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Abstract: Frenchman's Creek (1941), a thrilling read as a pirate novel, contains deeper meanings underneath the surface of the text. In order to create a pirate story with a female warrior as the heroine, Daphne du Maurier utilizes her own desires, anxieties, and love of pirate stories. This paper reconsiders, via the frameworks of queer studies and feminism, the impact of Daphne du Maurier's personal life and identity on the character of Dona, the protagonist of the novel.

Keywords: Daphne du Maurier, gender expression, cross-dressing, female sailor, pirate story.

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Mirrored Disembodied Spirits: Daphne du Maurier and *Frenchman's Creek*'s Dona St Columb

0. Introduction

Dressing in disregard of the socially acceptable clothing for one's assigned gender is usually discouraged, and in some cases even condemned. Robert Clark and Claire Sponsler claim that cross-dressing was a standard in the Renaissance theatre, where actors played masculine and feminine roles (319). Cross-dressing is a way to explore gender expression both in fiction and real life. The aim of this paper is to bring to light Daphne du Maurier's influence on Dona St Columb, the protagonist of her novel *Frenchman's Creek* (1941) based on her experience living as a woman in the twentieth century and her unconventional identity. This paper is divided into three sections to accomplish that: the first section presents the theoretical framework, using texts like *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler to discuss the notion of gender and its performativity, as well as gender expression explored through cross-dressing from theatre plays to real life that inspired stories using the Female Warrior motif; the second section concentrates on the examination of Daphne du Maurier's experiences with gender expression and her enthusiasm with pirate stories; and the third focuses on the analysis of Dona St Columb in relation to du Maurier's desires and concerns, and the use of the Female warrior motif.

1. Crossing the Barrier of Gender Norms

It has been an obsession to conform to conventional gender norms and roles in the Western world. Conventional gender norms are a prison, considering that traditional Western gender roles are imposed onto the population. These prescribed gender roles are not always accepted by the individuals, who deviate from gender norms in order to express their identity. Gender expression is most noticeably conveyed by the clothes one wears.

The gender norms someone will be imposed in their life will be conditioned by the sex they were assigned at birth, which is often determined by medical professionals solely based on their genitals. When the baby is born with a penis, they are assigned male; if they are born with a vagina, they are assigned female; and if their genitals are ambiguous, they might be assigned intersex. As Kristin Zeiler and Anette Wickström declare, when a baby is born with ambiguous attributes, very often the medical professionals and the parents decide for the child to have a surgical intervention in a social exigency to make their genitals fit the binary social standard (360). Anna Lindqvist, Marie Gustafsson Sendén, and Emma A. Renström explain, "diversity in gender identities is not captured with binary response options, which means that standard measures fail to recognise findings related to other identities than the traditional genders of woman/man" (332). Society assigns gender with this method, and therefore sometimes fails to coincide with the gender later self-assigned.

Queer studies are a field of research on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity that challenge patriarchal norms perpetuating heteronormativity and binary oppositions such as women/men or gay/straight that lead to the subordination of one side of

that division. This field of study also brings light to more diverse realities between those oppositions. One of the main theorists on this subject is Judith Butler, whose work *Gender Trouble* (1990) became a crucial work in this field. Butler argued that, "briefly, one is a woman … to the extent that one functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame" (XI). In other words, one is a woman when one occupies the feminine political position in a patriarchal society, where there is a gender dynamic of power in which the woman is placed in a subordinated position. Janet T. Spence explains the functions in a patriarchal society are divided according to the following pattern:

> men are assigned the primary responsibility for their society's political, economic, and intellectual institutions, and for providing their families with leadership and economic support. Women, on the other hand, are assigned the primary responsibility for maintaining the home, caring for the children, and providing emotional support to family members. (467)

Certainly, these "manly" and "womanly" roles are merely cultural and are rooted in a patriarchal system that establishes this structure. Still, the position a woman places in society is shaped by different aspects, such as her class, race, sexuality, and disability. Kimberlé Crenshaw manifested that the experiences of women of colour are often a combination of sexism and racism, and that this intersection of oppression was disregarded in the discussions of feminism and antiracism around the 80s (358). Understanding the intersectionality of aspects that shape one's identity is key to understanding one's position in their community and their experiences. Butler follows Crenshaw's idea of the different experiences among women based on their race, independently of being identified within the same gender category. Butler also claims that "the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed" (19). Therefore, there is no universality within the notion of "women", as" they encounter diverse circumstances depending on their background and their intersectional identity.

The notions of "woman" and "man" are connected to social stereotypes and confine people into fitting into these conceptions. Sandra Bem attempted to free people from sex-role stereotyping and created an inventory of attributes independent of the sex of the person portraying them. Bem exhibited in 1974 her development of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), a "sex-role inventory that treats masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions, thereby making it possible to characterize a person as masculine, feminine, or 'androgynous'" (155). This inventory includes twenty personality characteristics, based on sextyped social desirability, on each scale, such as "individualistic" and "ambitious" on the masculine scale, "cheerful" and "gentle" on the feminine scale, but attributes such as "adaptable" and "helpful" are in the neutral scale. A person's masculinity, femininity or androgyny is identified through the balance or imbalance in the use of those attributes. As an example, someone would be sex-typed as feminine when their display of masculine and feminine traits is noticeably disproportioned between the two. On the other hand, someone would be identified as androgynous when their display of masculine and feminine

characteristics is balanced. Therefore, by considering femininity and masculinity as independent categories, participants could score high on one of the scales and low on the other, high on both scales, or low on both scales. This research allowed attributes to be categorised regardless of who was portraying them and attempted to free people from sex-role stereotyping by encouraging them to make these attributes more flexible.

Butler describes gender as a "corporeal style, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative" (198). Then, gender is the manner in which someone portrays their identity. Gender performativity refers to gender being achieved through a reiterated set of acts, thus obtaining naturalisation in its context (Butler XV). This indicates that the performativity of gender is realised through being accustomed to presenting oneself in a certain look, ergo it cannot be portrayed in a fluctuating manner. Butler clarified that gender cannot be compared to a performance because that is an isolated act, not a reiterated set of acts and gender is not a costume that can be voluntarily put on or off (qtd. in Jagose 87).

The dynamics of gender roles are detrimental to society, especially to those whose behaviour or appearance does not fit the gender roles' standards. Butler shares their experience with the gender dynamics in Western society by stating: "I grew up understanding something of the violence of gender norms: … gay cousins forced to leave their homes because of their sexuality, real and imagined; my own tempestuous coming out at the age of 16; and a subsequent adult landscape of lost jobs, lovers, and homes" (XX). These experiences serve as examples of how not conforming to prevailing gender norms, consciously or unconsciously, can be rejected by society and lead to exclusion. "Masculine" and "feminine" behaviours set by society are sanctioned depending on who displays them. Spence explains that a woman behaving in a "masculine" manner, manifesting personality traits such as tough-mindedness and assertiveness are considered by society a rejection of the female role as a "feminine" woman (468). These roles are opposites in Western society and thus, as an example, if a woman presented masculine behaviour, she would lose her traditional role as a feminine woman.

One of the main aspects of gender is its external expression. Lindqvist et al. (339) explain that the external expression of gender is referred to as gender expression, which alludes to the way in which people present themselves taking into account behaviour and appearance. Gender expression involves the manner in which people speak, gesticulate, move, dress, use accessories, and present themselves to others. As Lindqvist et al. elaborate, "gender norms vary over time and context and it may be difficult to formulate items specifically addressing expression" (339). Therefore, gender expression is represented differently over time and depending on the culture and context in which it is represented.

Although unconventional gender expressions are more commonly explored in contemporary times, people have defied gender conventions for a very long time. Robert Clark and Claire Sponsler claim that cross-dressing was a standard in the Renaissance theatre, where actors played masculine and feminine roles (319). This occurred because it was forbidden for women to perform in theatres. That is the case of fictional cross-dressing, yet cross-dressing was also practiced by real people. An example of this act is Mary Ann Talbot, whose story can be read in the memoir *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Mary Ann Talbot, in the Name of John Taylor* (1809), where it is revealed that she took part in the British army and navy in the

1790s, but also a highwayman, an officer, a prisoner among others. Talbot confessed in the memoir, "I was placed in a lodging at the house of Mrs. Jones, Falcon-court, Shoe-lane, with a strict injunction, if possible, to break me of the masculine habit to which I was so much used" (37), however, she did not abandon the seaman garment nor the habits. This memoir serves as an example of someone who acted against the social impositions of the era despite society's attempt to modify them. David Cressy illustrates that cross-dressing on the streets of London as well as on the stage involved being assaulted by Protestant reformers, thus "whether in real life or in literature, by this account, cross-dressing involved struggle, resistance, and subversion, as well as modification, recuperation, and containment of the system of gendered patriarchal domination" (438–439). The subversive practice of dressing as one pleases in spite of social or religious disturbance was not being abandoned.

Individuals whose stories are similar to that of Mary Ann Talbot have been a source of inspiration for literary narratives. Catherine Craft-Fairchild claims that "ballads singing the praise of female soldiers and sailors also concerned themselves with the vicissitudes of lower-class life. By contrast, plays and novels depicted cross-dressing as either a whimsical or a vicious activity of the well-to-do" (171). Despite the distinctions between them, they share the use of the cross-dressing warrior characters. As Dianne Dugaw declares, the Female Warrior is a heroine who "masquerades as a man and goes to war or to sea for love and for glory" (XI). Then, the characters conforming to the role of Female Warrior would be crossdressers who engage in hazardous journeys with a goal in mind. The Female Warrior's figure, portrayed as a soldier or a sailor, found success and fame in poems, plays, and stories shared by many – especially the lower classes, from the Renaissance to the Victorian Era (Dugaw XI). The Female Warrior motif reveals long-established cultural connections between ideas about gender and heroism, but it also exposes the ways in which sexual orientation and expression exist in relation to the ideologies and concerns of specific times and places (Dugaw XIII–XIV). Despite the antiquity of this figure, it is clear that the ideas it questions, such as a woman being successful in a "manly" space or expressing one's identity at will, are still debated in contemporary times.

Dugaw declares Mary Ambree, the heroine of an Elizabethan ballad, as the first Female Warrior in Anglo-American folk songs (24). Among numerous characters from this tradition, Mary is the first and most well-known. Her story was registered as *The Valorous Acts Performed at Gaunt… by Mary Ambree* (1629) and contains the conventional themes of love and glory, which is the core of the Female Warrior narrative (Dugaw 35). In this narrative, "feminine" love and "masculine" glory are both present in the protagonist's life. Another example is Polly from *The Beggar's Opera* (Dugaw 191). The two characters belong to a highly used motif at their time, but from Victorian times onwards its use will gradually decrease. Nevertheless, there will still be stories published with cross-dressing sailors, such as *Jamaica Inn* (1936) and *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), both written by Daphne du Maurier.

Dress codes, together with societal views, faced modifications as time went by. Therefore, cross-dressing, as a form of gender expression, evolved as well as the lives of the people defying these cultural dress codes. Vern and Bonnie Bullough mention Private Frank Fuller, alias Frances Hook, as an example of someone who disguised as a man to enlist in the American Civil War (157). The experience of Frances Hook resembled that of Mary Anne Talbot

as they both served in the army as men; however, their lives were different taking into account a century of cultural and economic changes. Women's suffrage advocates demanded political power and the use of "masculine" clothing to free themselves from the social and political constraints that told them their physical attributes made them unfit for political life (Levander 117).

The traditional method of assigning a gender at birth with binary options and only taking into account physical attributes to assign a gender role fails to recognise accurately the gender one will be comfortable living in. Clothing serves people to express their identities and be comfortable with themselves, and as previously mentioned, cross-dressing is an opportunity to explore one's expression. People like Mary Ann Talbot cross-dressed in order to find freedom and live according to their desires, inspiring stories with the Female Warrior motif throughout history. Pirate stories were not fashionable in the 20th century but Daphne du Maurier published stories with cross-dressing sailors, such as *Jamaica Inn* (1936) and *Frenchman's Creek* (1941).

2. Daphne du Maurier: A Disembodied Spirit

Daphne du Maurier (1907—1989) is best known as the author of the novel *Rebecca* (1938), but she also wrote novels and short stories such as *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), and "Don't Look Now" (1979). She is wrongly categorised as a romantic novelist due to the public's misreading of *Rebecca*, but only *Frenchman's Creek* can be classified as a romantic novel. As Sheila Hodges, her editor from 1943 to 1981, reveals, she despised being categorised as a romantic novelist (294). The usage of cross-dressing in some of her novels, as well as her unconventional gender expression and her desire to escape through the subversion of gender roles, merit consideration. The texts that will be used in order to analyse Daphne du Maurier will be her own memoir *Myself When Young: The Shaping of a Writer* (1977) and her biography written by Margaret Forster *Daphne du Maurier* (1993).

Daphne du Maurier's concept of her own identity and how she preferred to express herself challenged the gender conventions of her time ever since she was a child. Du Maurier preferred everything about being a boy and despised dressing as a girl as a kid, therefore habitually abstained from it, and similarly, because she detested her hair put in ringlets and continually brushed, she got her hair cut in a short bob once she had the choice (Forster 14). As Forster elaborates, "she and Jeanne wore boys' shorts and shirts and ties and thick schoolboy socks and shoes – they liked to dress exactly as boys in an era when young girls did not wear trousers" (14). Du Maurier revealed how she started to explore with her clothes: "I saw why D liked to dress up and pretend to be someone else; I began to do it myself, and so did Angela, and even Baby, who could walk by now and was called Jeanne, could join in the play" (30). "D" referred to her father Gerald, who was an artist himself and encouraged artistic expression in the house. That is why du Maurier was permitted to use masculine garments. As disclosed by Du Maurier, it was Miss Torrance, their governess, who "suggested to M that we should perform in front of visitors. It was a strange thing, but the very act of putting on fancy dress and becoming another person stopped the feeling of panic when visitors came" (Forster

30). Her anxiety about having to dress for the visitors ceased when she was allowed to dress in another way to perform a play with her sisters to entertain the guests.

Du Maurier explained that, when playing, "Angela did not mind being a girl. In our make-up games she took the part of a girl, and would throw open the window of the Wendy house in the garden calling, 'Save me, save me!' Then bravely I would slash at the bushes, our enemies, and run to her rescue" (Foster 35). In *Myself When Young*, Du Maurier shared her fantasy of owning a sword, like Peter Pan (24). Anyone would agree that the courageous child greatly enjoyed themselves by believing that they were inside a pirate story. Daphne du Maurier received Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* (1883) as a gift from her uncle Willie, and she was so enchanted by the book that she started playing the role of Jim Hawkins and sometimes Long John Silver too, while Jeanne would play Blind Pew (Du Maurier, *Myself When Young* 43). The memoir also reveals other books the children would act, such as *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1877), where the middle child would play the narrator and second officer, Edward Royle (43). The fascination with sea narratives inspired her to create her own characters and naval adventures in the future, reproduced in *Jamaica Inn* (1936) and *Frenchman's Creek* (1941).

Daphne du Maurier, at the age of thirteen, felt much more fulfilled by creating a character for herself, called Eric Avon, than by thinking of potential lovers, as her older sister was doing (Du Maurier, *Myself When Young* 71). Du Maurier said in her memoir, "this game absorbed me until I was past fifteen" (71). Forster explains, this "alter ego … was bold and fearless and 'did all the things she would have done if she had been a boy'" (14). Daphne du Maurier wondered why she had picked Eric Avon as her alter ego but could not find a reason, and he remained in her unconscious until years later as the narrator of some of her novels (*Myself When Young* 73). Her family encouraged fantasy games, hence there was no objection to Daphne du Maurier's excitement for masculine things (Forster 14). However, Forster detailed that it could have been because even wearing the "most boyish clothes" and "doing the most boyish things", she still looked very feminine and was seen by others merely as a young girl who pretended to be a boy, and the fact that she "genuinely hated being a girl" was unnoticed (14). The family's perception of her was very simplistic and overlooked the complexity of her behaviour and identity. In addition to that, they did not realise that du Maurier was convinced of being a boy and, as Forster expanded on this idea:

> Her outward form was a mistake: inside, she was a boy, with a boy's mind and heart and ambitions. Everything she did, she did as she judged a boy would do. This made the onset of puberty at twelve absolutely devastating for her. It was for the first time impossible for her to be a boy once menstruation had begun. The shock was profound and she took a long time to recover. She hated her periods—given the code name "Robert"—and saw them as signifying "the end of being boyish. (14)

Her hopes of growing up as a boy were devastated by the undesired arrival of menstruation. Forster mentions, "the only person who recognized how fiercely Daphne resented her own gender was her governess, Miss Maud Wadell" (14). The governess was the one du Maurier could trust with these concerns.

Eric Avon emerged through du Maurier's writing as the narrator of *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932), *My Cousin Rachel* (1951), *The Scapegoat* (1957), *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965), and *The House on the Strand* (1969), novels written in the masculine first person singular (Du Maurier, *Myself When Young* 73). As a consequence of that, Du Maurier expressed, "if there was an Eric Avon struggling to escape from my feminine unconscious through the years, he certainly succeeded in the imagination, however different from his prototype, for I would identify with my series of inadequate narrators, plunge into their escapades with relish and excitement, then banish them from memory until the next one emerged!" (74). Eric Avon was free to explore the world of imagination of Daphne du Maurier, although he was confined inside her, and allowed her to escape through imagination.

Daphne du Maurier loved the sea and wished to own "a sailing lugger, with a deck and a cabin, and I saw myself hauling on ropes, hoisting brown sails, masts creaking" (Du Maurier, *Myself When Young* 131). She shared in her memoir that when she was sailing in the sea there were no concerns, no restraints and it was only calm, only absolute peace (171). As Du Maurier herself described it, Fowey was "a blessed retreat for anyone who wants to be alone" (145). Living on the seaside was a pleasure for her: "I think of nothing nowadays but fishing, and ships, and the sea, and a seaman's life … Then we had to go up to the ship *Wearbridge* … I sit in the cabin with the 1st and 2nd mates as they have their tea. I wish they'd take me to Philadelphia as a 'prentice!" (137). During Christmas, the family had suggested that she buy a sailing boat and later, she went to see a boat called *Sanderling*, which she fell in love with, but a week later the seller decided not to sell it, saddening du Maurier greatly. By purchasing the ship, she would be closer to her fantasy of becoming a sailor, as one of the Female Sailors in the British literary tradition, and experience adventures like them. Du Maurier repeatedly shared her longing for vitality and adventure, the same she longed for when she was a kid: "Oh, I'm sick of my unhealthy lassitude … wearing tight hats and stupid shoes. I ought to be digging with a spade. I ought to be on the top of a cliff, running and running, and drinking in great draughts of sky, and grass, and sea" (162).

Du Maurier manifested her hopes and determination to be able to write enough short stories to be financially independent (*Myself When Young* 133). Apart from that, Du Maurier wished to be completely free and not abide by any rule or conventional standard and shared the following ideas in her memoir: "I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion that freedom is the only thing that matters to me at all. Also utter irresponsibility! Never to have to obey any laws or rules, only certain standards one sets for oneself. I want to revolt, as an individual, against everything that 'ties' … There must be a free way, without making a muck of it all" (170).

Despite her apparent determination, she was a conservative. As Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik claim, her conservative attitude could be a result of coming from a family where the male members were the ones allowed to be creative, and then du Maurier became a seemingly conventional woman of her class in the 1930s (188). She met Frederick Browning and married him, which led her to become a wife and later a mother. She liked how confident and dominant he was, which made her feel relieved about locking the boy in her in a box because she doubted now if that boy even existed (Forster 92).

Mr. Browning's high rank in the army and his obligations during WWII caused them to live apart for a long time, and over time, the repercussions became apparent. Daphne du

Maurier also started being romantically interested in her editor's wife, Ellen, who had provoked the "boy in the box" to come out of it and be "transported back in time to when she was 'a boy of eighteen all over again with nervous hands and a beating heart, incurably romantic and wanting to throw a cloak before his lady's feet'" (Forster 221). Forster further shares Du Maurier's feelings: "the boy she explained she had 'locked up in a box' long ago when she had accepted that, since she was outwardly a girl, she must face facts and live as a girl", but once she moved to Menabilly, a house in Cornwall, she let herself free from restrictions (221). The writer had forced herself to live as a girl and hide her personality. A name she gave to her identity was "disembodied spirit", because it was a "phantom, who was neither girl nor boy" (Forster 221).

Through writing, many of her inner conflicts were represented, the main one being her desire to escape from any restraints, and very noticeable was the importance of sea life and the subversion of gender norms in her writing. As Nikola Havlová declares, du Maurier's predominant concern was the harmonisation of her masculine and feminine sides as well as the conservative and modern (72). Characters such as Dona St Columb from *Frenchman's Creek* or Janet Coombe from *The Loving Spirit* mirrored her life and concerns. Forster disclosed detailed information: "one half of Janet wanted to be a conventional wife and mother, the other to be 'part of a ship...and the seas' … Even nearer to what she felt was Janet's inner rebellion against being a woman – 'Please God, make me a lad afore I'm grown'" (76). Similarly, Dona St Columb from *Frenchman's Creek*, even after becoming a wife and a mother, yearns to be free and live adventures, which leads her to confront the dangerous situations she desires to experience. In this quest for freedom, she encounters a pirate who lets her indulge in her multiple fantasies. Alison Light claims that the majority of du Maurier's stories transcend the bounds of the feminine realm of emotion into the realm of action and incident, following that way the call of adventure with her characters as wanderers and travellers (165).

Daphne du Maurier, who presented herself as a typical nineteenth-century wife and mother, concealed worries about her gender identity and her desire to be free of gender roles. These ideas were more obvious when she was younger, when she would be more liberated to play masculine roles with the justification of acting and being an imaginative kid. However, there are also remnants of her distinct personality in her letters, memoir, the biography Forster published about her, and her stories.

3. The Hero/ine of *Frenchman's Creek*

In 1942, Daphne du Maurier published *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), a novel where the heroine, Dona St Columb, cross-dresses as a cabin boy. Daphne du Maurier was clearly inspired by the Female Warrior motif, in this case represented as a sailor. This character is also created out of the author's mind and spirit. Dona is a mother in her thirties dissatisfied with the futility of her life who wishes to escape from her life in London. She experiences temporary escapes from gender and class expectations, from cross-dressing as a highwayman in London to a cabin boy on a pirate ship in Navron, Cornwall. The most alluring aspects of this book in relation to the paper are the use of the sailor narrative, which she enjoyed reading as a child, the Female

Sailor motif, as well as how it reflects Daphne du Maurier's inner conflicts and desires associated with gender identity and freedom.

Dona St Columb is disenchanted with her husband and her life as a wife and mother, constrained by the expectations and obligations women had to bear in the Restoration period. This is comparable to Daphne du Maurier's personal experience at the time she wrote this novel, when, as Forster revealed, her husband spent little time with the family. Du Maurier started working on *Frenchman's Creek* to cope with her depression, which she thought was caused by self-pity, as writing was the only way she knew how to control her emotions (Forster 157–158). She deeply enjoyed immersing herself in her work and the world of imagination to write, ever since childhood, and it became again her support and escape. She detested the war and, to combat the thoughts of it, imagined a place where she desired to be, Cornwall, but in an age where there were no bombs and where she would be in her sailboat to enjoy the sea (Forster 158). She confessed to one of her best friends that the war was overwhelming her and that she needed to escape to another world. However, she knew that in that world she would be suffering from the same emotions as in this one (Forster 158). Du Maurier knew her emotions and her thoughts would still be present in this *Frenchman's Creek*'s world.

The use of the Female Warrior motif, introduced in the first section of this paper, was widely employed in cross-dressing ballads from the British literary tradition, but it was no longer in style by the time Du Maurier applied it. *Frenchman's Creek*'s Dona serves as a representative of the Female Sailor trope. Her decision to employ that motif was likely motivated by her love of pirate novels and her fantasies of escaping through the subversion of gender conventions.

Valentina Bold and Pauline Greenhill observe that *Frenchman's Creek* exhibits a transgender imagination, which is a cognitive trope that uses a person's ability to act outside of sociocultural expectations around sex and gender (47–48). They observe Dona's courage to act against society's disapproval of a woman behaving in a way that they would expect a man to, yet despite her courage to do so, Dona is ashamed of her actions. She becomes aware of what she did in London when she dressed as a highwayman and threatened to hurt the Countess if she did not give her a hundred guineas. After an argument between Dona and her husband, it is revealed that "the ridiculous prank on the Countess at Hampton Court was only a thwarted, bastard idea of fun … in reality it was escape she wanted, escape from her own self, from the life they led together" (Du Maurier 15). Dona's first experience cross-dressing as a highwayman makes her feel guilty and remorseful, which is a way to represent she should not have access to the privileged role of a man even despite proving her ability to do it (Bold and Greenhill 55). Because of this remorse, she leaves London and goes to Cornwall to clear her mind . However, in Navron, Cornwall, she will learn to embrace what scares her with the help of a French pirate.

The pirate reminds Dona that she has a family to take care of after she daydreams about joining him on his ship as a cabin boy – a job that was reserved for men, to which Dona replies: "no, you are right … there is no escape for a woman. Therefore if I sail with you again I shall be a cabin-boy, and borrow Pierre Blanc's breeches once and for always" (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, 146-148). She fragments her identity to be able to keep her occupation as cabin boy. According to Pauline Greenhill, cross-dressing ballads portray the cross-dressers

taking roles they had been excluded from when they were considered women (160). Through cross-dressing, Dona is able to become a cabin boy. She is satisfied with this life: "There was freedom in her boy's clothes, and her spirits rose" (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek*, 239). The occupation of a cabin boy is then more satisfactory for her than the occupation of wife and mother she had before. Greenhill claims that cross-dressing women in cross-dressing ballads not only take masculine clothes and their occupations, but also symbols of male privilege and masculinity (Greenhill 160). Greenhill notices how women in cross-dressing ballads perform the "male job" remarkably well, this way striking the core of ingrained cultural gender stereotypes and following Butler's observation that gender is performed rather than innate (165). Dona's job of tricking and distracting people during the raid was excellently performed and allowed the pirate's plan to continue appropriately. The raid's objective was to steal a ship belonging to Lord Godolphin, one of the men from Navron who are trying to capture the pirate. After the escapade, she can see the change in her appearance when looking in the mirror, as "her face had filled out, and the sulky look had gone from her mouth, and there was something different about her eyes", and she has also tanned her skin (Du Maurier 177). She can see the physical change from her cabin-boy life, a physical change that makes her look more masculine and more in tune with her cabin-boy role.

According to Bold and Greenhill, Dona experiences masculinity bilaterally, negatively when she feels rejected, and positively when she feels liberated (55). By distancing herself from the Dona St Columb society expects her to be, Dona finds freedom in Navron. Du Maurier reveals Dona's feelings in the first pages of the novel by saying: "she had consented to be the Dona her world had demanded – a superficial, lovely creature … and all the while another Dona, a strange, phantom Dona, peered at her from a dark mirror and was ashamed. This other self knew that life need not be … bounded by a narrow casement, but could be limitless" (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek* 9–10). Later in the novel Dona discloses to the Frenchman the possible reason for her escapades as a highwayman: "perhaps I was tired of Lady St Columb, and wanted to become somebody else" (Du Maurier 63). These identity escapades through cross-dressing are the only form of escape for her. Dona asks the pirate if it would be possible to become somebody else and if he is happy, to which he replies that he has found it possible to be someone else and that he is content with it. After Dona's question about the difference between being happy or content about it, he explains "contentment is a state of mind and body when the two work in harmony, and there is no friction" (Du Maurier 63). Evidently, Dona desires to leave her identity as Lady St Columb and become someone else. Dona emphasises the division of her identity between cabin boy and Dona St Columb by naming herself Tom (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek* 239). This is comparable to du Maurier's own decision to name her masculine self-character Eric Avon.

The sea and piracy are Dona's escape from gender norms: they liberate her fractured gender identity by cross-dressing, either as highwayman or cabin boy, and also work as a stance against traditional behaviour. Dianne Armstrong believes that Du Maurier uses piracy to represent her fractured gender identity and smuggling's position of defiance in the history of Cornwall (23–24). Indeed, piracy allows Dona to free herself from social expectations around the gentry, and as a pirate has to pay heed to no law. Armstrong continues claiming that smuggling, as a trope, represents, figuratively, a challenge to her own experiences contrasting

her landed gentry status against the rebellious man who served as the "boy in the box" in Du Maurier's childhood fantasies (24).

Dona asks the Frenchman about the reason behind becoming a pirate and the answer was that he was attracted to danger (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek* 49). The connection between becoming a pirate and not conforming to gender norms may not be apparent, but it is there, because piracy obviously violates any social norm. In another passage, Dona asks William – her servant and the pirate's servant – about his opinion on his master's occupation, to which he replies that piracy suits him, that he does as he pleases unlike those who follow a normal life, who "are forced into habits, into customs, into a rule of life that eventually kills all initiative, all spontaneity (Du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek* 57). For William, "a man becomes a cog in the wheel, part of a system. But because a pirate is a rebel, and an outcast, he escapes from the world. He is without ties, without man-made principles" (57). Later in this conversation Dona confesses "I wish I were a man, William … because I too would find my ship, and go forth, a law unto myself" (Du Maurier 58). Flavia Zecchini clarifies that the belief that only men can be free leads Dona to "seek escape and happiness through some sort of a male alter-ego" (4). She clearly desires to be free as a man, to follow her own law, independent from societal constraints, but acknowledges she is unable to do that while living as a woman. Raquel S. González and Laura Martínez-García claim that the majority of Dona's difficulties originate from how society perceives her and how it determined what women could and could not do at the time (qtd. in Zecchini 7). Despite her gentry status, which allowed her to have servants to take care of her children, Dona was still unhappy, and it was the pirate life she wanted to be able to live.

It can be concluded that *Frenchman's Creek* was written as an exploration of gender and the subversion of gender roles, keeping in mind Daphne du Maurier's gender identity concerns and thoughts were reproduced by Dona, who also wished to live as a man, and attempted to do so through the cabin-boy. The Female Sailor trope allowed du Maurier to use the British literary tradition to illustrate her fantasies and anxieties, and in the same way, piracy was a practical plot technique to depict Dona's rejection of any social norms.

4. Conclusion

Daphne du Maurier's conflicts regarding her gender expression and her unfulfilled desires to be a man or take a more masculine role were overlooked. The traditional system she lived in failed to recognise her experience and help her to make her life more fortunate. The strategy du Maurier used to escape reality was fiction, either by playing masculine roles from her favourite pirate stories or by creating fictional characters. Du Maurier created characters such as Eric Avon in real life, whom she would play, and the characters that appear in her books, such as Dona St Columb from *Frenchman's Creek*. Du Maurier is able to explore these desires through the subversion of gender roles as well as the use of the Female Sailor motif from the British literary tradition. Pirate literature was already out of fashion in du Maurier's time, however, the sea life narrative and the Female Sailor motif fitted perfectly with her gender identity conflicts and desire to live adventures as a sailor. Du Maurier's concerns and desires can clearly be noticed in *Frenchman's Creek*'s Dona St Columb. Daphne du Maurier formed her

identity and the identities of her fictional characters, especially Dona St Columb's, with her knowledge of stories of transgressive individuals from the past.

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