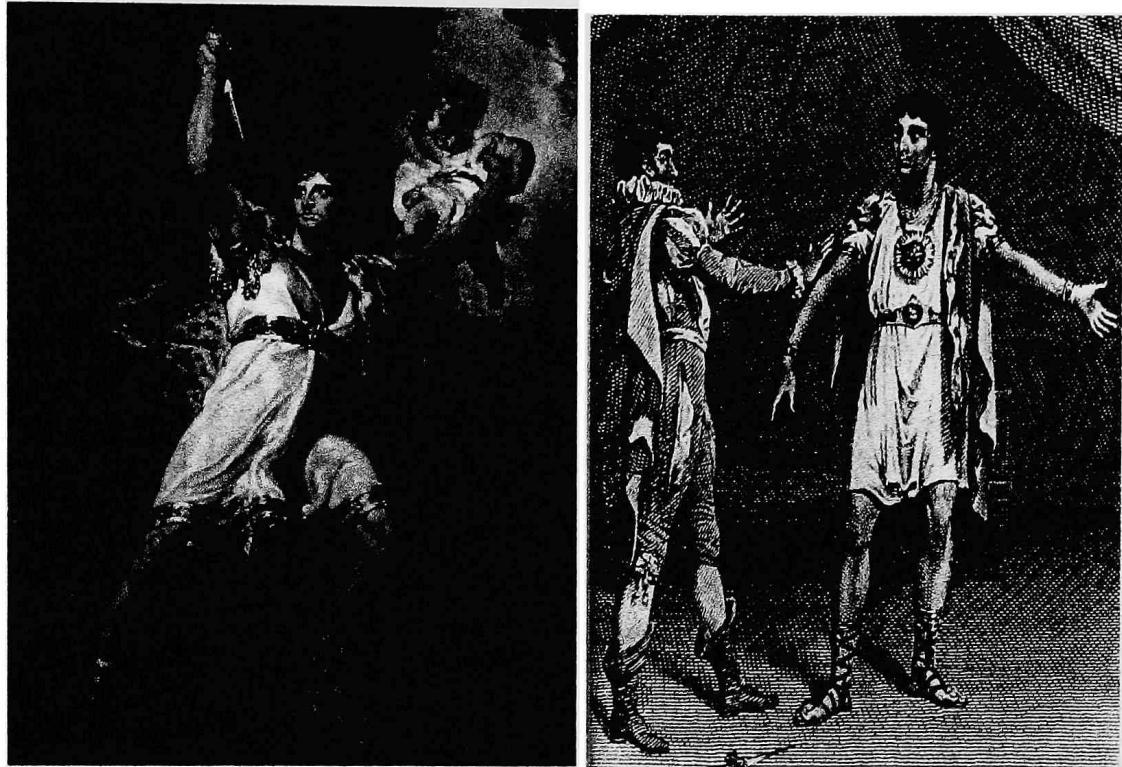
Romanticism was concerned with wildness, vitality, and moody atmosphere, so even a Roman toga was a bit too tame for what would come with the new century. Romantic plays of the late 1790s bear a not-so-subtle resemblance to what would later be called melodrama. They featured exotic settings, especially Scotland, which apparently was wild and untamed enough to house the stormy emotion of the characters. Sir Walter Scott helped to popularize this trend with his many historical novels set in long-forgotten eras, and his detailed descriptions of architecture, scenery, and clothing fanned the flames of historical curiosity. De Marly includes a full page of descriptions of costumes as printed in the published versions of plays from the Romantic era. These descriptions are not always completely correct in terms of historical accuracy, but they do show that playwrights were responding to a demand for detailed information about the visual aspects of their plays (Costume 66).

One of the more exotic settings of the early Romantic plays was for Richard Sheridan's Pizarro, a reworking of A.F. Kotzebue's German melodrama, staged at Drury Lane in 1799. Pizarro told the story of the legendary Spanish conquistador's conquest of the Incas in Peru. The Spaniard is not the hero, however; that role falls to the Inca leader, Rolla, played originally by Kemble. The character is exotic, emotional, virtuous, and

wild, but doomed to defeat at the hands of the evil European. He is the perfect Romantic hero. In two existing illustrations of Kemble in the role, it is clear that bare limbs are perfectly acceptable, as is a strong sense of ethnically different costuming with some attempt at historical accuracy. Kemble wears a short tunic cut above the knee, wide jeweled belt, high-laced sandals, and a leopard print cape. In one of the illustrations, another painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, Rolla is frozen in the middle of one of the most emotional moments in the play, when he saves the child of the woman he loves from certain death. He brandishes a dagger in one hand and holds the child aloft in the other, his animal skin cape swirling about him. Kemble is still obviously Caucasian with the obligatory short and wavy Titus hairstyle with stylish sideburns previously mentioned, but he dresses as much like a sixteenth-century Inca warrior as he could (Donohue pls.19, 20). These images prove that by the beginning of the nineteenth century male costuming in tragedy had pushed beyond the rigid rules that had governed most of the eighteenth century.

Kemble may have paved the way for costume reform, but that does not mean that he did not take occasional detours along the way. He wore contemporary, not historical, costume as Hamlet and Richard III. In his biography of the actor, Herschel Baker writes, “When Kemble appeared on the London scene, opulence instead of accuracy was emphasized” (263). Baker admits, however, that Kemble made some progress in costume reform, and his main gift to the theatre in that respect was not a strict adherence to the concept of accuracy but a devotion to the theatrical image he left with his audience:

Majestic John Kemble, classical in his toga, rolling out his stately declamations on a stage that to his admitting contemporaries was for all



John Phillip Kemble portrayed Sheridan's Incan hero Rolla in the closest thing the 1790s could get to accurate South American costume. Both of these illustrations show Kemble wearing a short tunic, animal print cloak, Roman sandals, and his own naturally curly hair. The portrait on the left, by Lawrence, shows the inherent theatricality of late eighteenth-century paintings of actors. (Folger Shakespeare Library)

the world like Augustan Rome – that is the prevailing impression one gets from reading through the theatrical documents of that bygone era. And the late eighteenth century, immensely pleased in the appearance of veracity and propriety, was undisturbed by the fact that it was not Brutus, nor was the toga the precise sort Brutus would have worn, nor would Brutus have recognized the massive piles of scenery as the forum. It was enough that a great actor had brought a new and zealous care to the staging of high tragedy. (269)

Another English actor admired for his fiery Romantic sensibility was Edmund Kean, who was best known for his passionate approach to the stage's famous villains; he excelled as Shylock, Richard III, Iago, and Sir Giles Overreach in Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts. His performance as Overreach was reportedly so full of terror and

emotional spirit that it caused several members of the audience, including Lord Byron, to fall into hysterical fits. Portraits of Kean generally capture his sense of furtiveness in these roles. An illustration of him in the costume of Iago shows him in light-colored form-fitting tights, dark folded-over boots, a doublet only reaching to his waist, and a Van Dyck style of lace collar. His costume is decorated with much braid and hanging trim, and the entire image has a Spanish feel. This would be entirely in keeping with tradition, which since the days of Elizabeth and the defeat of the Spanish Armada had associated Spanish clothing with villains. The most interesting aspect, however, is the absence of pants or trunk hose; the look is so revealing that it is practically nude, illustrating that the contemporary concept of exhibiting the male form was acceptable in the theatre, as well. Kean's Iago is seductively evil.



Edmund Kean's Macbeth wears a curious mix of period styles (tartan sash, pseudo-kilt, and sandals) and contemporary hair, but the look was common at the end of the eighteenth century. (Folger Shakespeare Library)

Despite his reputation for powerful acting, Kean was no great innovator in costuming. As discussed earlier, his costume for Richard III followed the theatrical convention of the previous century, and his costume as Overreach shows the lack of historical accuracy in the mixing of low-riding trunk hose, a floppy Van Dyck collar (instead of the more accurate starched ruff), early Renaissance slashing on the sleeves and doublet, and his contemporary wavy hair.

Although some actors were immensely popular in spite of their sometimes anachronistic costuming practices, by the 1820s historical accuracy had achieved a solid foothold in the English theatre. Charles Kemble (brother of John Philip) joined with playwright/designer James Robinson Planché in producing King John in 1823, a production like no other before it in terms of historical research and justification of its scenic elements, including the costumes. Their collaboration exhibited the height of what has been called antiquarianism, a pursuit of authentic historical support for accurate scenic design, costumes, and properties. The eighteenth century's forays into archeology had shown theatre designers how the ancient world really looked. Now these techniques of scientific discovery were applied to the fairly neglected medieval era. Planché studied every available book on ancient clothing and armor, consulted historians, and even visited Worcester Cathedral to study the carvings on King John's tomb for an accurate design. The actors of Covent Garden's troupe were not impressed, Planché wrote, and they complained that the audience would laugh at their silly clothes. The designer persevered, however, and noted that when the curtain first rose on the assembled cast in full armor and medieval tunics, the audience roared its approval and the actors were

astonished. The designer declared that a “complete reformation of costume upon the English stage” had begun (qtd in Nagler 462). Although the production was a major success, Kemble mounted only a few similar productions, and Planché would have to wait nearly ten years for a later actor/manager, Macready, to take up the banner of antiquarianism.



James Robinson Planché’s designs for Charles Kemble’s production of King John (left) and Hamlet (right) show how far costuming for male characters had come by the early nineteenth century. Historical accuracy was paramount by the 1820s when these designs were rendered. (British Library)

Any attempt at historical costuming was more successful when applied to the men in a company. Society was much more forgiving of tampering with the male figure than it was with any attempt to alter the female shape too drastically. Planché designed costumes for the entire cast of several Shakespearean productions, and while the women's costumes show obvious medieval signatures, mainly in decoration and accessories, the silhouettes clearly belong in the 1820s. This proves that the male image was more flexible and adaptable, while the women's look was as rigid as their corsets. De Marly states that the Romantic theatre was still a man's world because women's roles were as defined as their look:

It was and is always more difficult for an actress to be historical in her looks than for the male actor, because the management and the public would most admire the woman who was fashionable. [ . . . ] Society demanded that women be only decorations, not active characters or individuals; and the romantic period saw women as passive and helpless, heroines who had to be sacrificed or rescued because they had no strength themselves. [ . . . ] Men wanted women as decorative adjuncts, not as rivals, and it was the male managers of theatres, like producers of films, who decided what women would look like, and they wanted the contemporary idea of beauty. (Costume 68)

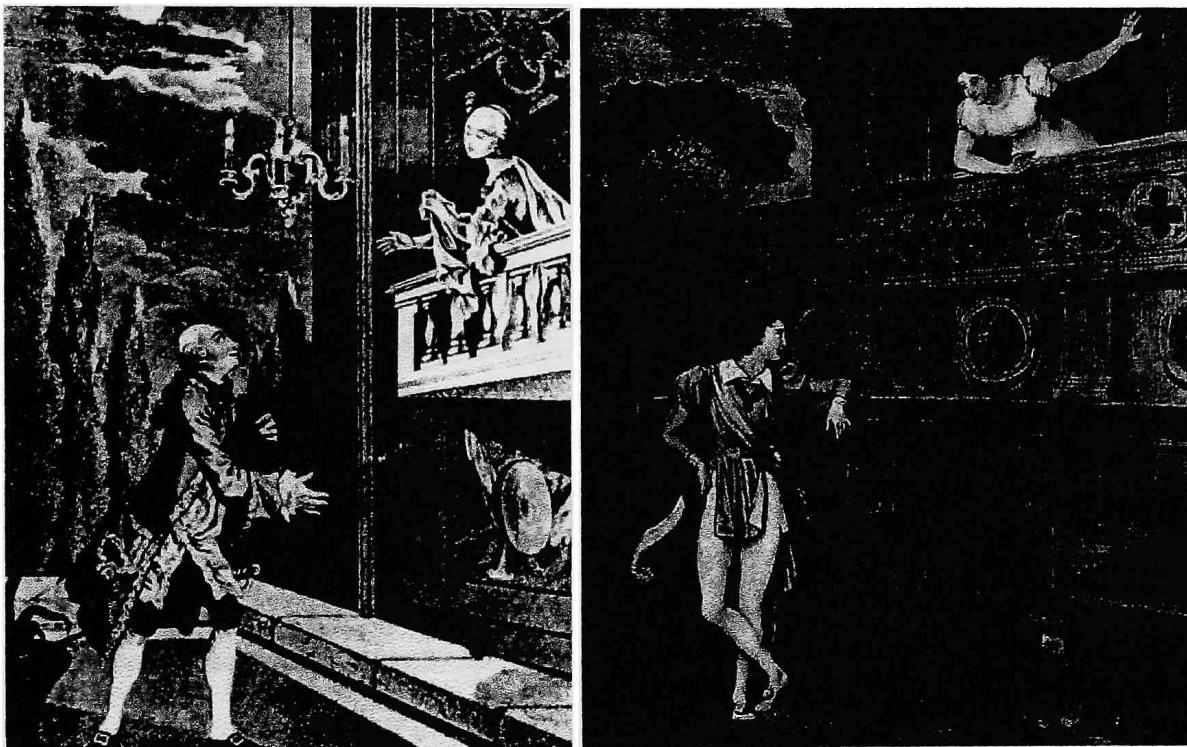
The Romantic movement, while stressing the traditionally feminine qualities of emotion and passion, did not improve the condition of women. Men were still the movers and shakers in the era's melodramatic plots, and as such the men were firmly in charge of every detail, including what the women wore. The masculine image was subject to change as men saw fit, but theatrical convention allowed women little room for experimentation in character or look.

In France, melodrama was becoming popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but Shakespeare was something else. They knew little of his works, and most of

the traditionalists in the French theatre saw little reason to study him. The Neoclassical influence was still strong with its emphasis on rules and governance of passion, none of which could be found in Shakespeare's plays. When Charles Kemble visited Paris with his troupe in 1827 and presented Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet, he outraged the neoclassicists and stirred the Romantic writers there into a frenzy. The Romantics in Germany had earlier realized the power of Shakespeare's emotionalism, but the French Romantics were now galvanized and declared all-out war on the old rules, much as society had ousted the fashion excesses of the aristocracy after the Revolution. Victor Hugo became the spokesman for the Romantic front when he wrote Hernani and presented it at that bastion of Neoclassicism, the Comédie Française, in 1830. With a plot centered on a Castilian outlaw, Hernani caused a riot on its opening night because Hugo dared his fellow playwrights to break all the Neoclassical rules and explore the full range of dramatic possibilities. The French theatre had felt rumblings of change in the years before Hernani, but Hugo had written the quintessential Romantic play – melodramatic (but with an unhappy ending), historical, passionate, and rebellious. With Romanticism growing stronger throughout the next decade, Talma's early attempts at historic costuming found greater favor among the new actors and managers, and although comedy continued for some time to be dressed in contemporary clothing, by 1815 Molière's comedies were being costumed in seventeenth-century fashions (Brockett 313).

Two engravings in Altman's Theater Pictorial illustrate the changes that had taken place between the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both illustrations depict the balcony scene from productions of Romeo and Juliet at Covent Garden. In the one from

1754, the actors wear what would have been the height of fashion for that year: Romeo in white hose, buckled shoes, flared coat with elaborate trim, white wig with pigeon curls, and dark tricorn carried in one hand. His Juliet wears a fashionable sacque dress with ruffled sleeves. In the second print, from 1827, Charles Kemble plays Romeo in full Renaissance finery: slippers, pleated velvet doublet slit at each hip, sleeves that puff at the shoulders and tighten along the forearm, draped sash and sword frog, and dark hat with a large white plume. His Juliet, however, wears what appears to be a stylish Empire-cut dress with small puffed sleeve caps and perfectly coiffed Victorian hair.



Spanger Barry as Romeo in 1754 (left) wears a fashionable suit, powdered and curled wig, and carries his tricorn hat neatly tucked under one arm. His Juliet wears a stylish sacque dress of the period. Charles Kemble (right) cuts a dashing figure as a true Renaissance Romeo in 1827. His hair is natural and his costume shows the increasing interest in historical accuracy. His Juliet, however, looks more Romantic than Renaissance. (British Museum)

The differences between these prints illustrate that while the women's costumes remain tied to contemporary fashion, the men's costumes had evolved into a historical accuracy that mirrored the gradual shift from Neoclassicism to Romanticism. Male actors enjoyed a freedom to display their bodies that women were not allowed. That freedom had been developing gradually for 170 years, but as the nineteenth century progressed to its midpoint, men's street clothing would reach what some fashion historians have described as a point of near stagnation. While almost yearly changes in street fashions distorted the shape of the female body for the rest of the century and on into the twentieth, the basic look for proper gentlemen was established as dark and undecorated but neatly fitted and stylishly uniform. In the theatre, men retained control over costume silhouettes, which meant that although their street wear was sober they could continue to explore their historical choices and appear in more varied costumes than their female counterparts who remained restricted by whatever shape their corsets and petticoats took from year to year.

In the theatre, new foundations had been laid for historical accuracy, so actors and managers increased research and elements of spectacle to attract audiences. Melodrama had become the most popular theatrical form of the early and mid-nineteenth century and had returned actors to stereotypical roles easily identified by the theatrical elements of music, action, and costume. Drawing-room comedies and later realistic dramas would take hold on audiences' imaginations, and costumes would continue to reflect the fashions of the day as actors portrayed characters of the day.

CHAPTER V  
COSTUMING AS MIRROR  
OR AS LEADER?

Throughout the years covered by this dissertation, men's clothing and the corresponding images that male actors presented on the stages of France and England ran parallel courses. Society's view of appropriate masculine behavior underwent a gradual evolution from acceptance of frivolous characters and fashions as pure comic fodder to a disdain and mistrust of such qualities as those exhibited by the Restoration fop and even those of the rakes of the same period. The corresponding evolution in men's fashions, as this dissertation has shown, is one of the best barometers of this progression because it provides a visual record of the masculine self-gaze.

One of the best ways to ascertain the true character of an era is to look at how the people of the time entertained themselves. In the years covered by this study, people generally loved the theatre, whether they belonged to the largely aristocratic audience of the Restoration or to the middle class that filled the cavernous auditoriums of the early nineteenth century. The chapters of this dissertation have attempted to show how the world of the theatre changed during these years because its audience changed. As audiences change, actors and managers alter their efforts to entertain that audience accordingly; the thrust of this study has been to prove that costuming, in particular that of men, was a clear indicator of both actor self-image and character identity.

As we have seen, for much of the 170 years covered in this study most actors made their own costuming decisions, and those decisions were based partly on what they perceived to be what the audience wanted to see. We have also seen, however, that these actors were individuals who based their decisions not only on their audiences' preferences and limitations, but also on what they themselves were willing to attempt in the name of their art. Some chose to follow theatrical traditions, as evidenced by the long life of the stereotypical costumes of the Greek and Roman tragic heroes, Richard III, and Falstaff; others were braver and willing to look beyond those traditions, like the Kembles, Kean, Macready, and Talma. They were willing to take risks and appear in costumes that spoke to the more forward-thinking members of their audiences, and because these men took such risks, costuming for men in particular moved from a reliance on tradition and standard portrayals to greater attempts to reflect character, individuality, and dramatic purpose. The changes these men were able to effect paved the way for costuming with greater attention to historical accuracy and to psychological motivation for the character, which in turn led to greater realism in the theatre. Once the costume fit the period and the dramatic situation of the play, and provided more subtle hints to character for both the actor and the audience, such realism would become the dominant dramatic form from the middle of the nineteenth century to today.

To look at the stage and the men who performed on it is to see how social a form of art theatre can be. As the stage became more and more commercial during the late seventeenth century, playwrights and managers sought more entertaining ways to draw audiences. A multitude of social factors influenced these efforts. As Campbell says at the

end of her essay on costuming, “To trace the history of stage costume from 1660 to 1823, then, is to discover that the stage depended for the possibility of its development upon the receipts from pit and boxes; that it shared the aesthetic theories of the time in common with all other arts; and that its artistic effects were conditioned by matters of construction and illumination” (138). Artists were also scenic designers, and her comment illustrates the fact that all scenic art in the theatre generally followed the lead of visual art.

Costuming also followed the changes in visual art and lighting advancements, but more importantly, if audiences did not come to the theatre, there would have been no theatre. Costuming in general developed as it did because audiences were ready to accept change and actors were ready to attempt it.

Researching the subject of male costuming has presented a number of challenges. As Nicoll warned, although there seems to be an “embarrassment of iconographic riches” in the search for theatrical images during this time, the pedigree of many such images seems suspicious (144). The fact that actors generally provided their own costumes without the benefit of a single person as a costume designer or coordinator means that evidence has been scattered throughout a multitude of sources; some of these sources contradict each other as they try to identify illustrations of actors. While there are many books on how to recreate historical costumes for the stage, only two fairly comprehensive books on the actual history of theatrical costuming are available (de Marly’s Costume on the Stage 1600-1940 and Laver’s Costume in the Theatre), which further illustrates how unfocused the field of information and evidence has become. We may read personal accounts of visits to the theatre, or diaries of the actors themselves, but personal

narratives carry the writers' own personal biases, which may cloud the factual history they claim to recount.

In short, it is often impossible or at least suspect to say that beyond the shadow of a doubt, a certain actor wore a certain costume in a certain role. That is not to say that evidence is not available, and this study has included as much of it as possible. It is simply necessary to say that much of this evidence is general, and while specifics do exist, they are best taken as a part of the whole picture of masculine costuming from 1660 to 1830. This dissertation has shown how this picture developed and has provided some explanations for the most important aspects of its development. It has been shown that this 170-year period saw great change in both the world and in the theatre that reflected it, and because men dominated this period, their sense of gender and empowerment proved to be an important aspect of the era's history.

In the modern theatre, directors and actors have a wealth of techniques and research materials at their disposal. When we look at a play from the years covered by this study, we can find historical fashion information to assist us in designing costumes that fit the period; we can read numerous reviews and analyses of the play and its themes; we can read history books to determine what was happening when the play was written or when it is set. Recalling Simon Callow's comments on playing Restoration fops as flaming queens, it becomes clear that reading facts and putting the actor in an accurate costume is not enough. An understanding of how the character fit into his social setting and of what he represented on the Restoration stage helps the actor create a more complete portrayal of a character from long ago. Carlson says that when we attempt to

recreate a play from another time in our history, we face some interesting challenges in recreating believable characters and situations for an audience that may not be well-versed in the play's historical origins or settings. To look at a painting from the same time as the play would be fairly easy; the painting has not changed since the artist made his last brush stroke. A play, however, is re-interpreted each time it is produced (Theatre Semiotics 119). We have seen evidence that even in the eighteenth century, Shakespeare might not have recognized some of his own plays or some of his own characters because of that era's attitude toward the editing and subsequent presentation of dramatic material.

Modern directors take liberties with scripts, sometimes editing the words themselves and sometimes changing the visual interpretation to suit current tastes or trends. The theatres of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were no different, so when we look to their costuming traditions, we can see that they were merely adapting their presentations to suit what their audiences wanted to see. Shakespeare did not costume his actors in historically accurate clothing; for the period covered by this study Molière, Betterton, and Garrick were merely following long-accepted theatrical practice in dressing their actors in contemporary – or at least almost-contemporary – fashions. This practice survives, as we have seen, as long as people in the real world hold on to traditional values and social roles. During the period covered by this dissertation, these values and roles faced some of their most serious challenges to date, and as these elements of society began to show signs of change, the image of the male on stage also changed. The goal of theatrical presentation was to make a connection with the audience and to present characters so that the spectators not only understood who and what they

were in the dramatic situation, but also so that audience members believed that the character was a real man like themselves. Susanne Langer says that drama is a unique art form because of this shared interpretation: "Drama is more variable, more tolerant of choices made by performing artists, than any other art and mode" (314). Georg Lichtenberg, a prolific contributor to firsthand accounts of eighteenth-century theatre productions, and a proponent of contemporary costume in historical plays, summed up this attitude from his own playgoer's perspective:

The trifling momentary pleasure, so to speak, given me by the worthless splendour of a masquerade costume, does not make amends for the harm done to the play in every other respect. All the spectators are aware that something is lacking, though all do not believe this to be the cause of it. The taste of an actor of tolerable discernment, who knows the strength and the foibles of the public before which he must appear, in this transcends all rules. (qtd in Thomas 331-332)

Theatre is not static; if it were, it would no longer be necessary. The theatrical men of the Restoration, Neoclassic, Baroque, and Romantic periods watched and listened to their audiences just as much as the audiences did them. The result, as this study has shown, is a give-and-take relationship that produced important changes in the way masculinity was portrayed in the theatre. Styan provides an excellent summary of this process in Drama, Stage and Audience:

The bulk of theatre history is an account of how the various parties to the play, audience, actors, author, chime with the best features of the physical theatre and the development of its conventions. It was Charles Macklin who first played Shylock for sympathy in 1741, but in retaining the conventional red wig of the comedian, he balanced the eighteenth century's new interest in the psychological depth of Shakespeare's character with its continuing belief that the Jew was comic. Edmund Kean removed the red wig, replaced it with a black one and presented an authentic Shylock to match the new realistic approach to the classics of the stage. (137)

Through fops and wigs to Flugel's Great Masculine Renunciation to the stirrings of the Romantic stage, the concept of manhood underwent some of the most significant changes in history. As the inner man morphed into a stoic gentleman, the outer man became a respectable, somber gentleman, as influenced by history, science, and politics. Men on the streets could look at each other to see these changes, or they could just step into a theatre and see themselves and their sensibilities reflected in the mirror of the stage as actors played out the changes as they saw them.

Actor Callow says: "It's not the human body that's changed, it's the clothes" (84). This may be true, but as this study has shown, clothes can give the illusion of change, as both men and women have, over the centuries, padded and restricted their bodies to create what society deems to be the most pleasing shape. Those shapes immediately telegraphed the individual's self-image and position in society, and this dissertation has illustrated how important that concept of masculine image was both on the street and on the stage.

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