EDICIONES COMPLUTENSE

Complutense Journal of English Studies
ISSN-e: 2386-3935

ARTÍCULOS

"You are Equipt I see a la Mode D'Espagne": Transnational Cross-Dressing and the Performance of National Identity in Mary Pix's *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706)

Laura Martínez-García
Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana, Universidad de Oviedo

https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cjes.103530 Fecha de recepción: 23/6/25 • Fecha de publicación: 23/04/26

Abstract: This article examines how Mary Pix's *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706) uses transnational cross-dressing to critique national identity and gender norms. Written against the backdrop of the War of Spanish Succession, the play relocates English characters to a caricatured Spain, where English men don Spanish clothing. This theatrical cross-dressing contributes to contemporary debates about emerging national identities, both Englishness and Spanishness, and highlights their performative nature. This article argues that national identity is constructed through a series of markers that can be imitated, ridiculed, and ultimately rejected and draws attention to sartorial identities. Spanish fashion—especially the *golilla*—becomes a symbol of decline, rigidity, and emasculation, while English masculinity is framed as pragmatic and modern. The play's farcical tone masks a deeper ideological critique: England's apparent superiority is affirmed through direct (if somewhat timid) praise and through contrast with a decaying Spanish other. Pix demonstrates how Anglo-Iberian relations and emerging nationalism affected women's lives while she subtly questions whether English liberty, especially for women, is a genuine condition or merely another seductive performance.
Keywords: Transnational cross-dressing; Mary Pix; national identity; Anglo-Iberian relations; English drama

ES "Vas vestido, por lo que veo, a la Moda de España": Travestismo transnacional y la performatividad de la identidad nacional en *The Adventures in Madrid (1706)* de Mary Pix

Resumen: Este artículo estudia cómo *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706) de Mary Pix utiliza el travestismo transnacional para cuestionar la identidad nacional y las normas de género. Escrita durante la Guerra de Sucesión Española, la obra traslada a personajes ingleses a una España grotesca, donde son los hombres ingleses quienes visten ropas españolas. Este travestismo enlaza con los debates contemporáneos sobre las identidades nacionales emergentes, qué significa ser español o inglés en el siglo XVIII, y pone de relieve el carácter performativo de la pertenencia a un país. Este artículo sostiene que la identidad nacional se construye mediante una serie de marcadores que pueden ser imitados, ridiculizados y rechazados, prestando especial atención a la vestimenta. La ropa española —especialmente la golilla— se convierte en símbolo de decadencia, rigidez y emasculación, mientras que la masculinidad inglesa se presenta como pragmática y moderna. El tono bufo de la obra oculta una crítica ideológica más profunda: si bien es cierto que la identidad masculina inglesa se construye a través del elogio discreto y del contraste con el español abyecto, es innegable que Pix cuestiona sutilmente si la libertad inglesa, especialmente en el caso de las mujeres, es una condición real o simplemente otra identidad performativa.
Palabras clave: Travestismo trasnacional; Mary Pix; identidad nacional; relaciones anglo-ibéricas; teatro inglés

How to cite: Martínez-García. L: (2026). "You are Equipt I see a la Mode D'Espagne": Transnational Cross-Dressing and the Performance of National Identity in Mary Pix's *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706) (2023), en *Complutense Journal of English Studies* 34, e103530. https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cjes.103530

1. National pride and the construction of the 'other'

The Adventures in Madrid, written by Mary Pix and premiered sometime around 1706, tells the story of two Spanish heroines (Laura and Clarinda) who find their freedom curtailed by the actions and vigilance of Clarinda's old husband, don Gómez. With the help of their friend (Lisset) disguised as a eunuch (Liscias), they manage to outwit the old man and marry two English gallants, Bellmour and Gaylove. For their part, both Englishmen enlist the help of Jo (an English servant) and don Gusman (a Spanish "pimp" in love with Lisset) to free their lovers from the avarice and cruelty of the old man. Don Philip, Clarinda's brother, who don Gómez has ordered to be killed in the Indies, hides in Madrid assisting the Englishmen and his sister escape the clutches of the old corrupt man and winning Emilia's hand (Gaylove's sister) in return.

This farcical play presents us with all the elements of Spanish cloak-and-dagger comedies: the archetypal old man who is jealous and greedy, plans to outwit him, resourceful heroines, helpless maidens, smart servants, brave gallants and a triumphant happy ending. What makes this play even more interesting is the fact that the action is transposed to Spain, where (so the belief was at the time) this kind of far-fetched intrigues and disguises were far more common than in London. Thus, while it would seem absurd for an English father or husband in London to lock up the women under his care, the transposition (or *deplácement*, to use the critical term) of the action to Spain gives verisimilitude and justifies such a plot device and all the subsequent intrigues characters devise to achieve freedom. This *deplácement* is not merely a mechanism to make the plot more plausible, but a strategy to pit the two nations against each other and to present to the audience a flattering portrait of themselves, since national identities are never created in isolation. As Lezra explains, "the imaginary processes of national, social, religious, or ethnic consolidation (...) are never autonomous, never acts of sovereign self-fashioning, but always depend upon an imitation of, and distancing from, and hence upon a form of dialectical subjection to, perceived others" (2009, 120). And, for centuries, Spain was the chosen 'other'.

Since the early medieval times, Spain was the chosen 'other' against which Englishness was formed, due to the centuries-old rivalry between the two nations and their historical fight for supremacy. As Serrano-González states in her study of Beaumont and Fletcher's rewriting of Cervantes, literature played a central role in this nationalistic creation of the 'other' by dramatizing "the perceived ethos and social norms of a source culture that inspired, simultaneously, hostility and admiration" (2022, 20). This vacillation between esteem and rejection towards the Iberian nation is summarised by Serrano, quoting Griffin, as "the ambivalent state of cultural Hispanophilia and religiopolitical Hispanophobia (Griffin 2009: 1–26) that marked Renaissance Anglo-Iberian relations" (2022, 20).

This uncertainty was very much present in 1706 when the play was staged and published and when the two nations were, once again, immersed in a political and military conflict: the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714). This war confronted the Grand Alliance against France and Spain, consequently involving almost every European country and making it a conflict of unprecedented scale (Falkner 2015, 3).

Still, and although Spanish motifs, plots, characters, setting and even whole plays are used in an attempt at "sketching England's own contours, which were similar, but differentiated" (Lezra 2009, 120), research proves that many authors do not merely use these devices to humiliate rival countries and offer positive pictures of themselves to their audience, but that their plays also engage "with the target culture's political and ideological matrix, offering –oblique– commentary on the authors' own society" (Serrano González 2022, 20). One such example would be Centlivre's strategic use of *déplacement* to both forge English national identity and advance protofeminist thought. By setting plays in the Iberian Peninsula, she created a critical contrast which served to subtly critique English society from a distance, advocating for greater female agency and social mobility; thus, this strategic choice functioned not only as a political tool but contributed to shaping her plays as a "liminoid stage where, through *déplacement*, gender ideologies, identities, discourses of truth and national stereotypes can be contested, reformulated and interrogated" (Martínez-García 2017, 54).[1]

Pix employs this spatial transposition and the negative portrayal of Spaniards to similar effect and with the same critical intentions: to buttress the emerging national English identity through opposition with the 'other', holding up mirror in front of her audience's face, confronting them with their own actions and bringing them to reflect on their own cultural norms and views on the subjugation of women. As Cynthia Lowenthal has observed, in Pix's work *The Spanish Wives* (1706), plot devices such as "celebratory speeches" commending the freedom husbands allow women in England "can be read as ironic complaints, based on gender differences, as much as genuine political statements" (1999, 42). Thus, both in the case of Pix and Centlivre we find that their gender, the fact that they are female playwrights, adds another layer of meaning and a different way of interpreting their plays "as a lament for the oppressive circumstances for women in her own country, as much as criticism of foreign practices" (Lowenthal 1999, 43)

One particular strategy Pix employs in *The Adventures in Madrid* to stage this contrast between English and Spanish identities and to address notions of masculinity in the process, is transnational cross-dressing. In a reversal of the expected gender dynamics of theatrical disguise, it is not the women, but the English men, who don Spanish clothing to navigate the Madrid setting. This sartorial transformation functions as both a comic device and a symbolic gesture that underscores not just the fluidity of national identity but the inextricable link between clothes and identity. Through this cross-dressing across borders, Pix exposes the performative nature of nationality, ultimately reinforcing English superiority through the temporary and

[1] For an in-depth discussion on the topic (Martínez-García 2019, 2015, 2017).

ridiculed adoption of Spanish traits, while offering very subtle commentary and criticism on gender relations in her own country.

This paper argues that, through the use of transnational cross-dressing, *deplácement* and the intermingling of Spanish and English characters, tropes and plots, Pix's farce not only paints a picture of the state of Anglo-Iberian relations in the 1700s, but also contributes to the emerging English nationalism[2] by painting Spaniards as the aberrant and abject 'other' while reinforcing her pro-women message.

2. Fashion and politics

The study of clothing has a long tradition and history; from archaeology to anthropology and law, fashion studies are one fruitful field for all types of scholars. It is generally agreed that it was the Renaissance and early modern period that articulated the inexorable link between clothes and identity, bringing the term "'fashion' to its Latin origin as the verb 'to make', or, in its biblical sense, 'to create', i.e. creating a self through their appearance" and thus investing clothing with the power to "materialize identity" (Griffey 2019, 15).

As Elizabeth Currie points out in her introduction to *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Renaissance*, clothes became political in the early modern period through the growth of a printed media which allowed for the circulation of a wide variety of texts dealing with garments "from prescriptive writings, manuals on etiquette and domestic management to travel accounts and festival books" (2018, 1). Currie argues that these varied written testimonies fostered a greater awareness of how the dynamics of morality, gender, status, and authority were visually communicated through apparel. Consequently, such texts help illuminate the ways in which multiple layers of a person's identity, whether sexual, geographical, or political, were intricately tied to their sartorial choices (2018, 1).

Furthermore, during this time, clothing not only gained new cultural weight but also offered a tool for deception as the social structures of the early modern world grew increasingly complex (Aust et al. 2019, 2). During the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the economic changes and the social shifts derived from the dissolution of feudalism and the rise of city life, led to a preoccupation with social mobility and the possibility of confusion of one's identity (social status and wealth). Consequently, as urban elites grew wealthier and the expansion of global trade introduced a wider array of novel fabrics and accessories, apparel naturally emerged as a crucial instrument for asserting social boundaries and actively shaping individual public personas (Aust et al. 2019, 3).

Therefore, and as Weller explains, "the growing number of sumptuary laws issued by political authorities in Europe since the Late Middle Ages highlights the role of dress as an important marker of difference" (2019, 52) since most of these laws (which were passed at different times in different European territories throughout the early modern period) sought to maintain class distinctions primarily by limiting access to opulent garments and luxurious materials to specific, privileged social groups (Aust et al. 2019, 5). Fashion had the power to both order society and disrupt that same hierarchy.

Theatre, which allowed for actors (usually belonging to the lower classes) to wear the clothes and accoutrements of the wealthy, was the focus of many attacks due to this confusion and obfuscation of identity. Moralists at the time railed against the stage because in allowing lesser men to fashion themselves as elites, it contradicted God's intentions in creating clothes, as seen in the case of Prynne who claims,

> [Why] God ordained apparel at the first, was onely to cover nakedness, to fence the body against cold, winde, raine, and other annoyances: to put men in minde of their penury, their mortality, their spirituall clothing from Heaven, and the like; and to distinguish one Sex, one Nation, one dignity, office, calling, profession from another.' (Shulman 2007, 81)

This study focuses precisely on how clothing operates as a visible marker of national and ethnic identity in early modern performance. Foreign clothes, and thus, foreign identities, became known to others through costume books. As Weller (2019, 53–54) notes, these volumes compartmentalized the world into easily identifiable demographic and social groups based on factors such as rank, religion, and ethnicity, even though they often promoted a biased, nationalistic agenda that distorted other cultures. Clothes ordered society. Garments and costume books became geographical maps, reflecting the early modern urge to visually organize, categorize, and frequently subordinate foreign peoples, making fashion become a matter of nationality (Currie 2018, 1).

More importantly, nationalistic sentiment intermingled with economic worries in the literature of the time, with many authors criticising the trend of abandoning English-made materials for imported fabrics. Shulman (2007) illustrates this by examining a wide variety of sources, from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, to the intriguing Robert Greene's *A quip for an upstart courtier: or, A quaint dispute between velvet breeches and cloth breeches* (a dialogue between a pair of Italian velvet breeches and a pair of English-cloth ones). In these texts, authors rail against foreign fashions, equating them to treason, unmanliness, and all manner of sins and vices. Thus, while in origin sumptuary legislation had economic protectionism at its core (as proved by laws passed in the 14th century to limit the use of foreign cloth and revive the local trade), the early modern period also saw dress as a matter of patriotism and national pride. As Hentschell (2002, 543) notes, fabrics were not only associated with specific nations, but they actively helped "create sentiments of nationhood" by linking the clothing directly to the country of origin.

---

[2] For a more detailed discussion of the terms nationalism and patriotism (Lowenthal 1999).

At times of political confrontation and turmoil in international relations, to dress in foreign clothes was often perceived as a betrayal of one's own country. While garments in their unworn state might clearly indicate a specific national origin, the actual wearing of foreign apparel blurred these clear-cut boundaries (2002, 544). This practice created profound anxiety, as it obscured a person's true country of origin and, more troublingly, cast doubt upon their political loyalties.

Furthermore, as moralists of the time pointed out, this sartorial transgression went beyond mere appearance. Donning the dress of other nations threatened to erase inherent English virtues, acting as a form of cultural contagion that could corrupt individuals and push them to adopt the vices and worst qualities associated with foreign nations (Hentschell 2002). The threat of contagion by inferior national identities was a recurrent concern in contemporary writings and a frequent source of comic relief in Restoration drama. As Lowenthal notes in her analysis of clothing and national identity in Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1999), these anxieties are often played out humorously in plays where characters adoption of foreign clothes and manners lead to absurd behaviours and affectations. Men strutting about in powdered wigs, affecting French accents as Mr Fopling Flutter does in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), or swearing by the incongruously un-Spanish oath "by St-Iago" are undeniably ridiculous. Yet transnational cross-dressing goes beyond a mere comedic device. It serves as a means of articulating and reinforcing English national identity by staging it in contrast with, and in moral and cultural superiority to, the abject, foreign 'other.'

3. Transnational cross-dressing: English Masculinity in Spanish Disguise

Considering the complex associations between clothes, nationality and gender, the use of the term transnational cross-dressing does not merely refer to the act of adopting foreign garments, but rather to the performative crossing of national identities through sartorial means. The term borrows from theatrical cross-dressing, where changing one's clothes has the potential to destabilize established categories such as sex, class, and nationality. Numerous plays feature young women donning male attire to access the freedom of movement and agency denied to them by societal norms. Breeches roles, however, are a different case altogether, as they involve issues of sexuality, bodily exposure, and the eroticisation of the actress that fall beyond the scope of this paper.

More significantly, in *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706), it is not women, as might be expected in a comedy of disguise, but English men who assume Spanish dress in their pursuit of greater freedom of movement and agency. This transnational masquerade not only grants temporary access to foreign forms of power but also exposes the constructed and performative nature of two national identities still in development: Englishness and Spanishness.

Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, this use of costume reveals the dangers of assuming that identity can be apprehended through visual markers such as clothing, which emerges here as unstable and mutable, easily imitated and therefore easily falsified. One can thus "wear" an identity, that is, perform Spanishness or Englishness, through the mere act of donning specific garments, rendering identity a slippery and unstable construct. Furthermore, as Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry suggests, this kind of exaggerated imitation of Spanishness does not confirm the power of the original but rather parodies it, highlighting its fragility and artificiality. In this context, the Spanish disguise operates not only as a comic tool but also as a cultural critique, allowing Pix to question the stability of national identity while simultaneously reinforcing the ideological supremacy of the English self.

In Act I scene I we find the young Englishmen, Bellmour and Gaylove; the latter remarks, "save ye *Don Bellmour* as a Man may say, you are Equipt I see *a la Mode D'Espagne*. What canst thou mean by this ---------- S'death I'd assoon change the Habit of thy Sex and wear the Womens Furbelows as these Damn'd Golilia's." (Pix 2018, 1).

Though seemingly a throwaway comic line, this opening exchange is deeply significant. These are the first words uttered by a character in the play, and they immediately convey disdain for Spanish fashion, while also alluding to a threat to English masculinity. As Roze Hentschell has shown,[3] the donning of foreign clothing in early modern England was often seen as effeminate and unpatriotic. In this context, Bellmour's Spanish costume becomes more than a theatrical device: it is a cultural masquerade that, from the outset, marks recognisably Spanish garments as feminising and unpatriotic, reinforcing national and gender boundaries through sartorial critique.

In Gaylove's remark, the act of wearing a *golilia* (or *golilla*, the stiff starched collar characteristic of Spanish court dress) is equated with a form of identity transformation, even of national betrayal. The *golilla* was among the most recognisable and symbolically charged items of Iberian male dress, so much so that Wunder refers to it as "quintessentially Spanish" (2017, 112). As Tara Zanardi notes, by the mid-sixteenth century this collar had become a powerful symbol of Spanish national identity. Diego Velázquez, in his role as royal painter, actively shaped the image of the Habsburg dynasty as unequivocally Spanish by portraying the royal family in garments such as the *guardainfante* and the *golilla*, items which came to epitomise the height of seventeenth-century Spanish fashion and national identity (2016, 30).

Thus, this royal endorsement elevated both the *guardainfante* and the *golilla* to the status of official Spanish "uniform", markers that distinguished Spanish dress from the increasingly dominant French fashions of the rest of Europe (Wunder 2019, 265). Images of Philip IV and his courtiers wearing the *golilla* circulated widely,

[3] "The men who buy velvet cloth in order to dress the part of the court-dweller are also emasculating themselves" (2002, 561–62).

and foreign visitors to the court would have seen the collar as a staple of Spanish regal fashion, particularly after it was favoured by Philip IV from 1623 onward (Zanardi 2016, 53).

Wunder explains that this smaller collar came to substitute the lavish and ostentatious *lechuguilla* which was the height of royal fashions in the reign of Philip III (1598-1621). By the time Philip IV (1621-1665) inherited the throne, Spain was in decline the most powerful European Empire: excessive expenditure and the generally opulent lifestyle of the Spanish court was seen as decadent and self-indulgent and lavish clothes were the most obvious physical sign of this moral and economic decline.[4] Thus, the young king, desperate to return to a time of splendour associated with his grandfather Philip II (González 2019, 20), brought back the more restrained fashions of his forebearers: dark unadorned clothes and a more simple, understated collar, the *golilla*.

While this sartorial austerity may have been read positively within the Spanish territories, it was interpreted quite differently in England. English cultural discourse reframed Spanish attempts at reviving imperial grandeur as evidence of national stagnation, rigidity, and absurd pride. As Cynthia Lowenthal argues, the defining features of Spanish male identity were commonly read through clothing: their garments became emblems of

> their pride, especially as symbolized by their cloaks and ruffs, which themselves symbolized the Spaniards' being lost, mentally, in a world of their past grandeur; their torpor, a laziness that contributed to their decline and allowed them to think they had a right to live off plundering others; and their obstinacy, a refusal to admit a loss of power. (1999, 45–46)

Crucially, by the 1670s, the *golilla* had fallen out of general use in Spain and was confined mainly to court ceremonial. For English audiences, its continued use was seen not only as anachronistic, but symbolised Spain's refusal to modernise, a clear sign of Spain's cultural and political regression. At a moment of renewed conflict between England and Spain with the War of Spanish Succession, Pix's audience would have instantly understood the mockery embedded in Bellmour's disguise and Gaylove's scorn as the stiff collar was seen "as [a] dusty symbol[s] of the Old Regime" (Wunder 2017, 130), a visual confirmation of the country's worst qualities: arrogance and stubbornness.

Further textual evidence reinforces this satirical reading and view of Spanish dress and character as proud, inflexible and living off past glory. Only a few lines after the opening exchange, Bellmour concedes to Gaylove's judgment, admitting the discomfort caused by his Spanish costume: "Transport her my close Collar too; 'twill hide the Wrinkles of her Neck, for I am sure it pinches mine intolerably" (Pix 2018, 2). The *golilla* is here feminised and ridiculed, suggested as a gift for an ageing English woman and unsuitable for a man of action since it impedes movement. Even within Spain, as José Cadalso would note, the garment was regarded as notoriously uncomfortable (Zanardi 2016, 53). In the play, this physical discomfort becomes metaphorical: it symbolises the perceived rigidity and inflexibility of Spanish manliness, a masculinity, like the Spanish Empire itself, in decline, constrained by excessive formality, inaction and obsolete codes of honour. English identity, by contrast, is implicitly and indirectly constructed as dynamic, practical and modern, rejecting the outdated aesthetic and moral codes associated with haughty Spain.

Later on in this act, Jo, the English servant, offers his own complaint about the restrictive Spanish clothing his master has forced upon him: "the Devil take his Civility, my damn'd Spanish Cloaths are so stiff I cannot bend my Body" (Pix 2018, 4). This additional detail reinforces the comic association between Spanish fashion and immobility, positioning Spanish masculinity as both ridiculous and ineffective when compared to the supposed freedom of English men. This critique is not a gratuitous jab at the Spanish, but part of a broader strategy to define Englishness in opposition to an abject and decadent other. For a servant bent on intrigue, who will probably need to jump over garden walls, crawl under fences, scale ladders, hide and even fight, the Spanish clothes are restrictive and impede movement, thus reinforcing not only the view of Spanish customs and society as dictatorial, but giving shape to England's self-perception as a land of freedom.

This absurd formality is further parodied in the same act when Don Gusman, hired by the English gallants to assist in their romantic intrigues, introduces himself with the ostentatious declaration: "My Appellation is, Alonzo de Mendez de Antonia Ferdinando de Gusman" (Pix 2018, 4). His pompous, overlong name stands in stark contrast not just with the simplicity if Jo's name, but with his actual function within the play as a pimp and exemplifies the disjunction between appearance and substance that defines the English caricature of the Spanish nobleman.

This moment, steeped in irony, ridicules the Spanish obsession with lineage and hereditary prestige, implicitly celebrating the English ideal of merit, pragmatism, and individual agency embodied by his English counterpart, Jo. For Pix's audience, the joke would have been unmistakable, reinforcing the ideological opposition between a decadent, hollow aristocracy and a supposedly rational, action-driven English identity. This is further emphasised by the humorous contrast in the two men's attitude to danger: while Jo is a self-confessed coward who longs to be back in England and out of the dangerous reach of jealous and violent Spaniards, Gusman willingly seeks it out in an attempt of reuniting with his beloved Lisset in prison. Never, not once, does it occur to Gusman to try and liberate her, something a more practical mind would have tried.

This ideological contrast between English and Spanish masculinity is further reflective of the importance of social class as a key component of national identity. England, by the early eighteenth century, was

[4] "The elaborate, expensive *lechuguilla* represented the waste and excess of Philip III's regime, and it became the focal point of the reforms that Philip IV, under the guidance of the Duke of Olivares, sought to implement in the early years of his reign" (Wunder 2017, 117)

witnessing the emergence of a powerful merchant and professional class whose ideals of industriousness, rationality, and social mobility were becoming their distinguishing features. As Brown explains, this is the time where England witnesses "the ultimate ascendancy of a new economic system based increasingly upon a money economy and capitalist production" (1982, 437) a turning point from early Restoration economics and social systems. Within this new landscape, which emerged after the Glorious Revolution and which expanded through the reign of Queen Anne, "of particular importance is the enormous growth of a class of prosperous tradesmen" (Brown 1982, 438) which become wielders of economic status, political power and social currency. Thus, early eighteenth-century English identity became increasingly shaped by the values of this burgeoning middle class and the theatre of the time (Augustan drama) catered to the tastes and ideas of this social group. Pix, "responsive to the audience's interest and the expectations of the Establishment to succeed as a playwright" (Yebra 2014, 159) was also part of this social class, having been brought up in this middle-class background and having married a wealthy merchant.

Furthermore, "as Britain grew into its role of colonial and imperial empire, the theatre also served a means of negotiating imaginary relations between what the English saw as central—themselves— and peripheral—anybody else" (Straub et al. 2017, xxx) which explains the stark differences between the English male characters, who ultimately embody a rising ideal of merit-based identity and bourgeois pragmatism and the Spanish men who are portrayed as obsessed with lineage, nobility, and hereditary privilege.

Another identitary category closely linked to the English characterisation of Spanish men and their attire is gender, and more specifically their perceived effeminacy, a trait frequently associated with the excessive formality and restrictive nature of garments such as the *golilla*, whose stiffness impedes movement and aligns the wearer with passivity, a traditionally feminine trait. Gaylove's reaction to Bellmour's adoption of Spanish dress exemplifies this anxiety: the *golilla* is not simply unfashionable, but profoundly un-English and emasculating. His exclamation—"S'death I'd assoon change the Habit of thy Sex and wear the Womens Furbelows as these Dam'd Golilia's" (Pix 2018, 1)—explicitly blurs the distinction between national and gendered identity, equating transnational cross-dressing with gender transgression. Crucially, Gaylove likens the quintessentially Spanish male accessory to furbelows, ornamental female frills and ruffles associated with frivolity and excess. In his eyes, then, Spanish clothes are a form of frivolous emasculation; to appear Spanish is to forfeit not only one's Englishness, but also one's masculinity, two interdependent constructs that, within the ideological framework of the play, are portrayed as fundamentally incompatible with Spanishness.

The same way Spanish laws prohibited the use of excessive ruffles and big collars reminiscent of Philip III and excess (Wunder 2017; Zanardi 2016), English culture rejected the more discreet but equally limiting *golilla* as unmanly and inappropriate for the active display of English manhood. This double rejection, first of Spanish extravagance and then Spanish rigidity, reveals a cultural logic in which manliness is visually constructed and where Spanish fashion codes and their associated notions of honour and masculinity is ridiculed. Such is the case of Bellmour's satirical account of the spectacles he is forced to wear:

> Behold what a pair of Spectacles my Rogue of a Taylor has brought me, at Sight of which I in a great Passion bid him look in my Face and guess if I wanted those Helps. Don Thimble with the Gravity of a Corrigidore answer'd, 'twas a Proof of Manhood not of Age, and by the solemn Oath of St. Sago, Swore not a Hero of fourteen durst pretend to a piece of Gallantry without these Magnifying Glasses, adorn'd his Nose and alter'd his Speech. *puts them on)* Do ye understand me Friend. (Pix 2018, 1)

In this comically exaggerated anecdote, which seems to precede classic 'tailor' jokes, the Spanish outfitter's logic—equating spectacles with virility rather than old age—becomes a parody of cultural prescriptions of masculinity. The absurdity of needing "magnifying glasses" (Pix 2018, 1) not to see, but to flirt, to prove one's manliness, and the transformation they supposedly effect ("adorn'd his Nose and alter'd his Speech" (Pix 2018, 1)) offers yet another example of how Spanish identity, particularly manhood, is performed through gestures and performances whose meaning is open to ridicule. Spanishness is, once more, incomprehensible in its ludicrousness. Through Bellmour's anecdote, Pix exposes the absurdities of foreign masculinity, contrasting them with a supposedly more 'authentic' English manliness grounded in action and reason.

This joke is immediately extended by Gaylove who suggests that the spectacles would be more fitting for the ageing Englishwoman previously invoked, one who, unlike the Spanish male, would use them to assist in domestic labour rather than public performance "Gay. Rediculous—pr'ythee give them me; I'll carry them for a Present to an Old Decay'd Beauty of my Acquaintance in England, who always uses Spectacles when she Patches" (Pix 2018, 2).

This exchange further reinforces the connection between Spanishness and effeminacy: while Spanish culture, in this parodic version, frames accessories like the spectacles as markers of masculinity, the English perspective assigns them to an older, vain woman, a figure linked not to strength or virility, but to decay, aesthetic preoccupation, and diminished sexual capital, further undermining the signs of Spanish masculinity and associating them with weakness, infirmity and vanity.

The ridicule reaches its climax when Bellmour offers to send her his *golilla* as well,[5] so she can hide her loss of beauty, hiding her unseemly wrinkles under the Spanish collar. While it is true that Spanish men transitioning from the big *lechuguilla* to the discreet *golilla* did feel vulnerable and exposed (Wunder 2017, 118), Pix portrays a grotesquely fragile Spanish masculinity. Through this final image, the "Old Decay'd Beauty"

[5] "Bell. I know who you mean—e'en Transport her my close Collar too; 'twill hide the Wrinkles of her Neck, for I am sure it pinches mine intolerably" (Pix 2018, 7).

(Pix 2018, 1) may be read as an allegory for the Spanish nation itself: once a great power, now faded, clinging to obsolete signs of splendour and incapable of confronting its decline. Thus, Spain is feminised, aged, and ostentatious, precisely the qualities that the English characters, and by extension Pix's audience, mock and reject. What begins as a comic critique of costume ends as a richly layered metaphor for the perceived moral, political, and sexual exhaustion of a rival empire.

The political dimension of this sartorial tension is made explicit when Gaylove questions Bellmour's choice to adopt foreign dress and with them, the cornerstone of English identity, freedom. Liberty is a privilege particular to their nation and which Spain, according to these negative stereotypes, does not afford its citizens, especially women, as embodied by the stiff and uncomfortable national dress. In a key speech, he links costume with ideology, asking:

Gay. But for Heaven's sake tell me the Reason? When my Lord Ambassadour gives us our full Liberty, and Travailing in his Train as Relations and Men that design only to see the Country and not Inhabit in it; We I say, whose chief aim is Pleasure? Why we should put our selves in pain with the Formality of their incomprehensible Dress? Is indeed to me unacountable Folly (Pix 2018, 2).

Gaylove appears not merely frustrated but flabbergasted by what he perceives as Spanish obstinacy in their insistence on wearing uncomfortable, overly formal clothing in the name of tradition and national pride. He classifies Spanish dress as "incomprehensible," echoing contemporary anxieties about the instability of clothing as a reliable marker of identity, be it national, gendered, or class-based, since garments can clarify but also obfuscate meaning for the social 'reader.'

In this passage, Spanish fashion becomes synonymous with a loss of liberty and pleasure, two pillars Gaylove associates with Englishness. The "formality" of Spanish attire, in his view, imposes not just physical discomfort but also a kind of spiritual constraint. That Bellmour would willingly adopt such a costume strikes Gaylove as not only foolish but as a betrayal of their shared English values. Bellmour, however, justifies his sartorial choice by appealing to pleasure and desire:

> Bell. Gay-love, you mistake my End—'tis to promote my Pleasure I have done it. I never yet Address'd a Woman but I cou'd hear the Don say to his Servants beware the Englishman, watch him close, use your Pistol if he proceeds— so I resolve to Mimick their formal Gate, set Speech, and stiff Behaviour, and try what Luck I shall meet with then (Pix 2018, 2).

While Bellmour's willingness to "wear" a much-hated nationality in pursuit of carnal pleasures may cast him as opportunistic and shallow, his speech nevertheless showcases English bravery, wit, daring and inventiveness: his ironic performance of Spanishness becomes a critique of Spanish jealousy, violence and hostility to outsiders, tropes that dominated the English representation of Spain and its men. In mimicking "their formal Gate, set Speech, and stiff Behaviour" (Pix 2018, 2), Bellmour performs an exaggerated version of Spanish masculinity, one that is instantly recognisable and mockable to the audience and characterised by haughtiness and obstinate pride.

Thus, because of the undesirability of this Spanishness, it is only when Bellmour divests himself of the Spanish clothing and of the assumed Spanish identity and masculinity, that he wins the ultimate prize: the woman. And not any woman, but one who is taken away from the clutches of the quintessential Spanish Villain: a jealous, greedy and cruel Don who mistreats his wife, her brother, his servants and who has only married her to get her money and dreams of locking all women up.

While women may appear at first to be the 'prize' in the cross-national competition of masculine identities, Pix ensures they are not passive trophies but active participants in the cultural critique. Spanish women, in particular, reinforce the emasculation of their male counterparts through sharp wit and visual satire. Laura, for example, mirrors and extends the ridicule previously enacted by Bellmour and Gaylove, turning the accessories of masculine authority, such as spectacles, into emblems of decline and impotence. When Gomez complains about the lack of eunuchs in Spain to guard women's virtue, Laura sarcastically quips: "We have abundance of Old Men, and that's much the same thing" (Pix 2018, 12). The exchange escalates into a jab at Gómez's virility and appearance, culminating in Laura's biting line: "Why you deserve to have Horns ------- Horns over those Glasses, I mean your Spectacles and false Eye ----- but your Wife's too Virtuous" (Pix 2018, 12).

Much as Bellmour and Gaylove had concluded, the spectacles mark Gomez as foolish, impotent, and old, thus deserving of betrayal. Laura's insult connects eyewear not with wisdom or status (as the foolish tailor intended), but with decay, fragility, and cuckoldry (as Gaylove and Bellmour do). Spectacles are thus confirmed as props of ridicule, and as visual reminders of failed masculinity, projecting weakness and insecurity, rather than strength. Laura identifies spectacles with feminized frailty, sexual irrelevance, and physical degeneration. In both scenes, glasses operate as satirical devices that question and undermine Spanish claims to power and masculine virtue, highlighting the play's broader association of Spanish national identity with absurdity, stagnation, and decay.

Consequently, the attraction of Spanish women to English men in Pix's play is not merely a plot device to ensure the triumph of the foreign gallants, but a symbolic affirmation of the superior appeal of English masculinity, which is defined not just by courage and action, but by relative openness to female agency. While Spanish men are depicted as possessive, violent, and obsessed with honour, English men offer (within limits) the promise of liberty, respect, and partnership. Their masculinity is thus portrayed not only as virile, but as progressive, another axis through which national superiority is asserted. Whether these women will find the freedom they long for with their English husbands is completely unresolved in the play.

4. Conclusion

In *The Adventures in Madrid*, Mary Pix transforms a familiar comedic device, disguise, into a sophisticated mode of political critique. Through the use of transnational cross-dressing, she constructs a world in which English masculine identity is defined in opposition to a feminised, rigid, and declining Spanishness. The sartorial markers of Spanish masculinity, such as the *golilla* or the spectacles, become objects of ridicule, symbolic of a culture trapped in outdated codes of honour, fashion, and patriarchy. Englishness, thus, is constructed indirectly through the ridicule of Spanishness and is ultimately hailed as desirable through the international "happy" unions.

These marriages hinge on the fact that women choose English men and, by extension, Englishness, as the ideal and preferable companion, with its apparent promise of freedom and liberty even for women. Still, transnational cross-dressing in *The Adventures in Madrid* allows Pix not only to stage farce, but also to perform a sophisticated critique of national identity, both English and Spanish. Through the praise of the liberty women are given in England and through the comparison with the restrictive Spanish customs, the author puts into question whether this image of England as a place of liberty for women is actually a reality: the same way the men put on Spanish garments and masqueraded as Spanish, one could wonder whether they are also putting on the mask of this freedom-loving Englishness to attract these women and ultimately win the "prize". Furthermore, having witnessed the treatment women are supposedly given in Spain (imprisonment, insults, control and cruelty) at the hands of the infirm and stiff Don Gomes, the promise of liberty, coming from the lips of young men, would certainly be an inducement to 'betray' one's country and believe the words that claim women in London are allowed all kinds of liberties.

Ultimately, transnational cross-dressing and clothes themselves, when used in conjunction with other literary strategies like *déplacement*, are more than a comic strategy than a comic strategy; it is a mechanism for reinforcing national myths, contributing to emerging national identities, challenging gender norms, and exposing the workings of identity, whether sartorial, imperial, or sexual. More importantly, the playwright and her work give us an invaluable insight into how international relations, politics and emerging national identities were not just of interest to women but had a direct and clear impact on their lives.

5. References

Aust, Cornelia, Denise Klein, and Thomas Weller. 2019. "Introduction". In *Dress and cultural difference in Early Modern Europe*. De Gruyter.

Brown, Laura. 1982. "The Defenseless Woman and the Development of English Tragedy". *Studies in English literature, 1500-1900* 22 (3): 429–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/450240.

Currie, Elizabeth. 2018. *A cultural history of dress and fashion in the Renaissance*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Falkner, James. 2015. *The War of the Spanish Succession 1701-1714*. Pen and Sword.

González, Álvaro Romero. 2019. "The tailors and embroiderers of Philip IV of Spain: approaches through painting". *Datatèxtil*, no. 39: 39.

Griffey, Erin. 2019. *Sartorial politics in Early Modern Europe: fashioning women*. Amsterdam University Press.

Hentschell, Roze. 2002. "Treasonous textiles: foreign cloth and the construction of Englishness". *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern studies* 32 (3): 543–70.

Lezra, Jacques. 2009. "'A Spaniard is no Englishman': The ghost of Spain and the British imaginary". *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern studies* 39 (1): 119–41. https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-2008-016.

Lowenthal, Cynthia. 1999. "Performing nations on the Restoration stage: Wycherley's *Gentleman Dancing-Master*". In *The clothes that wear us: essays on dressing and transgressing in eighteenth-century culture*, edited by Jessica Munns and Penny Richards. University of Delaware Press.

Martínez-García, Laura. 2015. "A defence of Whig feminism in Centlivre's Portuguese plays *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps A Secret* (1714) and *Mar-Plot; or the Second Part of The BusyBody* (1710)." *Revista de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses* 24 (1): 85–106.

Martínez-García, Laura. 2017. 'Politics of gender and national identity in Susanna Centlivre's Iberian plays: a defence of Whig feminism". *Anagnórisis: revista de investigación teatral* 16: 54–79.

Martínez-García, Laura. 2019. "'Bloody-minded Spaniards' and honourable Brits: revisiting national stereotypes in the 1815 English edition of Centlivre's *The BusyBody*". In *Romanticism and Revolution: British views on Spain, 1814-1823*. Peter Lang.

Pix, Mary. 2018. *The adventures in Madrid. A comedy, as it is acted at the Queens Theatre in the Hay-Market. By Her Majesty's Servants*. Gale Ecco, Print Editions.

Serrano González, Raquel. 2022. "Beaumont and Fletcher rewrite Cervantes: *Love's Pilgrimage*, a farcical representation of Spain and a subversion of Jacobean patriarchy". *Anglia* 140 (1): 19–49. https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2022-0003.

Shulman, Rachel. 2007. "Sumptuary legislation and the fabric construction of national identity in Early Modern England". *Constructing the Past* 8 (1). https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/constructing/vol8/iss1/8.

Straub, Kristina, Misty G. Anderson, and Daniel O'Quinn. 2017. *The Routledge anthology of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama*. Routledge.

Weller, Thomas. 2019. "'He knows them by their dress': dress and otherness in Early Modern Spain". In *Dress and cultural difference in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Cornelia Aust, Denise Klein, and Thomas Weller. De Gruyter.

Wunder, Amanda. 2017. " Innovation and tradition at the Court of Philip IV of Spain (1621-1665): the invention of the golilla and the guardainfante". In *Fashioning the Early Modern: dress, textiles, and innovation in Europe, 1500-1800*, edited by Evelyn S. Welch. Oxford University Press.

Wunder, Amanda. 2019. "Spanish fashion and sumptuary legislation from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century". In *The right to dress: sumptuary laws in a global perspective, c.1200–1800*, edited by Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108567541.010.

Yebra, José M. 2014. "The flourishing of female playwriting on the Augustan Stage: Mary Pix's *The Innocent Mistress*". *Journal of English Studies* 12 (0): 0. https://doi.org/10.18172/jes.2828.

Zanardi, Tara. 2016. *Framing majismo: art and royal identity in eighteenth century Spain*. Pennsylvania State University Press.