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THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEEKEND WARRIOR

Kyrie Ellison

May 2021

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre
Sarah Lawrence College

ABSTRACT

Weekend Warrior and the process of creating it was an experience built on memory and inspiration. The research supporting the performance delves into gender identity and gender performance with a focus on the experiences of female warriors, duelists, and stunt performers. The research within this paper comes from my perspective as an able-bodied, white, female bodied, femme presenting individual and by no means is a full spectrum account of the experience of others who occupy this space with me. The research within was done in support of my opinion and desire to learn more about the women who have inspired me as a director, choreographer, performance maker and human.

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INTRODUCTION- WRITING A SOLO PERFORMANCE

I have never categorized myself as a solo performer. The one time I had to perform alone on stage was during the spring of my final year in undergrad. Much like Sarah Lawrence, in order to complete your final year and earn your Bachelor of Science in Musical Theatre at Russell Sage College, we were required to create and perform our own solo show. This show had to be an hour in length and must showcase all that we've learned in our four years studying performance. I spent a lot of time collecting songs and monologues that discussed dreams, choreographed four ensemble dance numbers to the music of The Hush Sound, built the costumes, and designed the lights. I spent hours making sure that my solo performance would be one to remember. At the climax of the show, the light board malfunctioned and I lost the lights I'd spent hours making the previous day. And the dance I choreographed specifically to work with that lighting design ceased to make sense. I had so much tension in my jaw from the stress of things going wrong that I lost my voice and was unable to be heard for the majority of the piece. All this to say, it was an utter disaster and a performance I will not soon forget.

I share this, because I want to communicate the fear I had finding myself, once again at the helm of a ship that was all too familiar. It was a blessing to have the performance length shortened from one hour to thirty minutes, but the idea of putting that much time and effort into something that may or may not happen how I imagined because of the pandemic was a lot to prepare myself for. If I learned anything practical from this experience, it's that one must pivot and be open to surprises.

I knew going into my final year that I wanted to do a piece that centered female duelists, warriors and stunt performers. I had reignited my love of stage combat, and was taking active

steps to certify myself with the Society of American Fight Directors as an actor combatant with the eventual goal of becoming a Fight Director. This artistry is a part of my practice and a part of who I am, and I carry that knowledge with me into every room. Therefore, it only felt right and appropriate to continue to delve deeper into the world of combat. However, fighting by oneself, on stage can only go on so long. In hindsight, I could have saved myself a lot of heartache and headache by choreographing a two sided fight and then abstracting it physically on stage. However, I've never been one to make things easy on myself.

In the Graduate Lab class, the previous year, my cohort member Amelia Bethel and I explored the different aspects of femininity by creating a stage combat and burlesque piece that centered the celebration of female bodies, but also the inherent danger in occupying spaces where femme bodies are objectified. What does it mean to be seen on your own terms, and how does being seen on your own terms pose a threat to oneself? This was the beginning of my interest in female fighters and how they used their bodies to make room for themselves in the spaces they wished to occupy.

CHAPTER 1: THE GENDER BINARY

I don't remember when I learned the difference between men and women as a child. I do remember the materials we were given in school though. Cartoon silhouettes or images labeled "boy" and "girl" that we could decorate or embellish. Sometimes we were divided in classes to compete against each other, mostly gym classes, and on sports teams. These were surface identifications to start. It wasn't until later that I would encounter anyone telling me what I could or couldn't do just because I was born genetically female. The first person I ever encountered who didn't fit the description I'd been given as a gender road map was my first grade gym teacher. She had closely cropped hair and wore athletic clothing, which in the nineties was usually some kind of baggy short or pants and a large t-shirt. She had no discernible shape to me, at the age of six, that would indicate that she was a woman, and I didn't quite understand the titles preceding teachers names and how they might give clues as to whom I was speaking to. She had just finished explaining gym class to all of us, what we would be doing throughout the year and asked if anyone had any questions. I raised my hand, and after I was called upon I asked, "are you a boy or a girl," and everyone laughed. She smiled and replied, "I'm a girl," and that was it. My idea of what "looking like a girl" was changed forever.

There would be numerous times in my life after that where I would encounter people who identify in a magnitude of ways, but I will never forget that interaction. If we are taught that there is a gender binary, and given images to associate with that binary, until we learn the more complex layers of gender performance, then why do we teach the gender binary in the first place?

I discovered a book written by Sikita Banjeree, which outlined the colonialism of India and Ireland by Great Britain, and the response to that colonialism between the years of 1914 and 2004. This book was entirely focused on the specific interactions between the native peoples of both India and Ireland and the presence of British colonizers, but I thought I might find clues within the pages since North America had been colonized by European countries long before the Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence. I thought that the material might answer my questions about the reasons why the gender binary is enforced by society and the education system. Though, at the time of reading this book, I didn't fully understand what the gender binary truly was and how individual performance within that binary can be fluid based on environment, situation, and circumstances. I believe this was the first step into embodying and teasing apart specific aspects of the binary in my own life.

Banjeree's breakdown of gender in relation to the colonization of both India and Ireland held some clues that I think might have at least explained why the men in my life continually enforced that I, as a woman, had a different set of expectations as to how I should behave. Especially when I was present in rooms that were mostly male dominated, such as restaurants and stage combat workshops.

“If politics centers the martial male body, what are the consequences for women who pick up arms or are associated with violence in other ways (imprisonment, couriering, carrying weapons, running safe houses for wounded men)? ... even when women are not actively political, their bodies remain the political space on which muscular national energizes itself through expectations of female chastity.” (Banerjee 11)

But if the above is the case, and the “natural state” of women is to be soft and maternal, then why is it so satisfying to watch women in action movies doing stunts or combat? Why are women and those who identify as women still criticized for choosing lifestyles outside the Western norm? I must admit that I am a huge Marvel Comics Universe (MCU) fan, and that this part of my identity was a large factor into the material I researched. I have spent hours watching the plethora of movies released over the years, and find a lot of joy in the way they make space for female actors to engage with their bodies. This is not a new trend, since other movies have done so in the past. However, in most of these movies, the attire the women wear hyper sexualizes or emphasizes the shape and size of their bodies. Additionally, it’s not uncommon to see women in these narratives featured in heteronormative relationships, which likely has to do with the producers of this content and the consumers.

“As the female militant body occupies a contested location on the borderlands between normative visions of masculinity and femininity, an important response to this social anxiety has been concern with women’s sexuality and the need to ensure that political women exhibit proper chaste behavior. Society’s troubled relationship with the seemingly unnatural vision of women running guns, drilling and marching like soldiers, and wielding weapons, shaped by a suspicion that such behaviors transgress chaste femininity, has been the organizing theme in the narrative of muscular nationalism and femininity in the colonial and postcolonial contexts that are the subject of this book.”

(Banerjee 163)

Now if Banerjee’s book explains that in order to be seen as a “good man” in society, one must be ready to perform martially and even die for the sake of their country, and in order to be a

“good woman”, one must be soft and chaste and be willing to become a mother, and to raise her children with the same social understanding that she was raised under, then the next book I picked up, *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler, would be the undoing of this idea.

Butler teases apart the gender binary, questioning how gender can be determined if the entirety of someone’s gender is a social construct. “Does being female constitute a “natural fact” or a cultural performance, or is “naturalness” constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex?” (06; Butler xxxi) I think that there are two key words in Butler’s statement: “performative acts”. Meaning that the idea of the “natural gender identity” is based solely on how people behave, or the “roles” we play. And if we are performing, is that truly natural?

If we are told, as female-bodied individuals, that the acceptable way to behave is being as feminine as possible in juxtaposition with the masculine members of our society, what does that even mean? There is physical expression that one might categorize as feminine or masculine, but the identity behind that physicalization is so much more complicated. One can identify as feminine while pursuing a “masculine” career and vice versa. Women, both inside and outside Western society, have bent the rules of gender, due to their immediate circumstances. One does not, and cannot exist in a vacuum, and women have always fought alongside men.

“When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.” (2006; Butler 9)

If we are not, in fact, able to be classified based on outward appearance, then why do we classify at all? As a society, these “rules” seem flimsy at best, and easily challenged when examining typical “gender roles” and expectations.

“...These expectations are seemingly fragile, as political behavior ranging from picking up arms to marching alongside men in protest seems to disrupt this binary- martial man versus chaste woman- and several forms of female activism, especially those associated with facilitating political violence, challenge this cultural dualism to create social disease.” (Banerjee 2)

This disruption of the gender binary was the freedom I needed. It didn't matter that I've been classified as woman. I am under no one's obligation to perform in any way that showcases that, unless I want to. The presence of the female warrior narrative in my life, simply because it inspires me and makes me happy is enough justification to pursue a career in stage combat or stunt performance. And that premise became the central approach to creating my solo.

With the reason for the binary identified and the explanation of its fragility, I sought to understand what exists between that. If there is more than Male or Female, then what other spaces could I occupy as one who was just learning that maybe the letter “F” given to me as my identifier might not be enough to encompass all that I am? This is when I was introduced to the Glitch.

The Glitch is the space between. The space where discovery can happen and one can find the space to exist in the way that centralizes the existence of the one occupying the space.

Categorized by curator, writer, and artist Legacy Russell in her book, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, she “...urges us to consider the in-between as a core component of survival—neither

masculine nor feminine, neither male nor female, but a spectrum across which we may be empowered to choose and define ourselves for ourselves.” (Russell 11) Now this lined up with Gender Theorist Kate Bornstein’s idea of gender in a way that really excited me. If we look at gender performance as a mode of survival then we must also look at the society surrounding the individual performing. Bornstein’s theory of gender is that gender is fluid and any one point in spacetime, one might occupy a different gender entirely. In their book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, Bornstein catalogues their experience as a non-binary individual born biologically male, transitioning to female and then eventually identifying as non-binary.

“I know I’m not a man- about that much I’m very clear, and I’ve come to the conclusions that I’m probably not a woman either, at least no according to a lot of people’s rules on this sort of thing. The trouble is, we’re living in a world that insists we be one or the other- a world that doesn’t bother to tell us exactly what one or the other *is*.” (1994 Bornstein 8)

And therein, lies the glitch. “Feminist writer and activist Simone de Beauvoir is famous for positing ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.’ The glitch posits: One is not born, but rather becomes, a body.” (Russell 12) If, in fact, gender isn’t real and is a socially constructed idea in order to repress and suppress people into roles that serve the ideals of the government, then it makes total sense why I would start crying while watching the opening scene of *Wonder Woman*. As long as I play nice, and do as I am told, I am a functioning member of society. However, the moment I step out of that pretty little line, I am no longer compliant and something else altogether. Russell’s attention to this idea brings new light to the inspiration I find in action

movies and stage combat classes that allow me to wield a sword and interact with the violent and gruesome side of being a human. The idea of feminine and masculine within our society is a coded behavior taught to us from a young age in order to fulfill the Capitalism idea of a functioning society.

“Thus, hacking the “code” of gender, making binaries blurry, becomes our core objective, a revolutionary catalyst. Glitched bodies—those that do not align with the canon of white cisgender heteronormativity—pose a threat to social order. Range-full and vast, they cannot be programmed.” (Russell 25)

And the colonization catalogued by Sikita Banjeree,

“...muscular nationalism is the intersection of a specific vision of masculinity with the political doctrine of nationalism. Examples of muscular nationalism center an adult male body poised to sacrifice and kill for the nation. Usually this view of masculinity is juxtaposed with a chaste female body that both symbolizes national honor and provides a moral code for the lives of women in the nation. This gendered binary remains stable as long as women do not act to challenge the expectations of chastity.” (Banerjee 2)

It suddenly becomes clearer to me in my research the reasons why women might dress as men or learn to take advantage of a system that was never built with the intention to let them succeed.

The novel experience of watching a woman on a screen triumph and overpower a person physically larger than herself ceases to be something unreal in an instant.

“Violence is a key component of supremacy and, as such, a core agent of patriarchy.

Where we see the limitation of a body’s “right to range,” be it at an individual or state level, we see domination.” (Russell 21)

If this is what we are up against, how can we make a change? How do we take a stand and occupy spaces that weren't meant for us in the first place? I ask these questions as a white, able-bodied, female-presenting individual who is still figuring out their gender identity every day, and I acknowledge the privilege that I have to even ask these questions in a thesis paper as partial fulfillment of my Masters degree in Theatre. Historically speaking, I'd be remiss with out mentioning the advent and utility of dressing in the clothing of someone opposite yourself on the spectrum. Personally, I do not believe that clothing has gender. Clothing is an article of fabric, or fabric-adjacent material, used to decorate the bodies we occupy. However, societally, there is gender associated with certain clothing items, and knowing that inherently gives the wearer power.

One performance artist, Diane Torr, capitalizes on this idea by offering to women, and eventually men, the chance to figuratively and literally, walk in the opposite gender's shoes.

“The performance research and drag king workshops conducted by Diane Torr aim at a more constructive form of temporary transgendering. The goal is for participants and spectators to experience, through performance, the *reality* of physical possibilities other than those we take to be ‘natural.’” (Bottoms 34)

In her Tedx Talk for TedxStGeorg, Torr explains what it was like leading the “man for a day”/“woman for a day” workshops she would use to confront gender prejudice. She starts with a question, posing an idea to the women in the room first, asking, “...have you ever thought about who you would become if you'd been born male?” (Torr 00:00:28) and then poses the same question to all of the men in the room. The idea of the workshop being the centering of an experience that you might not otherwise have. People in the workshop would dress to their level

of comfort, often times, completely transforming from one gender to another, they would take pictures dressed in their new attire, and sometimes, go for a walk outside the gathering space. Torr would ask them what they noticed, what they felt, what they experienced, and these experiences often brought out vulnerability and surprise.

“I’m a person who happens to be a woman. And I’m also a performance artist who, since the early eighties, has specialized in male impersonation; that is performing as a man... I was not aware of the possibilities, of the revolutionary possibilities of this work. Of it’s possibility to create something new.” (Torr 00:01:23)

What Torr was getting at, without initially knowing or fully understanding it, was the interrogation of gender performance as related to the physical appearance of those who identify as male and those who identify as female.

“If gay men’s embrace of female drag can be read as an explicit rejection of masculine power status, and a kind of celebratory affirmation of their ‘feminized’ marginalization, it makes less obvious sense- conversely- for women to mimic the sex *responsible* for their relative disempowerment.” (Bottoms 26)

I think instead, what came out of it, was a utilized experience. The kind of experience where women and others could see what life might be like if the limitations of their respective gender, based on their outward appearance, didn’t exist.

Now, the subject of cross-dressing throughout history and popular culture is saturated and often portrayed as a kink, when in fact it was much more commonplace than I was lead to believe. Women often dressed in men’s clothing to remain anonymous while traveling and men often wore women’s attire for a multitude of reasons, some of which simply being because it

made them feel pretty, with evidence traced back to the renaissance. In a collection of articles, *Debating the Middle Ages: issues and readings*, Caroline Walker Bynum states, "...that cross-dressing was for women a primarily practical device... Women sometimes put on male clothes in order to escape their families, to avoid the dangers of rape and pillage, or to take on male roles such as soldier, pilgrim, or hermit." (Bynum 286) There was even a period in performance history where "pants roles" for women were lauded and celebrated. It is a common known fact during the Elizabethan era of theatre, entire ensembles of men would perform as both men and women for the entertainment of the masses.

"In England during the Shakespearean era of codpieces (around the turn of the century), puritanical proscriptions against women displaying themselves 'lasciviously' meant that they were barred from appear on public stages as performers, whether in female or male roles, although they began to do so in France, Spain, and Italy around this time... after the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660... the tradition of boys playing women's roles was swiftly done away with, not least because King Charles II liked to see women perform, and indeed to select mistresses from among those on show (most famously, Nell Gwyn)." (Bottoms 10)

There was a boom in opportunity for women across Europe to begin performing on stage as both men and women, depending on the role. Opera was one medium that utilized women in pants roles quite frequently, but as the popularity of physicalized performance rose, so did the amount of opportunities for women. "[Performance roles] emphasizing romantic imperatives such as the need to cross-dress as male in order to freely pursue one's (male) lover." (Bottoms 14) were

celebrated, and heralded for a time. As long as the performance of gender still upheld a heterosexual standard of relationship.

It must first be acknowledged, that everything is cyclical. There are times, throughout the history of performance and Western society when the binary has been blurred. These moments usually follow a tight restrict and restructure movement in compliance with government, religious, or social ideals which result in the defamation or even execution of someone in high social standing, usually male. Case in point, Oscar Wilde, was put on trial, “in 1895 for ‘gross indecency’. Wilde’s flamboyantly stylish personality became associated in the public mind with the new concept of ‘homosexuality,’ and- more broadly- any kind of diversion from the imposed norms of masculine and feminine behavior began to read in terms of ‘sexual inversion.’” (Bottoms 20)

This was all occurring during the height of popularity of pants roles in England, after which, women were once again restricted from appearing on stage without a regulation on what they were performing and what they were wearing while performing. I believe that this criticism of gender expression comes from the aforementioned term, “Muscular Nationalism”. However, this did not stop women from engaging in dressing to suit their needs.

“It is not surprising, in the light of changing attitudes, that female-to-male cross-dressing was less widely recorded, and certainly less celebrated, in the late nineteenth century than in the eighteenth...On his death in 1865, for example, after forty years working all over the world as a doctor in the British Army, and having attained the rank of Inspector General of hospitals, James Barry was discovered to have a female body. As a woman, he would not have even have gained medical training.” (Bottoms 16)

CHAPTER 2: THE REJECTION OF “FEMININE” AS NECESSITY

So, where are all the women? What are they doing and how are they existing in this world made for men? It was about this time that my friend sent me an article that she thought I would like. She prefaced the message by saying that she thought I would enjoy the article and that I might find it helpful for my thesis paper. Within this article were all of the feelings I had been struggling to put into words, but couldn't fully express. Written by Kameran Hurley, the article addresses the lack of women's narratives in history as anything more than wife, or daughter. She, too, was outraged at the lack of representation for women in history, and upon finding out that women have always been there, fighting alongside men, teaching, hunting, governing, she began to look into why. Why, if women have always been occupying these roles do we have a separate system for investing and educating ourselves of that history?

“I had no idea what to say to this. I had been nurtured in the U.S. school system on a steady diet of the Great Men theory of history. History was full of Great Men. I had to take separate Women's History courses just to learn about what women were doing while all the men were killing each other. It turned out many of them were governing countries and figuring out rather effective methods of birth control that had sweeping ramifications on the makeup of particular states, especially Greece and Rome.” (Hurley aidanmoher.com)

The fact is that the bodies we, as people occupy, have never stopped us from doing anything that we want to. The systems and rules put in place to govern us are the things that prevent us from achieving the goals we desire. Though it's not expressly talked about in any average history class about any war in the history of the United States, an unknown number of people fighting in any

war ever were women. And it's unknown because the assumption was always that the people fighting were men. "Mary Livermore, a nurse in the Union Army estimated that there were as many as four hundred cross-dressers on her side alone." (Bottoms 16), and that number is just an estimate from one war. If we apply the same idea to the entire world, both before and after the tragedy of colonization, the possibilities are, quite literally, limitless.

Understanding the history was the first step in beginning this project. Once that was done, it was time to look for the women whom I believed exemplified these ideas I was learning about. The women who occupied the space of the glitch in their respective timelines. The original idea for my solo script would be to abstract the experiences of the women I researched and embody those experiences on stage. The women I chose to feature were Mademoiselle La Maupin or Julie D'Aubigny, Madame Ching, Gladys Bently, and Jadie David. Each one I believed to represent a facet of myself when interrogating the gender binary in conjunction with my own performance of identity.

Julie was born in 1673 and lived in France during the reign of King Louis XIV. Her father worked for the Comte d'Armangac, and so Julie grew up amidst French Aristocracy, but not in the traditional way of most ladies at the time. Since Julie's mother was absent, Julie's father, Gaston, raised her alone, so instead of her learning how to keep house, or learn other skills her mother would have taught her, she grew up learning fencing with the pages of King Louis' court. When her father died, the Comte d'Armagnac became her guardian, and eventually her lover. She lived pretty freely, until d'Armagnac arranged a marriage for her. His motives were likely to keep her nearby, since she was his mistress at the time. However, after Julie was

married, her husband was sent south on business and while he was absent, she decided that moment was as good a time as any to strike out on her own.

I think one of the most fascinating things about her life, for me, was her insistence in doing things her own way. She rejected a privileged placement as the Comte d'Armangac's mistress, and a marriage to a man who would have, largely, been out of her life on a regular basis. She had every freedom available to a woman in seventeenth century France, and she left it all behind to travel France with a fencing master named Séranne. There are a few different stories about why they left Paris, one mentioned that Séranne had land in Marseille and was leaving Paris to claim it, another stated that he had to leave due to his proclivity to dueling, which was illegal, and that he either dueled too much, or that he killed someone. While traveling with him, they gave fencing demonstrations and lessons, and she sang in bars and inns for money or room and board. It was noted that while she was traveling and fencing, she often would wear men's clothing rather than the accoutrements of an upper class French woman. In the stories of Julie and her travels, of which there are many, there is often a narrative of men challenging whether or not she was actually a woman.

“Whether she had cross-dressed before is uncertain, but on the journey she did so. For the rest of her life, she cross-dressed frequently, having no trouble passing as a boyish cavalier due to her figure and her ease in a masculine environment. It should be noted, however, that female cross-dressing has a long history in the West; it made traveling much easier and opened otherwise forbidden pathways through a male-dominated society.” (Maupin, d'Aubigny (c. 1670–1707), encyclopedia.com)

Whether or not Julie was a woman shouldn't matter. Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble* writes,

“If one ‘is’ a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered ‘person’ transcends the specific paraphernalia of it’s gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities.” (2006; Butler 4)

Her skill level alone should be the indication of her ability and her gender should have no part in how remarkable she was. She was a talented fencer, for a woman, but I think it goes deeper than that. Since in her life she dueled exclusively men, I think it's a safe statement to say that she was simply a talented fencer; even better to call her a talented swordsman. She fought on “equal footing”, which meant that she would have no advantage over her opponent and would face the same consequences, be that by the rules set forth for the duel, or by the law. Throughout her short life, she had a multitude of lovers, dueled illegally, and had a number of different careers. Skipping ahead to the end of Julie’s story, she would be convicted of dueling illegally and acquitted due to the technicality that she was technically not a man, as the law was written that “men cannot duel”, which further points out the difference of expectations for the different genders at the time. Since her story was mostly recorded through the letters she sent and received and word of mouth in the forms of gossip turned to legend. The end of her story becomes unclear and we know she ended up in Brussels for a time before her eventual death between the age of thirty-three and thirty-seven.

Julie represented the part of me that didn't want to be categorized based on my gender. The part of me that when I was told that girls can't do the same things boys can, would go out and find a way to prove it. She is the part of me that relishes holding a sword, albeit, a prop one under very choreographed circumstances.

The next woman, Shih Yang born in 1775 in Guangdong, China. She was a Cantonese prostitute who married an infamous pirate, Zhing Yi. He had inherited a number of ships and crewman from his ancestral pirates and together, he and Ching Shih, formerly Shih Yang, grew their fleet to an enormous collection of ships and crew. In exchange for her help, she was named his partner, and was offered an equal split of the business, Their collection of crew and ships would be known as the Red Flag Fleet.

When her husband died, she took over the fleet entirely, refusing to return to the life she had before. In order to maintain the coalition of ships, she shared power with her lieutenants and set up a system of laws to regulate those working beneath her. The code of laws were specific and anyone who broke them would be punished.

"The code was strict, and stated that any pirate giving his own orders or disobeying those of a superior was to be beheaded on the spot. The code was particularly unusual in its laws regarding female captives. If a pirate raped a female captive, he would be put to death. If the sex between the two was consensual, both would be put to death. There are further accounts of Ching Shih's code that state that if a pirate took a captive as his wife, he was required to be faithful to her (although others say that captains would have multiple wives)." (Banerji atlasobscura.com)

Admittedly, she's not the most admirable when it comes to the way she regarded other people, but her intelligence cannot be denied, and I don't doubt that she made the decisions she made in order to survive. When she was eventually caught in 1810, she was pardoned, the majority of her crew was also granted amnesty in exchange for their ships and service. She was granted permission to remarry, despite laws against it at the time, and when her second husband died at sea, she moved the family and opened a gambling house. When she died at the age of sixty-nine, she was surrounded by family in her own home.

I had a hard time with Madame Ching, and ultimately decided not to include her story in my work simply because I felt her story deserved its own telling. When aligning her with the other women, Julie, Gladys, and Jadie, I found I had a hard time finding the connecting thread for all of them. Yes, they were all women, and rule breakers and rebels of their respective generations, but that didn't mean that they all belonged together in one piece of performance art.

Another woman whose story I found remarkable was Gladys Bentley. "[Gladys was] celebrated for her top hat and tails performances on the Chitlin' Circuit of black vaudeville in the United States during the 1930s." (Bottoms 21) Her use of costume in order to play up her already deep voice was brilliant and the attention to this aspect of herself set her apart from other female entertainers of the time. Though her career and life were not easy, she found herself in rooms many were unable to occupy at the time, and her unapologetic performance in men's formal attire might make her one of the first Drag Kings in history. Unfortunately, though this persona she created is what made her special, it's also what held her back.

"...Bentley's multiply othered status as large, black, and openly lesbian prevented any mainstream acceptance of her act. But the McCarthyite era of the 1950s she had recanted

her past and married a man, claiming to have been ‘cured’ of her deviance by taking female hormones.” (Bottoms 21)

And this fact further proves the presence of the heteronormative agenda when addressing women’s bodies. Despite her talent, her sexuality and race kept her from her receiving the recognition she deserved, and once the novelty of her act wore off, she was forgotten.

Amidst this newly awakened clarity to just how blind I’ve been this whole time, I began applying my new knowledge of these “invisible women” to every aspect of my life. I found myself thinking about jobs I occupy, stories I tell, the movies and books I consume most of which foster the internalized misogyny I keep carrying with me everywhere I go. I looked into my artist statement, the writing I’ve done in various classes, the scenes and plays I choose when performing or directly. All of it gendered and all of it featuring women’s achievement as something extraordinary. We have always been here living our lives because we have to, and doing what we can every day to survive.

CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN STUNTS

Much of my artistry utilizes components of stage combat or the stage combat process and ethos, much of which is now being utilized to teach intimacy throughout the performance industry. The tenants of these two approaches to choreography place safety and longevity of performance above anything flashy or dangerous. Yet, in my experience, the people with a little knowledge in either of these aspects are the ones who do the most harm. This paper is not about that, but I feel the need to include my feelings on the subject as I begin to talk about one of the other major research facets when building this piece. I mentioned in the previous chapter that women have always been present in every industry and facet of existence forever, and the reason that we do not “see” them in our history is because many of these occupied spaces have been rebranded as “male” spaces. When researching the women featured in chapter two, I came across one woman who I found to be particularly inspiring, and her story opened up a whole world that connected my desire to highlight the “forgotten” women of history and the women whom I so admire performing stunts within the MCU. Her name is Jadie David.

Jadie David was discovered at an equestrian park near her college. After that first meeting, she found herself in a career she never imagined. She was a nursing student at the time of her first movie, and was brought on because of her ability to ride a horse and swim. “When the production wrapped, Jadie realized ‘they were going to pay me to have fun!’ She abandoned her plans to be a nurse.” (Gregory 79) It was the 1970s and opportunity for black stunt performers was opening up a lot more than before. This was due to the black exploitation films being produced in Hollywood during this era, but Jadie enjoyed the work, and there was more than enough opportunity for her to work as much as she wanted. Her resume included a number

of high grossing film and television shows with stunts ranging from falls to fights and everything in between. But there was much more to the stunt world than just getting in. Once she was in, she had to keep her job, and contended against sexism, wiggling, painting down, drug abuse, and injury.

“When an on-set injury in forced her to change professions, Jadie decided that she could help insure safety on set for her fellow stunt performers. She joined Paramount Pictures as a Production Safety Coordinator. Her responsibilities as Safety Coordinator included making sure productions stayed current with State and Federal Safety Regulations, reading and breaking down scripts for safety recommendations and supervising the production’s safety on set.”

(womeninstunts.com)

Jadie left the performance aspect of the industry, but never stopped fighting for fair treatment of stuntwomen and influenced many of the safety precautions taken on set today. Seeing her love of the industry felt very much like my own, and I saw in her someone else who understood the importance of safety despite making a career selling danger. Her contributions made the industry safer for women and black performers, which seems more than fair considering it was upon women and black performers bodies that the stunt industry was built.

When stunt work began in California, it was mostly women who were performing. The film industry in California was new, and not many people believed it would develop into the monumental industry it’s become. Film was expensive to obtain, and time consuming to make, and the stories, so short, that there wasn’t a point in investing a lot of money. With the invention of serials the film industry and the stunt industry took off. Exciting episodes of daring adventure, often times featuring female stunt performers were in theaters every week. And each week a new

episode that ended on a cliffhanger ensuring that the audience, mostly married women with nothing else to occupy themselves during the day, would come back to see what happened to their favorite characters. “Most of the early movie stars... were skilled riders, swimmers, or acrobats who were willing to do almost anything.” (Gregory 16) And since the money they could make performing one day for a serial was more than they could make in a week elsewhere, many of them never left the industry unless they were injured or died. I’m reminded of the popularity of pants roles mentioned in chapter one. The pattern of women starting an industry, garnering popularity and then eventually being replaced by men due to society’s interference or commentary. Mollie Gregory, in her book *Stuntwomen: the Untold Hollywood Story*, notes this trend as well, saying, “Ironically, as soon as actresses became well-paid stars, the studios hired men in wigs to double them, cutting out most of the stunt work that made them special.” (Gregory 19).

As I mentioned before, stage combat is a big part of my practice as an artist, and stunt performers are a facet of the combat world. Outside of martial artists, they may be the closest thing to Julie or the other women I researched that I might come in contact with. When beginning this research, I was focused on the performance of women specifically within the Marvel Comic Universe (MCU). I attended a virtual talk over the summer hosted by Neutral Chaos, a stage combat studio based in Brooklyn, New York, and they hosted a number of stage combat artists who gave workshops and sat on panels discussing the stunt world for those interested in pursuing a career or just curious about the world of stunts. I reserved a space for the talk with Jess Durham, who has performed in a number of movies in the MCU and television shows alongside some of my favorite actors and fictional characters. While she agreed to the

talk, she did not agree to me directly quoting her, so I will not do so in this paper. But her discussion with us about women in the stunt world was incredibly inspiring and I left the ninety minute discussion with a number of questions and ideas to investigate; one of which was wiggling.

“Wiggling”, in the stunt world is when a man puts on a wig and performs as a stunt double for a female actress. Though not illegal, its frowned upon by the Screen Actors Guild, a union created to protect the rights of performers working in the film industry, as there are more than enough performers who identify as female who are capable of completing stunts in lieu of male identifying performers. “...men doubling for women [was] not denounced by the members of the Screen Actors Guild until the late 1960’s.” (Gregory 29) And unfortunately, this practice still exists as long as the film can prove that it made an effort to cast the role. If the role remains available up to the day of filming, they can proceed with using a male stunt performer to double as a female actress. And this was what happened to a number of stunt performers early on in the beginnings of the industry.

““They didn’t have to be asked twice to leap from 40-foot masts on ships or from bridges 60 feet above the water,’ [Eddie Cline] said. ‘Those ladies had courage...And they did all this not for glory but for \$3 a day.’ Lack of bravery was not the reason why so few ‘stunt girl players’ worked in Hollywood. As Cline observed, ‘So many stunt men of small stature can double perfectly for feminine stars that we simply don’t need women in stunts.’” (Gregory 25)

Thus, the seeds were planted that women weren’t physically or emotionally capable of handling the stunt work being asked of them. Though today, the men have costumes that are capable of

concealing more padding. Though it's not, and should never be, a contest of who can endure the most pain, I would argue that female stunt performers, due to unrealistic societal expectations of physical presentation of "feminine", suffer the most in the stunt world. To say nothing of the physical expectations put on them to remain the same size as the actress they are doubling, while maintaining the muscle necessary to keep themselves from serious injury.

CHAPTER 4- WEEKEND WARRIOR PROCESS

So how does all of this research fit into theatre-making? How can something so large and complex and with so many facets be boiled down into a piece that is no longer than thirty minutes? The short answer is that it can't. There's so much in all of this research that I am intensely passionate about, that the process of writing the script for this piece felt, at times, like an impossible task. At last count, I think I went through ten or twelve different variations on the script of this piece before settling on the final version, which I have included in the appendix of this paper.

My first attempt at writing this piece was a response to one hundred questions I wrote down in order to begin thinking about what I might actually want to say or do on stage. I think the original intent of the one hundred question exercise was to write as many as possible as quickly as possible, but I think the whole exercise took me about an hour. And after that hour, I definitely didn't have one hundred questions. But I had enough to start and so I did.

The first draft of my script was a piece entitled *She/They*, in which I wanted to address the physical location of gender in the body in juxtaposition with societies expectations of the two genders. This was in the early stages of my research, during which I was reading both *Gender Trouble* and *Muscular Nationalism*, which proved to be a dangerous cocktail of reading material. The work I was generating was compelling, raw, and primal. Pieces that were built around rhythm, listing body parts and eventually working up to a spoken word song that I intended to add bodily percussion to. Imagined the whole piece happening on a stage with a loop pedal, a microphone, and a single beam of light isolating me in the center of the space. I combed through pages of notes and ideas that I had collected during the summer of 2020, during which I had

more than ample time to dream and let my brain wander and make connections freely with the material I was absorbing. Looking back now, with these two polar opposite ideas rattling around in my head, it's no wonder I became overwhelmed.

One of the most important tenets of intimacy and stage combat is breath and eye contact. These two things alone are exciting, but when you bring them together, they create tension. If you set two people on a stage and just ask them to look each other in the eye and breathe, you've created a story. It's that easy. What happens after that is the introduction of physicality which is where the communication with the audience actually begins. At this point in the process, I was simultaneously unpacking what I believed society wanted of me as a woman, and what I wanted from me as a woman. As a nearly thirty-year-old woman, from a small town in New Hampshire, my friends were inquiring about my impending wedding in the September of 2021 and whether or not I pictured my fiancé and I having kids. The majority of my responses were something like, "I can't think about any of that until I've earned my MFA," when in reality I wanted to tell them that there was so much more going on in my life that was more important than changing my last name or the theoretical children I might some day have.

On September 7th, 2020, I wrote the following in my process journal during a ten minute process response,

"Where are you right now? I have a bunch of ideas and a laundry list of more things that I want to look into. I feel like I have a direction that I want to move toward but I worry that that direction is uninformed or too complex. This is not an uncommon feeling for me. Do you have an idea that might feel too big for its britches. But I'm really excited by the idea of writing music and using the information about women in the past to draw parallels

with our future. I am excited by the idea of gender in my work and breaking that idea down to further explore why gender makes certain stories compelling. What is the difference? Can someone write songs without gender being featured? Folk songs and hero ballads are also intriguing. These long stories on events preserved through song by the eyes of the bard who wrote them. What is the etymology of Bard? Where does that word come from and why don't we use it today? I keep switching positions to find the most comfortable way to write but every time I do my hand just starts to hurt again. I know I can type, but I want to actually write. The active physically writing makes this feel like it's becoming a part of my ritual. Maybe there is something in the idea of ritual to look into further? What would a musical ritual of empowerment look like? I have another deep desire to create an experience which I think comes from working in hospitality. What role does gender have an achievement?"

Looking back at this entry, it's not surprising my script had so many incarnations. I was still drawing connection between the multitude of interests I have as an artist, and feeling the isolation of the pandemic very deeply. Some ideas in this ten minute writing response made their way into the final piece, and through this, I've been able to see the difference between inclination and embodiment.

The first aspect I tried was writing music without featuring gender. Knowing that songwriting was an aspect I wanted to explore in this piece, I enrolled in Stew Stewart's Songwriting for the New Musical Theatre class, and began the experiments there. Within that class I was able to experiment through prompts under the guidance of an artist constantly encouraging us to interrogate our impulses and challenge ourselves by looking at the layers

underneath our initial ideas. I began by writing a piece about Joan of Arc as told through the perspective of a tree in her village. Though I was not successful in writing this song without the mention of gender, it was an exploration of telling a story from the perspective of a secondary character. The idea of music stuck with me throughout and I was unable to shake it, knowing that the introduction of live music to a zoom performance setting might cause a major headache down the road. There was something there, in the research about how the women's stories were told, by word of mouth that felt important. There are articles and books out there chronicling, Julie D'Aubigny, Madame Ching, Jadie David, but they were difficult to find and even more difficult to get a hold of. Most of the information about them was relayed through websites and blogs, citing more resources and information. That's when I came across the ballad of Mulan and I launched into research surrounding ballads and oral storytelling.

I don't think I have ever felt deep despair when writing a piece, but I think that is the only way to describe what I was beginning to feel. My outward expression wasn't matching what I was trying to share and I began to feel like I was immersed in gender theory to the point that rather than my art manifesting, I was manifesting therapy sessions as art. This is definitely a kind of performance, but it is not a performance style that I wish to utilize. I needed to find a way to extract the emotion from the work and just present the facts. If the script I was writing ended up being a dramaturgical presentation of one aspect that I researched, that was okay. A dramaturgical presentation is still a kind of performance.

In December, I hit the breaking point. I had been through storyboarding, action mapping, vision boarding, and countless free writes, and I still hadn't come up with what I wanted to say. I had a question I kept asking over and over to the point of internalizing it, "What does it mean to

exist between a binary?" I was angry and feeling rebellious and felt as though writing this piece was the absolute last thing I ever wanted to do. I couldn't see how to connect my love of stunts and female warriors, music, and the interrogation of gender roles into one performance piece that people would understand. I thought about portraying a stunt performer hired to play a historical woman despite knowing nothing about her, and the script being written by men. I played with the idea of a talk show on gender. I even wrote a series of monologues in the form of stream of consciousness breaking apart every aspect of my day into gendered gestures and the intention behind them. All of this was too close to home, too raw, and too deeply personal. Perhaps one day I will be brave enough to make either of those three ideas into a piece of performance text, but this year, using my bedroom as my studio, isolated from friends and family, was certainly not the year to try. I was angry, bitter, and definitely judging my progress based on the progress of those around me and my own progress in different classes. I was having breakthroughs in every class but this one, after all. From this anger came the idea.

One of the spaces I have occupied in my life where I have felt the most confident, other than the theatre, was in the restaurant industry. I have countless stories of experiences I have collected after years of working behind a bar. Within bars I met people who changed my outlook on life. Live music happens in bars. And suddenly I had the form I had been looking for.

The piece would be set in a bar, told through the perspective of a bartender who was relaying stories about people that she/they found inspiring. They would share stories of all three women and embody them onstage using the bar as a setting and the props there as tools to communicate. Once this idea was clear, the rest of the piece fell into place. I eventually let go of Madame Ching, Gladys Bentley, and Jadie David, knowing that the lessons I learned from them,

though not expressly mentioned would still be there. In letting them go, I was able to highlight the woman whose story I kept coming back to over and over again. Nearly all of the drafts I began and then abandoned to start again all began with Julie's story, and I think ultimately it's because I saw so much of myself in what I learned about her. In the spring of 2020, I had the privilege of interviewing Doug Wright, who had just lead a writing workshop with the Graduate Theatre Cohort. His body of work focuses on writing narratives around historical figures, and in response to asking how he knew who to write about, he said this,

“You know you can have a lot of interesting ideas about, that's a really worthy subject, or that's a great theme, or I should write about that, but none of that becomes real until the characters in the play start talking to you, and you hear their voices in your head. That means you have to do it. All the lofty intentions fall apart and it's just, are they whispering in your ear, yet? And once they start doing that, you know it's the project you should pursue.” (Wright 00:12:40)

The whole time, Julie had been whispering in my ear. I just wasn't listening hard enough.

The music found its way in, interstitially, supporting the more emotional parts of the script, and the infusion of my own personal stories in relation to Julie's life events all connected rather seamlessly. The central idea being that as long as I was doing the thing that made me happy, that was the only thing that really mattered in the end.

CONCLUSION- IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY

After all of the research and all of the investigating, the thing that it all came down to was happiness. If I wasn't happy in the process, enjoying the performance aspect, it wasn't worth it. The same thing can be said of my existence in this world. If I'm not centralizing my happiness, then I'm not capable of being a person that can support the happiness of others. Identity is not an aspect to which people can apply a science. There might be a scientific aspect to interrogate the way we look at identity, but I think that the emotional aspect, the instinctual picture of how we see ourselves might be the most powerful tool we have in creating futures together. If I see myself existing beyond the confines of the gender binary, then the only thing keeping me from any space I wish to occupy is myself and not my body. This is a comforting thought and one that I find a lot of freedom in.

My solo performance of *Weekend Warrior* happened on Thursday, April 22nd, 2021. I performed in a theatre with an audience spread out across the United States watching my performance from their respective homes. The subsequent feedback I received was encouraging, and enlightening, and supports the idea that virtual theatre, can create a feeling of community or even environment. The music, which I admit, needs further development dramaturgically, will continue to grow and change, and some day I hope to perform this show with a live band, much like Young Jean Lee's *We're All Gonna Die*.

The process of creating *Weekend Warrior* might have been the hardest process I have ever been a part of. A solo show doesn't have to be biographical in order to be about you. I could have chosen material that didn't come quite as close to home, and in future processes, I probably

won't. I like having a clear distinction between my practice and my personal life, though I know keeping them separate is a fallacy.

But more than anything, I am so glad to have been in process, working on something so difficult, in a space where process was prized above product. This experience has gifted me the ability to work on anything and know that no matter how polished, or perfect or ready I might feel during a process, there will always be something I will want to change. No performance is ever done, and the ephemerality of live theatre is one of the things that makes it so special. Learning to meet myself wherever I am, in whatever form I occupy in the moment has been a gift. And *Weekend Warrior* is the visual manifestation of that gift.

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APPENDIX

WEEKEND WARRIOR

Written by Kyrie Ellison

April 4th, 2021

*There is a bar downstage center.
Behind the bar is a musician's set up
with a guitar on a guitar stand, an
amp, and a microphone. The bar is
bare. There is the sound of a battle.
It's loud.*

*She/They enter from the audience.
Mask on, hoodie up, backpack on.
They "fight" their way through the
crowd to the bar. They transform and
so does the bar.*

*When the bar is set up everything
stops abruptly and the lights shift.*

SHE/THEY

Hey welcome to Weekend Warrior! I'm Kyrie (she/they) and I'm your bartender this evening.
What can I get for you?

You look adventurous. A rule breaker, maybe. Someone who seeks happiness above all else.

I have just the drink for you.

Each weekend we spotlight a woman who broke the rules of her time. Tonight, we have a
cocktail called La Maupin. Have you heard of her before?

They wait for an answer.

You can tell me. Go ahead it's cool.

*They see the chat, somehow (must
figure this out).*

Looks like a mix of yes and no. Lemme share a bit about her with you.

Now hearing La Maupin's story for the FIRST time was a little bit like finding your favorite bar. You kinda want to keep it a secret, but you can't help bringing your friends with you each time you go. Her life would make a bingeable miniseries. In fact, I don't know why HBO hasn't made a mini-series out of her life yet. It's got Adult Content, Adult Language, Nudity, Dim Lighting, Violence! It's right up their alley. If anyone from HBO happens to be watching this right now, just remember who gave you the hot goss.

Her real name was Julie and she was born around 1673. She was a woman of privilege, with questionable upbringing, spending her formative years fencing with Louis XIV's pages.

Now, when it was time for Julie to settle down and get married, all that time spent in trousers with a sword in her hand made her rather... difficult to control. If I had to choose a spirit for Julie, it would be tequila.

She started to question that divide between men and women. Why some rules applied to her, and others, applied to them. Men were praised and encouraged to take mistresses and women were married young and kept close at home under the watchful eyes of their husbands... or so they thought.

Now, I can't speak for anyone else, but that would piss me off.

They step out from behind the bar.

I once interviewed for a server job, at an Italian restaurant I was terribly underqualified for, but my friend worked there, and they needed servers and Krisite insisted that I would pick it up fast. It's mostly memorization anyway, how hard could it be?

They spin the bar around and move it. Now we are in an interview. The back of the bar is visible to the audience.

SHE/THEY

Hi! Thanks so much for seeing me, when Kristie said you wanted to meet with me I was so excited! I love pasta!

What kind of pasta?

Well, I like lasagna, spaghetti, ziti, ravioli... I LOVE ravioli.

Do you have ravioli on the menu here?

(Aside) Mistake number 1.

Oh, yeah, I have experience at The Standard, The Smith, The Grille... All the big 'the's'

Which what?

Oh! Which restaurant in the Standard? Well, um. The fancy one in the front.

(Aside) Mistake number 2.

What drew me to working at Giovanni Rana? Well, I'm really passionate about the service industry! My mom was a bartender and she taught me everything I know.

(Aside) Mistake number 3, but also a useful bit of information.

See, I was lying. I didn't know the difference between sauvignon blanc and cabernet sauvignon, and when he asked me what my favorite sparkling wine was, I said Andre.

I kept talking, VERY QUICKLY, trying to mask all of the mistakes I was making. And I knew I wasn't doing a good job, which made everything so much worse.

I couldn't tell him my friend who worked there told me exactly what to put on my resume, and I didn't have the knowledge to back it up in the interview...

So when he called me out about lying, and asked me why, I stopped, took a big breath, and dramatically stated, "my mother".

Mom, if you're listening, I know how you feel about being called mother. But I did it for dramatic effect. There's something really different about saying "mother", and "mom" in that context.

He asked me why she would tell me something so wrong. And I said, "Because as a bartender for a number of years, she told me no one would take me seriously in a male dominated industry if I didn't have experience."

Well, that stunned him, but looking around at his restaurant, there were 5 men to every woman on the floor, and only one female chef.

*SHE/THEY walks around
the bar.*

So Julie left, travelling France with a fencing master giving demonstrations and singing in bars, performing and travelling in men's clothes, which would have been a whole lot easier to move in than corsets and multiple skirts.

Now, I don't know how many of you have tried to fence in a full skirt, corset and petticoats, but I imagine it's not easy. I imagine it'd be a lot like bartending in a dress.

*They grab a pile of bar rags from
behind the bar and begin folding
them.*

SHE/THEY

So I got the job. Well, not the server job. I was offered a hosting position and an opportunity to learn the restaurant and then train as a server. I was told to dress comfortably for my first shift during lunch the next day. So I took a look around, noticed the staff was wearing jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts, and so I showed up wearing jeans, sneakers, and a t-shirt.

What am I wearing? You told me to dress comfortably so I-

I look like a server? I didn't think about that, but you told me to wear something comfortable.

Change? I didn't bring anything with me.

I live an hour away.

Well, what would you like me to wear?

(Aside) And then he said the words, "Something sexy."

Sexy? Sexy. Oh, I'll give you sexy.

They grab a bar rag and attach it around themselves. It looks like a cocktail dress of bar rags. They pull their hair down, shake it out, strike a powerful pose as the lights close around center stage.

Is this sexy enough for you?

[song 1]

I've already proved you wrong

I don't need to waste my breath explaining

Honey it'll take too long

To get us on the same page

Take a look between the lines

I'm not interested in maintaining

Roles that we have been assigned

Life is not some little play

And it doesn't really matter much to me

If you're born with an x y or a z

I am sick to death of classifying
 Every human being
 Based on what *YOU* see...

The lights shift, music continues, and a projection of two people swordfighting plays. SHE/THEY removes the bar rag cocktail dress and bar rags from atop the bar and roll the bar to where a camera waits. The projection stops, the music fades, and they continue.

After training for so many years with the Sun King's pages, she was an extremely accomplished fencer. She was brazen, outspoken, and unafraid to prove herself a woman, while kicking the ass of anyone who challenged her. This combination made for some noteworthy interactions. Here's one reenacted with fruit.

They grab two cocktail swords and two pieces of fruit, a lime for Julie and a blood orange for men. The fruit reenactment is projected behind them via the live feed camera.

BLOOD ORANGE

Fool. No man can defeat me. Die now.

LIME JULIE

I am no man.

They take a fruit peeler and peel a piece of skin from the lime. LIME JULIE stands proudly with sword en garde.

SHE/THEY

Stab

*LIME JULIE stabs the BLOOD
ORANGE. The BLOOD ORANGE
DIES is covered with a cocktail
napkin.*

SHE/THEY

Now, I know, I know, I know.... That's Eowyn from Lord of the Rings, but I just couldn't help myself. It was too perfect.

And no one she dueled died. I took creative liberties with that last bit.

But that was how good she was. She beat man after man in duel after duel, sometimes dueling multiple men at once! She was impressive. And when she wanted something she didn't stop til she got it.

Case in point- There was a woman, the daughter of a merchant, whom she fell for. I mean, like Xena and Gabrielle kind of love. Her name probably wasn't Gabrielle, but I'm gonna call her that for this story.

So Gabrielle's parents, upon finding out that the "young man" who had been courting their daughter was actually Julie in drag, whisked her off to a convent.

*With the fruit again. This time the
peeled lime (Julie) and a strawberry
(Gabrielle).*

LIME JULIE

Gabrielle, if I only had thirty seconds to live, this is how I'd want to live them- looking into your eyes.

STRAWBERRY GABRIELLE

Stop this. Stop it.

LIME JULIE

Always remember... I love you.

*STRAWBERRY GABRIELLE is
whisked away into the fruit bowl.*

SHE/THEY

But it wasn't goodbye! Because Julie snuck into the convent with her! And when an old nun died, she disinterred the dead nun's body, put the body in her lover's bed, and set the convent on fire to create a distraction while the two of them escaped into the night!

But passion doesn't always last. And people don't always stay together, no matter how good the tv ratings are and how much we want them to, and Julie, well, she liked to love 'em and leave 'em.

[song 2]

I remember lights in the room that night and you were different

I remember the songs and how I knew everyone, but you were different

And I'm kicking myself as I write

Because I can't quite find the right words to describe

But I remember you, if only because you were different

You asked me my name and I told you because you were different

You were taller than me, that was easy to see, but that's not why you were different

I had never met someone

Could eclipse the dark, light a room like the sun

But I remember you, if only because you were different

You were so sweet

But I've always been

More of a fan of salt

It's not your fault
I missed out on you, simply because you were different.

I heard the whispers then, hushed voices confessing, that's different
It wasn't what they said, it was the lack that showed what was different
Thinking back to that night
I wish I had known then what I now know is right
You were better than them, and not just because you were different

You were so sweet
But I've always been
More of a fan of salt
It's not your fault

I missed out on you, and not just because you were different.
I missed out on you, and not just because you were different.

*The music continues. Again, with the
fruit.*

LIME JULIE

If there is a reason for our travels together, it's because I had to learn from you enough to know
the final, the good, the right thing to do. I can't come back. I can't.

STRAWBERRY GABRIELLE

I love you, Xena- Julie. How am I supposed to go on without you?

LIME JULIE

I'll always be with you, Gabrielle. Always.

*SHE/THEY eats STRAWBERRY
GABRIELLE.*

SHE/THEY

Gabrielle doesn't die. I just got hungry.

The bar moves again back to where it was for the interview. The back of the bar is visible to the audience.

SHE/THEY

After her relationship with Gabrielle ended, she returned to Paris and became an opera singer. Despite her fame as La Maupin (her stage name), she never turned down a chance to teach a man a lesson. Though now, she was more well known, and a lot more seen, and dueling in Paris was *very* illegal.

One of the male performers of Paris Opera was overheard, one night, by Julie speaking ill of one of the other female performers in the ensemble. She asked him to take back what he said, and he told her to- well, it wasn't very nice. She beat him with her cane, and took his watch and snuff box as punishment.

The next day, she heard him telling everyone he'd been mugged by at least four men. In response, she produced his watch and snuff box, a smile on her face.

I don't think he ever lied again. But at what cost to Julie?

During the following video/voice over, SHE/THEY pulls out wine glass after wine glass one by one from behind the bar and places them into her fingers. She holds as many as she can, and when she can hold no more, they fall.

YELP REVIEW

I came to Dear Irving last Saturday night with two girlfriends who had heard wonderful things about this spot. We arrived and were immediately seated at a table where we ordered some of the best cocktails that we have had in a long time. Ambiance was beautiful, our server was lovely.

Here is where it gets bad. Really bad. Three of our guy friends arrive and we are moved to a bigger table, the ones along the side with the bling bling beading. We order drinks again, but this time from a different server. A quite miserable looking girl who was really forcing herself to engage. Upon bringing our drinks, she drops the tray of 4-5 drinks onto my girl friend and guy friend. Without apology or, well, nothing really, she panics and runs away. Literally. We are shocked, my friends are soaked and I'm honestly concerned. I've worked in restaurants and I've made mistakes, but I always managed to apologize profusely. But alas, yet another server comes to clean up her mess and retake our order. Fine. Those drinks arrive safe and sound and we proceed with our merriment, albeit a little confused and a lot of damp.

The kicker is, when the check arrives, which we expected because we hadn't paid for the very first round of drinks, all three rounds are on the bill. Yes. the even the drinks that she toppled over PLUS the replacements. By this time the miserable server had composed herself and come back so I asked her politely if there had been an oversight because usually spilled drinks are comped, no? She gives me a look like she wants to punch me, tears the bill out of my hand and STOMPS off, like a four year old child. We are all in shock at this point and more in shock that someone would behave that way at their place of business. The manager comes over and again I politely explain the situation, to which he replies that it was OUR FAULT that she spilled the drinks because "someone asked her if she has ever dropped a tray." Blank stares all around. Um, what? I responded calmly by saying this was now a very uncomfortable position to be in. My friend chimes in and says it's fine, that she'll send Dear Irving her dry cleaning bill. At that point, he takes the check without a word, comes back and everything is comped. All of that could have been handled so much better. I'm not sure if they were passing judgement because of the Real Madrid jersey that I was wearing (I'm half kidding), but I will say that I will NEVER take my international football clients here to this place nor will I ever return.

PS Great drinks though, just not on your pants or shoes :)

SHE/THEY rolls the bar back to the center where it began and begins putting things away.

SHE/THEY

The last story I have about Julie is that she attended a party at the Sun King's Palace, dressed in the attire of a French nobleman. Here she danced, courted and kissed a woman who had many well known suitors at the time. Now, kissing this woman, in the presence of three men vying for her hand meant that their honor had been challenged. But knowing Julie's prowess with a sword, they decided to challenge her then and there, all three of them at once.

Well, she won. But-

The sound of a door opening is heard.

SHE/THEY

Hey guys, I'm sorry we're closed. Last call was 10 minutes ago.

No, that's it. No more drinks tonight. I'm closing up.

I'm sorry it's your birthday. You and your friends can pick another bar, there's a ton more that stay open later than us just down the block.

I said no. I'm not serving anymore alcohol tonight. Besides it looks like you've been overserved.

If you were a bartender you would know how uncool this is.

You have to leave now. The bar is closed.

Leave.

They grab a beer bottle and smash it on the bar.

GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY BAR!

*The door closes and SHE/THEY
cleans up the glass and debris.*

SHE/THEY

Julie won the duel, but since dueling was illegal and that duel happened right in front of King Louis, she wasn't let off this time. Not like before. The law was that *men* couldn't duel each other, and since Julie wasn't technically a man, she technically wasn't guilty. But sparing her life made Louis look weak, and so he banished her to Brussels where history lost track of her.

*They make the La Maupin cocktail
and once they are finished, they
move the bar to the side, and flip it
so the front is facing the audience.
They sip the drink, now a guest of the
bar.*

And me? I still bartend sometimes. I've met a lot of really wonderful people in bars. Weekend Warriors. Afterall, it's about doing what makes you happy, right?

*The lights shift, and projections of
sword fighting and bartending
appear behind them. SHE/THEY
moves to the music set up and plays
one last song.*

[song 3]

If they don't remember your name
You can go ahead and treat them the same
I don't want you to carry a deep sense of shame
If they don't remember your name

If they don't remember your face
I don't want you to think you're erased
Keep that heart open wide and that smile in its place
If they don't remember your face

If they don't remember your heart
Then they didn't have a heart from the start
They can't make you feel small if you remember that part
If they don't remember your heart

If they don't remember your soul
I don't want you to think you're not whole
All the fear that they have, well it stems from control
They might not remember your soul

If they don't remember your name
You can go ahead and treat them the same
I don't want you to carry a deep sense of shame
If they don't remember your name
If they don't remember your name
If they don't remember your name.

Black out. End of Play.

SET:

Bar on wheels

Amp

Microphone & Stand

Rug

Projector

Live Feed Camera

PROPS:

Guitar

Glassware

Bottles

-Tequila

-Sweet Vermouth

-Grapefruit Juice

-Lime Juice

Bucket for Ice

Shot glass

Plastic Sword Picks

Bowl of fruit

-lemons

-limes

-blood orange

-Strawberries

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