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# Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature

Gender, Performance,  
and Queer Relations

Simone Chess



# Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature

This volume examines and theorizes the oft-ignored phenomenon of male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing in early modern drama, prose, and poetry, inviting MTF crossdressing episodes to take a fuller place alongside instances of female-to-male crossdressing and boy actors' crossdressing, which have long held the spotlight in early modern gender studies. The author argues that MTF crossdressing episodes are especially rich sources for socially-oriented readings of queer gender—that crossdressers' genders are constructed and represented in relation to romantic partners, communities, and broader social structures like marriage, economy, and sexuality. Further, she argues that these relational representations show that the crossdresser and his/her/their allies often benefit financially, socially, and erotically from his/her/their queer gender presentation, a corrective to the dominant idea that queer gender has always been associated with shame, containment, and correction. By attending to these relational and beneficial representations of MTF crossdressers in early modern literature, the volume helps to make a larger space for queer, genderqueer, male-bodied and queer-feminine representations in our conversations about early modern gender and sexuality.

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Relations

Simone Chess

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Introduction: Passing Relations	1
1 Doublecrossdressing Encounters: <i>Haec Vir</i> and <i>Hic Mulier</i> , <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , <i>May Day</i> , and “Robin Hood and the Bishop”	39
2 Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market: <i>A Mad World</i> , <i>My Master</i> , <i>Epicoene</i> , and “Phylotus and Emelia”	72
3 Crossdressing and Queer Heterosexuality: <i>Arcadia</i> , <i>Urania</i> , <i>Isle of the Gulls</i> , and “Sport Upon Sport”	103
4 Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labor: <i>Convent of Pleasure</i> , <i>Gallathea</i> , and “The Male and Female Husband”	138
Epilogue: Male-to-Female Crossdressing, Transfeminism, and Relational Gender	167
<i>Index</i>	189

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# Introduction

## Passing Relations

Perhaps the most famous instance of a man dressed as a woman in early modern literature is the scene in William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in which the wives dress Falstaff in the gown, hat, and muffler of the aunt of Mistress Ford's maid, the old witch of Brainford.<sup>1</sup> This scene of male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing is almost always played for humor, and Falstaff's crossdressing is motivated by his fear of being caught seducing Mistress Ford rather than by his own internal identity or interest.<sup>2</sup> Already having withstood the buckbasket (where he had formerly "quaked for fear lest the lunatic knave [Page] would have searched it"), Falstaff chooses crossdressing over a beating.<sup>3</sup> Yet, when he passes for the witch of Brainford, Falstaff makes himself more, not less, vulnerable to violence. Already a fat fool character, Falstaff's crossdressing makes him appear even more ridiculous, which is the point of the joke. Mistresses Ford and Page trick Falstaff into crossdressing to exploit their husbands' misogyny toward old, fat, and bearded women like the widow of Brainford.<sup>4</sup> At the heart of the Brainford episode is the idea that MTF crossdressing is humiliating, risks violence, and has no benefits since the crossdresser becomes the object of misogynistic disdain.<sup>5</sup> The Falstaff/Brainford scene is funny and memorable; it allows the reader to think about individual gender roles and restrictions, as well as about the violent policing of normative gender. It also puts pressure on the question of "passing" and shows off the oddness and disruption of crossdressing.<sup>6</sup> Yet, while this is the most familiar instance of MTF crossdressing in early modern texts, the representation of Falstaff crossdressed is not necessarily typical since many early modern representations actually show MTF crossdressers doing more serious work to negotiate and inhabit queer gender.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond Falstaff, there are more than thirty other instances in English texts from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in which fictional male characters dress as and pass for women for sustained periods of time. This assemblage of sources includes both canonical texts—including works by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Sir Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser—and less familiar texts, including works by women and anonymous authors. MTF crossdressing also appears in texts from a wide range of literary and popular genres, including drama, poetry, prose romances, and cheap print

## 2 Introduction

ballads and pamphlets. While there are certainly cases—like Falstaff’s—in which MTF crossdressing is depicted as one individual’s negative experience, there are an abundance of instances in which MTF crossdressers are not isolated individuals, in which their crossdressing is not always a punishment or a joke, and even some in which their gender presentation provides them with subversive benefits.

What, then, should we think about the many instances of MTF crossdressing that occur in texts from the early modern period? How might thinking about MTF crossdressing, in particular, contribute to our understanding of early modern sex, gender, and sexuality? While there has been sustained attention, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, toward female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing, and on the phenomenon of “transvestite theater,” very little theoretical and historical work has been done around the question of men dressed as and passing for women in literary representations.<sup>8</sup> By foregrounding instances in which male characters dress as and pass for women in prose, poetic, and dramatic works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and by discussing these individual characters on their own terms, in this project I aim to demonstrate why and how the issues surrounding this type of crossdressing are both distinct from—and essential to—the arguments and ideas that we use to talk about women dressing as men, boys performing as women, and the early modern sex/gender system more broadly.

MTF crossdressing episodes push against the ideas that fictional representations of queer or subversive gender are most often about the crossdresser outside of society or relationships, that crossdressing (especially male crossdressing) is always shameful or punishing, and that instances of queer presentation and performance are ultimately contained.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, MTF crossdressers in early modern texts demonstrate that queer gender presentation is frequently relational. That is, representations of MTF crossdressers in early modern texts focus less on the individuals and the “gender trouble” they personally experience or provoke; they focus more on the social impact that queer gender presentation can have on dyads, communities, and broader social structures, like marriage, economy, and sexuality. These representations show that most MTF characters are constituted *with* and *through* their relationships with other characters more than through identity or outfit in isolation. Further, when an MTF crossdresser’s gender is embedded in and mutually constitutive with these larger systems, the crossdresser and his/her/their allies often benefit financially, socially, and erotically from that queer exchange.

In addition to contextualizing MTF crossdressers as participants in all aspects of community life—as citizens, siblings, children, lovers, and spouses, etc.—in this project, I expand on existing work on early modern crossdressing in three key ways. First, I intervene by inviting MTF crossdressing episodes to take a fuller place alongside FTM crossdressing episodes and discussions of boy actors’ crossdressing that have long held the spotlight in early modern

gender studies, thereby demonstrating the particular contribution of MTF crossdressing episodes to conversations about gender and sexuality in the period. Second, I argue that MTF crossdressing episodes are especially rich sources for relationally and socially oriented readings of gender, and that MTF crossdressing episodes might therefore suggest that relational queer gender could have a positive or beneficial association in early modern literary representations; for the purposes of this project, in prioritizing relational and beneficial gender dynamics made possible by representations of FTM crossdressers, I have chosen to step back from the tendency to focus primarily on violent reactions to and containments of queer gender. Finally, in this work, I use models from queer and trans\*<sup>10</sup> studies to help make a larger space for queer, genderqueer, male-bodied, and queer-feminine representations in conversations about early modern gender and sexuality, which have often skewed toward homo/hetero, masculine/feminine, female-bodied, and queer-masculine foci.<sup>11</sup> In this introduction, I will speak to these three areas before briefly outlining the book's chapters.

### FTM Crossdressing and Boy Actors

Work on crossdressing in early modern literature, especially drama, flourished during the feminist-historicist turn in early modern studies during the 1980s and 1990s. This foundational work on gender presentation and performance focused almost exclusively on FTM crossdressing and "transvestite theater," the practice of boy actors dressing as female characters.<sup>12</sup> Including MTF crossdressing more fully in this conversation, especially from a trans\*/queer studies perspective, can both amplify and redirect some of the critical conversations about boy actors and the FTM crossdressers they often played. It is understandable that the first wave of scholars working on crossdressing focused on FTM instances and boy actors since doing this allowed them to zero in on the role of women and boys within a hierarchical gender system and on the "gender trouble" that crossdressing could cause within that system. Both areas of scholarship tend to leave the patriarchal prescription that masculine presentation is ideal and beneficial intact. In contrast, MTF crossdressing episodes shift this focus by showing the beneficial availability and desirability of some queer and feminine genders.

Representations of FTM crossdressing on the stage and page have been rich and generative areas for feminist inquiry. Scholars working on FTM crossdressing in early modern drama have been interested, primarily, in the female crossdresser as an individual transgressor within systems and ideologies of gender, and on the broader social and cultural messages about women in society that could be inferred from each crossdresser's experiences and representation. For instance, in her seminal 1988 article "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," Jean E. Howard famously argues that polemicists' attacks on FTM crossdressing in books, sermons, and pamphlets "signal[ed] a sex-gender system under

#### 4 Introduction

pressure, and that crossdressing, as fact and as idea, threatened a normative social order based upon strict principles of hierarchy and subordination, of which women's subordination to man was a chief instance, trumpeted from the pulpit, instantiated in law, and acted upon by monarch and commoner alike."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the female crossdresser, passing for male, undermines the sex-gender order and reveals cultural fears about women's autonomy more broadly; crossdressing is used to sidestep the system and to show its machinations. Discussing Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, for example, Howard argues that crossdressing "does not release Rosalind from patriarchy, but reveals the constructed nature of patriarchy's representations of the feminine and shows a woman manipulating those representations in her own interest."<sup>14</sup>

These two moments from Howard's essay typify the critical conversation about FTM crossdressing in the late 1980s and 1990s, which generally read moments in which female characters dress as men as potentially liberating since these moments reveal gender roles and imbalances by enabling FTM crossdressers to access the social and cultural privileges unavailable to them as women and otherwise given only to men.<sup>15</sup> As Howard puts it, "Disruptions of the semiotics of dress by men and women were not, however, read in the same way. For a man, wearing women's dress undermined the authority inherently belonging to the superior sex and placed him in a position of shame."<sup>16</sup> While this is true, I argue that fictional MTF crossdressers complicate this equation even more, insofar as they suggest that men, who would seem to have the most to lose from presenting gender ambiguity, often experience actual gains while crossdressed. Because we expect crossdressers, like Falstaff, to be miserable and mocked, the benefits of gender ambiguity and crossdressing—money, sex, relationships, and community—are more surprising and specific. To name just a few examples, in Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* and Jonson's *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, male characters crossdress in order to marry men, inserting themselves into the marriage market so as to manipulate it for financial and social gain; in Sidney's *Arcadia*, dressing as a woman allows Pyrocles access to Philoclea, who is barred from seeing male suitors; and in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*, the Prince passes for female in order to enter a community of women from which he would otherwise be excluded. In each of these instances, and many others, MTF crossdressing is beneficial rather than shameful. Further, queer and feminine presentation are presented in relation to husbands, lovers, and communities; depictions of MTF crossdressers upend the expectation that crossdressers must by necessity be represented outside of or in opposition to society.

In addition to expanding the canon of scholarship on early modern crossdressing, research attending to MTF crossdressing episodes is in conversation with scholarship on early modern theatrical debates about crossdressing and the traditions of transvestite theater and boy actors.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have drawn attention to the cultural anxieties that surrounded the practice

of crossdressing boy actors, including fears about sexuality, queer desire, and sex and gender indeterminacy. Stephen Orgel, following Laura Levine, summarizes the problem: “But the argument about transvestite actors warns of an even more frightening metamorphosis than the transformation of the boy into a monster of both kinds. Male spectators, it is argued, will be seduced by the impersonation, and losing their reason will become effeminate, which in this case will mean that they will lust after the woman in the drama, which is bad enough, but also after the youth beneath the woman’s costume, thereby playing the woman’s role themselves.”<sup>18</sup>

Representations of MTF crossdressers reveal concerns that naturally follow these anxieties about the actual practices of transvestite actors. If boy actors crossdressed were meant in part to play out anxieties about female hypersexuality, or if the figures of boy crossdressers evoked queer desires, then the sexually charged relationship between cisgender (cases in which gender presentation is aligned with anatomical sex) and queerly gendered femininity in these MTF crossdressing texts not only echoes those concerns;<sup>19</sup> it also amplifies and eroticizes them for the audience. Similarly, MTF crossdressing plots capitalize on and embrace the obsession with erotic androgyny that is so evident in the antitheatrical debates about boy actors. If theater critics feared that men and women alike might desire boys dressed as women, many MTF crossdressing examples demonstrate that there could be attraction to queer gender, that genderqueer presentation might be an intention endpoint, and that desire for a genderqueer love object might sometimes be manifested with more pleasure than anxiety.

Describing an MTF crossdresser, or at least a highly feminine boy who passes for female, in the fifth satire of his 1597–98 “Microcynicon,”<sup>20</sup> Thomas Middleton captures some of the paradox and confusion surrounding early modern representations of queer gender presentation:

Pyander in a nymph’s attire,  
Whose rolling eye sets gazers hearts on fire,  
Whose cherry lip, black brow, and smiles procure  
Lust-burning buzzards to the tempting lure.  
(lines 34–38)

Middleton’s crossdresser, like a boy actor on stage, is at once known and disguised, not so much passing for female as attracting attention for being genderqueer. Middleton details the undeniable appeal of the crossdresser’s queer gender presentation. In part, this blazon of Pyander’s pleasing features replicates crossdressing by describing the boy in lush, feminine terms, including the “cherry lip” and the feminine “rolling eye.” Yet, even as Pyander’s feminine beauty is described, Middleton suggests that Pyander is appealing *because* of his MTF gender presentation, not in spite of it. As Wendy Wall has pointed out, the “rolling eye,” while feminine, is a characteristic in other queer poetry like Shakespeare’s master-mistress sonnet.<sup>21</sup>

## 6 Introduction

Further, Middleton emphasizes the appeal of Pyander's feminine beauty to a male body:

No lady with a fairer face more graced,  
But that Pyander's self himself defaced.  
Never was boy so pleasing to the heart  
As was Pyander for a woman's part. (68–71)

A male “fairer” than a woman, a boy able to play the “woman's part,” Pyander is presented here in a highly eroticized, highly queer way.

### Sex Changes and Sexualities

Critical analysis of FTM crossdressing and boy actors alike has been productive for work on the cultural, medical, and scientific history of sex and gender. Both types of criticism richly demonstrate the early modern cultural concern—partly real, partly rhetorical—that sex was malleable. Work on transvestite theater has paid special attention to the fear that boy actors might be anatomically changed by dressing as women; similarly, FTM crossdressing plots have seemed to show that women might be changed to men through disguise. These ideas interplay in particular in moments when a boy actor plays a woman dressed as a man: his actual male body makes her crossdressing into a literal sex change. Both the phenomena of boy actors and of FTM crossdressing plots have been seen to reflect, as Michel Foucault and Thomas Laqueur have argued, a culture at the crux of a shift in thinking about anatomical sex, gender presentation, and the connections between them.<sup>22</sup> In England in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, beliefs about sex and gender were still heavily influenced by the Galenic tradition, which understood male and female bodies, while generally sexually different from one another, to be homologous and, therefore, changeable. As Will Fisher describes it, “within this tradition, male and female bodies were not understood to be two discrete entities that were fundamentally different from one another; instead, they were viewed along a continuum.”<sup>23</sup> Because anatomical sex could be seen as “a continuum,” sexual differentiation between men and women could be seen as unfixed and impermanent. It is thus deeply historically specific that gender expression—and with it, clothing—came to have high stakes; what a person wore and how he/she acted had the potential to actually change his/her/their sex. In this context, it makes sense that clothing and accessories were key signifiers of gender and sex, and that clothing could be deployed, swapped, or altered to queer and complicate both gender performance and, possibly, the sex of the body beneath.<sup>24</sup>

For my interests in MTF crossdressing specifically, it is worth noting here that examples of actual sex changes in classical and early modern texts are almost exclusively female-to-male; thus, while the FTM narrative of

a female character becoming male might have hinted at the possibility of physical change (indicated also by the boy actor's body in staged iterations), MTF narratives hint at an even less possible or probable type of anatomical and social shift. As Orgel puts it, "transformations that are attested to as scientific fact only work in one direction, from female to male, which is conceived to be upward, toward completion."<sup>25</sup> The confluence of several factors marks MTF crossdressers as sites of anxiety: queer feminine undesirability, the apparent unfeasibility of MTF sex change, and the threat of social downward mobility that comes with casting off masculinity. With masculinity as the default ideal, MTF crossdressers are doing their genders in a way that goes especially against the grain. However, in many cases, when MTF characters play out anxieties and fantasies of sex transformation and its aftereffects, they undercut this concern with the possibility of hidden benefits as well.

Barnabe Riche plays with mythical and medical models of sex change in the resolution of his MTF crossdressing episode in the prose "Phylotus and Emelia."<sup>26</sup> Crossdressed as his sister Emelia and trying to seduce his future husband's daughter, Phylerno stages a scene of sexual transformation. He tells the daughter, Brisilla, "I wold to God, my Brisilla, that I were a man for your only sake."<sup>27</sup> Also, though Brisilla believes it is impossible, Phylerno then theatrically performs his own transformation from female to male:

[A]nd herewithal he seemed with many piteous sighs, throwing up his hands to the heavens, to mumble forth many words in secret as though he had been in some great contemplation, and suddenly without any manner of stirring either hand or foot did lie still as it had been a thing immovable, whereat Brisilla began to call and with her arm to shake him, and Phylerno giving a piteous sigh, as though he had been awakened suddenly out of some dream said [...] "In the meantime receive thy loving friend that today was appointed to be thy father's wife but now consecrated by the goddess [Venus] to be thy loving husband."<sup>28</sup>

With this, Phylerno convinces Brisilla that, though his external physical appearance is completely unchanged, he is now a man beneath his dress. He is successful: "[A]nd herewithal embracing Brisilla in his arms, she [Brisilla] perceived indeed that Emelia was perfectly metamorphosed, which contented her very well."<sup>29</sup> With this move, Phylerno reclaims masculinity without giving up the dress; he looks the same as he did when Brisilla saw him as her father's wife, and yet his rhetoric and behavior now allow him to be read as male despite the prosthesis of the dress. The scene is nominally one of FTM sex change, but it is dependent upon Phylerno's first transformation, through MTF crossdressing, into a woman. Further, Phylerno's choice of metamorphosing himself without changing his clothes signals that the gendered order of the text remains unresolved, and that not even sex change can un queer his crossdressed appearance and its effects.<sup>30</sup>

## 8 Introduction

It is important to note here that scholarship on transvestite theater and FTM crossdressing has depended upon a clear distinction between the androgynous boys who played female/FTM roles and the adult men who were supposed to play only male roles. In cases in which the MTF crossdresser is clearly an adult, like Falstaff with his belly and beard, there is a higher likelihood that the plot will show him failing to pass, being punished, or experiencing violence. The threat of sex change was certainly amplified by perceived gender ambiguity of young men and women, both of which could be seen as not-yet-men. There is, therefore, an impulse to write off representations of MTF crossdressing in which the crossdresser passes for female as being more about the ambiguity of boyhood than about the risk of men becoming women. However, in many cases, texts with MTF crossdressing plots, especially prose romances, blur these lines by writing ambiguously aged and young-adult crossdressers, and by showing them moving in the adult world in relational ways—this is especially the case in moments of sexual encounters.<sup>31</sup>

Work on both FTM crossdressing and the boy actor has been at the center of the project of queering the Renaissance, but in both types of work, there has been a tendency to read romantic and sexual scenes involving women dressed as men or boys dressed as women as either homoerotic (the FTM crossdressing mechanism stages a kiss between two men; the presence of a boy actor means that even a romance between a male character and a female character is actually between two men) or heterosexual (the FTM crossdresser is a female character kissing a male character; the boy actor plays a female character in love with a man). These readings depend upon a relatively stable model of sex and gender in which attraction is seen as directed either to the boy actor or the female character's clothes, or to his/her/their body beneath them. Thus, this approach succeeds in mapping desire toward crossdressers as generally homosexual or heterosexual, but rarely both at once or neither. Further, queer readings of situations involving both FTM characters and boy actors have been less interested in the sexuality or desire of the cisgender partner in each encounter. Textual instances in which MTF crossdressers court, woo, and sleep with cisgender women (and, more rarely, men) demonstrate how sexual encounters and acts can be at once "queer" and "heterosexual." MTF sex and courtship scenarios allow an exploration of sexuality that, outside of the paradigms of male-female, male-male, or female-female erotic encounters, instead highlight the availability of an early modern eroticization of queer gender. Further, I contend that the sexual and romantic partners who build relationships with MTF crossdressers are active participants and co-creators in their queer sexual encounters, and that their desire is, in fact, a vehicle for demonstrating how crossdressing can be read as a queer and desirable performance of gender, rather than a successful or failed disguise. These episodes are surprisingly positive, highlighting the potential for beneficial relational queer presentation and practice, at least in literary representation.

## Relational Gender Expression

A relational model of queer gender grounded in early modern MTF crossdressing texts pushes against the automatic assumption that queer presentation—especially queer femininity from men—would only be relational in the sense that it would be met exclusively with punishment and correction. Instead, MTF crossdressing episodes often represent gender subversion as a relational exercise, something that happens not only between an individual and society, but also between groups of individuals within society. When men dress as women in many early modern texts, the audience is often encouraged by plot and discourse to focus less on the experience of any one crossdresser alone and more on his/her/their experiences in partnerships, relationships, and communities. There is certainly social subversion and containment in play whenever a character is crossdressed and then reveals his/her/their “real” gender. Nevertheless these crossdressing episodes demonstrate that when queer gender is done relationally it is often depicted in positive and beneficial ways that last even when the queer episode is resolved.<sup>32</sup>

In using MTF crossdressers to look at gender relationally, my work runs parallel to recent theories in the social sciences. Relational gender theory is generally traced to Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West’s 2002 *Doing Gender, Doing Difference: Inequality, Power, and Institutional Change*, which itself sought to bring Butler’s theories of performative gender into praxis within sociological work.<sup>33</sup> Not only does relational gender theory make visible the construction and limitations of categories like sex and gender, then, but it also shows the relational ways in which both normative and alternative expressions of gender and sexuality are negotiated and maintained.<sup>34</sup> In their introduction to *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law*, Jocelyn Downie and Jennifer J. Llewellyn explain that, through relational gender theory, “we can see the ways in which being in relationship is integral to self-understanding and to interactions with others at individual, collective, and even institutional levels. The central question in each case is not so much ‘what is X in relationship with?’ but, rather, ‘what is the effect of being in relation?’”<sup>35</sup> They continue, “The human self in this view is constituted *in and through* relationship with others. We define ourselves *in* relationship to others and *through* relationship with others.”<sup>36</sup> This project demonstrates how MTF crossdressers constitute their gender *with* and *through* their relationships with other characters in four ways: by exchanging clothing and gender roles via doublecrossdressing with an FTM crossdresser in the same text, by crossdressing in order to play the female role in courtship with cisgender men, by engaging in queerly heterosexual romantic and sexual relations with cisgender women, and by working with partners to co-create and deploy their genders of choice.

Moreover, MTF crossdressers who give up masculine presentation and take up riskier feminine or even genderqueer presentations demonstrate the impact that specifically transgressive gender can have on relationships and

in society. Writing about relational gender in contemporary contexts, Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll show that when gender transgression is done relationally it can have actual social and cultural impact: “In contexts where people know or have good reason to presume that others present share their [nonhegemonic] alternative gender beliefs [...] we expect it will be the shared alternative gender beliefs, rather than the hegemonic form, that will become sufficiently salient to measurably affect participants’ self-other expectations and thus their behavior and evaluations in the situation.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in early modern texts that feature representations of MTF cross-dressers, there are small glimpses of this relational impact from transgressive or alternative gender presentation: within the relational communities surrounding MTF crossdressers, there are brief and beneficial moments in which the alternative becomes the norm. Ridgeway argues that when widely shared beliefs about gender are interrupted or revised, even briefly, they impact the organizational structure of their culture; in the end, she suggests, “these material changes create gradual, iterative pressure for change in cultural beliefs about gender as well.”<sup>38</sup> Kristen W. Springer elaborates further: “Bodily needs, bodily pleasures, and bodily limitations are at work in social relationships, and are at stake in social change.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Prioritizing Benefit and Relation**

In focusing on the ways that MTF crossdressers participate in relational gender dynamics, and in highlighting the potential benefits of that participation, I do not mean to minimize the reality of gender policing, punishments for subversion, and individual isolation depicted in many moments of MTF crossdressing in early modern texts (or, for that matter, as similar violence and shaming continue to have a real and negative impact in queer and genderqueer communities today). It is important to recognize historical corrective measures like skimmingtons and charivari rituals, which made MTF crossdressers and queer gender presentations targets of hate-based violence.<sup>40</sup> These realities are certainly present in many instances of MTF representation. Taking *Merry Wives of Windsor* as an example again, the Falstaff episode is echoed and reiterated by the play’s second MTF cross-dressing incident, in the final act, when Slender and Dr Caius are tricked into running away with boys who are both dressed as Anne Page. Slender’s response to discovering that he has been fooled by a crossdresser reveals that the act of crossdressing, once it is discovered, is threatening and unsettling enough to require violence. Slender reports: “I came yonder at Eton to marry Anne Page, and she’s a great lubberly boy. If it had not been i’ the church, I would have swung him, or he would have swung me. If I did not think it had been Anne Page, I would never stir—and ’tis a postmaster’s boy [...] If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman’s apparel, I would not have had him.”<sup>41</sup> Even though the postmaster’s boy is crossdressing for

profit—he has been hired to do so—in passing for female and being outed as a crossdresser, he becomes both a threat (“he would have swinged me”) and a target (“I would have swinged him”) for violence. By nearly marrying Slender, the postmaster’s boy threatens boundaries of gender, sexuality, and class, and violence is the natural and assumed corrective to his very existence. Even when spoken by the floundering and ineffective Slender, the automatic connection between the discovery of crossdressing and an act of violence can be chilling. In the world of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Slender’s impulse to attack the crossdresser who threatens him goes unquestioned, and it is therefore naturalized as a realistic or intuitive response: because he tricked Slender, the boy deserves to be beaten.

This pattern of violent punishment for crossdressing, or for desiring a crossdressed or gender-variant romantic partner, is common in MTF crossdressing narratives off the stage as well. While the Slender episode in *Merry Wives of Windsor* aims to correct the crossdresser’s threat to heterosexuality, the anonymous and undated ballad “The Country Cozen” outlines other reasons to violently punish crossdressers.<sup>42</sup> This ballad’s subtitle summarizes its plot neatly: “The Crafty City Dame, Who invited a Gentleman into her House in Womans apparel, whereby her Husband was deceived, he taking him for a she Country Cozen, and how he found out, and punished the Deceit.” At the start of the ballad, the “crafty city dame” writes a secret letter to her “country co[usin]” and instructs him to visit her dressed as a woman. The ballad narrator explains:

When as the Barber had trim’d him completely,  
He shew’d himself like a woman dressed neatly,  
And toward London went as fast as may be,  
Where many took him for some country Lady. (column 3, stanza 3)

So dressed, and passing as female, the MTF crossdressed cousin is welcomed in the wife’s household, where the cuckolded husband feeds him, gives him drink, and even allows him to sleep in bed alone with the wife.

However, the lover’s luck changes on the second night, when the husband is woken from a nightmare in which “He dream’d like Acteon he was transformed, And like a Buck his pate was horned” (column 4, stanza 4). With the clarity of this prophetic dream, the husband is suddenly certain that he has been cuckolded, and he runs to his bed to find the wife and cousin there. The final stanza of the ballad reads:

When he had searcht him & found him a man, sir  
Having in one hand a good holly wand Sir,  
He soundly beswing’d him back, side, and bone, sir,  
And threatened next time he’d cut off his stones, sir,  
Then naked out of doors he turn’d his cozen. (column 4, stanza 6)

This punishment is ostensibly more for the cuckolding than for the cross-dressing, but the gendered focus (and genital fixation) of the violence—the beating of the “bone,” the threat of castration—and the final act of stripping the clothes from and forcing public humiliation upon the cousin (not unlike the forced crossdressing of the skimmington, here reversed) demonstrate that this beating is more about gender transgression than marital transgression.<sup>43</sup> The use of “swinge,” which could have sexual connotations, and the potential for erotics in the naked beating further demonstrate the anxious association of MTF crossdressing, like male effeminacy, with homoeroticism. At the ballad’s end, the MTF crossdresser is again beaten, threatened with lasting bodily harm, and discarded naked on the streets, where he may become the target of further violence.

Slender’s punishment of his boy bride in *Merry Wives of Windsor* and the ballad husband’s beating of the cousin are not uncommon moments among the large catalog of MTF crossdressing texts. The scenes of violence toward crossdressers—especially when publically staged in plays or performed in streets or taverns as ballads—enact a literary version of early modern skimmington rituals, which were used against MTF crossdressers (and men viewed as effeminate) and against FTM crossdressers (and women viewed as masculine or emasculating). Instances like these, both fictional and historical, have already been used to successfully show the limits and restrictions of the early modern hierarchical sex/gender system. Further, they have special emotional and political resonance in our modern, twenty-first-century context, wherein crimes against gender-variant individuals are all too common. Judith Butler, for example, describes violence toward genderqueer and transgender individuals and communities in terms similar to those used by Alexandra Shepherd and Rosemary Kegl to describe the work of the skimmington: “This violence emerges from a profound desire to keep the order of binary gender natural or necessary, to make of it a structure, either natural or cultural, or both, that no human can oppose, and still remain human.”<sup>44</sup> In both the early modern and modern contexts, it makes sense to connect variant and queer gender presentation with rituals of shaming punishment, and to focus on the loss and grief associated with those practices and social norms. Nevertheless, in this project I seek to direct focus away from the expected outcomes of shame, violence, and punishment; in doing so, I do not mean to diminish the significance of these realities, but rather to make a larger space for the surprising yields of MTF crossdressing. Even against a backdrop of violent threats, even against almost-certain containment or erasure, early modern English texts contain representations of MTF crossdressers who seem not to be ashamed or afraid, and who manage, without being punished, to demonstrate the advantages of their queer and feminine presentations *and* to display the ways that their presentations worked in relation to others. Rather than focusing on crossdressers as outsiders or societal irritants, my analysis of these texts readings shows the possibility of MTF crossdressers—at least

sometimes—doing their gender in positive and impactful ways, despite and in the face of threats against those very acts.

In organizing this book around the potential benefits of a relational model of MTF crossdressing, I am echoing recent moves in the contemporary trans\*, queer, and genderqueer communities to broaden the discourse that surrounds queer and genderqueer individuals' lived experience.<sup>45</sup> For instance, prominent activist Janet Mock spoke out in 2013 about the negative and minimizing aspects of the annual international Transgender Day of Remembrance, especially about how the day's focus on the death and loss of predominantly trans\* women of color has created a situation in which those women are remembered only in terms of violence and never strength or accomplishment.<sup>46</sup> She writes:

The disproportionate levels of violence trans women of color face pains me, and so does the pervasive framing of trans womanhood being directly linked to images of victimhood and tragedy. It hurts that our names are often amplified only when we are dead, gone, inactive. I realize it's a state of emergency for trans women and trans feminine folk of color, and I am dedicated to raising awareness to the plight of my sisters and siblings, yet I also know that the intense focus on the publicizing of murder, violence, death and victimhood becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the young women I share space with.<sup>47</sup>

Mock concludes, "We can't *only* celebrate trans women of color in memoriam. We must begin uplifting trans women of color, speaking their names and praises, in their lives."<sup>48</sup> There is no denying that violence against gender variance disproportionately impacts trans-feminine individuals, people of color, and the poor. However, as Mock points out, limiting the conversation about trans\* women of color to the stories of their violent and shaming repression, abuse, and deaths, while important and meaningful, can prevent us from seeing their full lives, their contributions to family and community, and the central place that they can and should hold in the larger queer community. Representations of MTF crossdressers in early modern literature are a far cry from modern trans\* women, but there is a similar tendency to bring them to the table first and foremost as examples of repressive ideology and restriction. Without diminishing those realities, in this project I hope to flesh out the other parts of the depictions of early modern MTF crossdressers, including parts that are positive and even indicate the possibility for variation and queerness in early modern literature and culture. By mirroring Mock's call for stories about queer femininity that push beyond hate crimes, in this project I seek not only to broaden our discussion of MTF crossdressing beyond the skimmington, but also to contribute literary and historical sources that support and model, however fleetingly, positive representations of MTF gender-variant characters

in relationships and communities. As Mock suggests, this view enables us to imagine social change, beginning from the work of individuals and expanding outward.

### Queer Contexts

Though the politics of violence and remembrance in the contemporary trans\* community can never speak directly to the context and concerns of representations of fictional MTF crossdressers written hundreds of years ago, Mock's argument nevertheless informs my emphasis on beneficial and relational aspects of MTF crossdressing episodes over and above violent and shameful ones. While this project centers on early modern literature and demonstrates how MTF crossdressing within that literature reveals a type of queer gender play that is culturally and historically specific to the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it is at the same time informed and enabled by contemporary trans\* and genderqueer theory. The ways in which we think and talk about gender have become more complex and interesting since scholars made the turn to trans\* studies; now is the time, then, to come back to early modern crossdressers using language and ideas from trans\* studies to complicate and clarify their genders individually and in relation to other characters and readers/audiences.

In her introduction to the first *Transgender Studies Reader*, Susan Stryker broadly defines the field: "transgender studies is concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood."<sup>49</sup> As such, trans\* studies explodes the ways in which we are able to think about queer gender presentation, identity, and behavior in early modern representation. Crucially, it allows a distinction between gender and sexuality and enables descriptions of gender that emphasize both fluidity and queer specificity. Stryker, for example, discusses her frustration with a 1995 panel on "Gender and the Homosexual Role" at which "the entire discussion of 'gender diversity' subsumed within a discussion of sexual desire—as if the only reason to express gender was to signal the mode of one's attractions and availabilities to potential sex partners?"<sup>50</sup>

Scholars working in trans\* studies have always shown an interest in locating and articulating trans\* histories; as such, their work has frequently referenced the early modern period, seeing examples of early modern queer gender performance as antecedents of contemporary genderqueerness. Simultaneously, within early modern studies, scholars have paid increasing attention to discussing gender, performance, and embodiment alongside

sexuality. In many ways, early modern studies are naturally aligned and in conversation with contemporary trans\* and queer theory: We have returned to the idea of a spectrum of anatomical sex, now informed by intersex and transsexual narratives instead of the Galenic. So, too, we have once again broadened sexuality beyond fixed orientation—to queer and pansexual, in addition to and instead of homosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian—echoing the common claim that in the early modern period, sexual orientation was not fixed, but was linked instead to specific acts or behaviors.

Despite these strong connections between contemporary trans\* theory and early modern literary and cultural studies, early modern work is often left out of or written off in broader trans\* studies conversations.<sup>51</sup> Through the apparatus of trans\* scholarship, this project continues to theorize the range of genders represented in early modern texts: where we have talked about cross-dressing, we might now deepen our readings by thinking as well about early modern models of trans\* or genderqueer presentations; where we have tended to look at genderqueer characters as individuals, we can think about their genders as relational; and where we have thought about variant gender as primarily negative, we can, through trans\* studies, make visible its advantages. At the same time, the early modern period deserves a richer place in historical trans\* studies; MTF crossdressers and other queer early modern figures have more to offer than anecdote alone, and the ways in which we think and talk about them can be usefully applied to modern trans\* discourses as well.

I want to be clear that early modern MTF crossdressers are represented in literature as queer figures in ways that are outside of modern thinking about sex, gender, and sexuality; I am therefore cautious about assuming that early modern crossdressing could indicate an identity, and I am wary about anachronistically conflating fictional representations of crossdressers with trans\* and other gender-variant identities. Yet, these connections are available; once they are articulated, they change, deepen, and nuance early modern characters and their identities just as deeply as feminist readings inform and change the way we see female characters and as post-colonial studies shift our readings of characters of color. As Jason Cromwell puts it, making trans\* and non-heterosexual people and their representations visible queers the binaries of “body-equals-sex-equals-gender-equals-identity,” and, without those binaries, MTF crossdressers and other queer characters in early modern texts are richly available for queer and genderqueer analysis.<sup>52</sup> Further, each queer character has a relational impact on *all* gender and sexuality within his/her/their textual or representational world. This results in instances of what Stryker describes as “renarration,” or “transgender effects,” in which “foreground and background seem to flip and reverse, and the spectacle of an unexpected gender phenomenon illuminates the production of gender normativity in a startling new way. In doing so, the field [of transgender studies] begins to tell new stories about things many of us thought we already knew.”<sup>53</sup>

One clear example of the impact of trans\*-studies-informed renarration in early modern literary studies has been seen in the increasingly queer

approaches toward the character of Moll Cutpurse in Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*. Famously based on the real-life Moll Frith, Moll Cutpurse wears men's clothes, smokes and drinks, puzzles at normative female behavior, and announces, "I have no humour to marry, I love to lie o' both sides o' th' bed myself, and again o' th' other side."<sup>54</sup> Cutpurse (and Frith, by extension) has been described in scholarship as a roaring girl, a transvestite, a lesbian, and, more recently, as both (proto-)butch and transgender.<sup>55</sup> Of these, the final two identities show a shift to focusing on Cutpurse's gender as distinct from, though related to, her sexuality: Theodora Jankowski suggests that *The Roaring Girl* might be "the first English play to present a (proto-)butch character on stage," and Geraldine Wagner argues that Mary Frith might be described as transgender, based on evidence from Frith's biography, *The Life and Death of Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse*.<sup>56</sup> Wagner grounds her claim in Frith's repeated articulation of a masculine persona, even at great cost, as well as a consideration of "the multi-valenced implications of transvestitism in early modern England," which included gender queerness alongside queer sexuality.<sup>57</sup> The language and ideas of trans\* studies are part of what enables this focus on Frith and Cutpurse's genders, instead of or in addition to their perceived sexualities, and because of that shift in focus these discussions orient queerness away from sexuality alone and toward social and interpersonal performances of other kinds. Though we can never locate a "real" gender for the historical Frith or the fictional Cutpurse, attending to Frith/Cutpurse's performance of queer gender makes visible the construction of cisgender and normative gender performances around her, both in the play and in the audiences, just as her queer act of opting out of marriage reveals the artificiality, production, and maintenance of heterosexuality.

Frith/Cutpurse's queer gender, doubly presented by a character and a cameo appearance by a real person, renarrates a straight comedy plot into a play about gender defiance and variation: Moll Cutpurse's relationships with other characters reveal the possibility of queer desire and alliance. More importantly, the audience members' interest in watching Moll, as is evident from the character's appearance in other plays and from at least one cameo by the real Mary Frith at one performance, demonstrates their interest in gender variance and transgression, and, maybe, their curiosity about how one person's queer performance might change their own views of gender.<sup>58</sup> The fact that Mary Frith was famous for her trans-gender (if not transgender) presentation, and that her queer gender generated such a popular-culture fascination is a reminder that genderqueer representation in literature and theater was never contained by the limits of fiction but was also a way of revisiting, examining, and displaying queer gender alternatives that were happening in reality, and, relationally, using them to understand cis genders as well.

This "transgender effect," in which a genderqueer character demonstrates the construction of gender more broadly, is equally evident in a less famous

but strikingly similar MTF crossdressing example from Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*. In this play, Jonson creates a circumstance in which a male character, Wittipol, must crossdress to play the role of a Spanish Lady. However, the crossdressing plot is further queered and complicated by the fact that Jonson wrote the role with a particular genderqueer performer, an actor known for his female roles as a boy and who was transitioning into adult male performance, in mind.<sup>59</sup> When Merecraft is in need of an MTF crossdresser, Engine recommends Richard Robinson, a real member of the King's Men. Instead of describing how well Robinson has played female roles in the theater, Engine emphasizes Robinson's queer presentation and crossdressing off the stage as well:

There's Dick Robinson  
 A very pretty Fellow, and comes often  
 To a gentleman's chamber, a friend's of mine. We had  
 The merriest Supper of it there, one night—  
 The gentleman's landlady invited him  
 To' a gossips' feast: Now he, sir, brought Dick Robinson,  
 Dressed like a lawyer's wife, amongst 'em all—  
 I lent him clothes—but, to see him behave it;  
 And lay the law, and carve, and drink unto 'em;  
 And then talk bawdy, and send frolicks! O!  
 It would have burst your buttons, or not left you  
 A seam.<sup>60</sup>

In this scene, Jonson could easily have had Engine praise Robinson's performance in a female role, but he instead emphasizes an off-stage instance of queer gender. In setting the stage for the real Robinson's cameo appearance, it is important for Jonson to demonstrate to the audience that Robinson is not just a professional crossdresser but also a person who takes his queer gender performance into regular life, passing as a "lawyer's wife" at dinner parties and fitting in among the gossips. Thus, just as Middleton and Dekker want to capitalize on how their play showcases Mary Frith's real queerness through the Moll Cutpurse character, Jonson wants the real Robinson to be a queer spectacle in addition to—and layered over—his character Wittipol's queer performance in this role as a male actor playing a male character dressed as woman. As Roberta Barker puts it, "The notoriously cranky Jonson praises his wit, looks, and elegance, but his greatest tribute is reserved for the art by which Robinson is able to transform himself so completely that he can convince a group of real-life women in whose midst he sits." This trans\* performance in life, instead of on stage, is what leads Jonson, through Merecraft, to call Robinson an "ingenious youth."<sup>61</sup> Having set the stage by describing the veracity of Robinson's cross-gender performances in real life, Jonson completes the joke by having the actor's character, Wittipol, now "undertake 't himself" by stepping in to play the Spanish Lady in Robinson's

place. The scene's humor depends upon the audience understanding that they are watching Robinson playing the role, so that when Merecraft thinks Wittipol is too tall to pass for female, Engine can say, "And Robinson's as tall as he [...] every jot."<sup>62</sup>

Both *The Roaring Girl* and *The Devil is an Ass* use rich textual description to discuss the clothing, bodies, and allure of their trans-gender characters. However, I would suggest that the eroticization of Moll Cutpurse and Wittipol's Spanish Lady can be read less in terms of the homo/hetero binary of sexuality and instead as a type of desire in which gender confusion and subversion are part of the erotic enjoyment of the endeavor. In these cases, along with the other MTF crossdressing episodes that I will discuss, queer, rather than homoerotic, desire is one mechanism for articulating a specifically genderqueer or trans\* erotics that is explored through figures of MTF crossdressed characters in early modern texts. Rather than debating whether genderqueer characters are passing or failing to pass in social, romantic, and erotic contexts, using the lens of trans\* studies allows for the idea that desire may be more broadly queer—generated by, not despite, queer gender. Further, queer desire encompasses the idea of taking pleasure—for readers and audiences as well as for characters—in and from ambiguity, especially the pleasure that comes from knowing, understanding, and participating in deploying queer gender.<sup>63</sup>

The Richard Robinson/Wittipol combination of role and cameo offers an MTF crossdressing counterpoint to the Mary Frith/Moll Cutpurse situation in *The Roaring Girl*. In both cases, the playwrights capitalize on popular-culture interests in the lived experiences and exploits of gender-queer individuals, particularly in the moments when they are least gender conforming (Frith's arrest for wearing male clothes, Robinson's crossdressed dinner party), and pay special attention to their desirability. In each case, the character based on a real person becomes the headliner of his/her/their play and the focus of audience attention: each uses gender to manipulate the world of his/her/their play, breaks social rules and conventions to meet his/her/their needs, and shows how limiting and restrictive normative gender roles are by comparison. Also, at least in some performances, both Robinson and Frith attended or acted in their own plays, participating in, celebrating, and even endorsing their own somewhat valorized representations. *The Roaring Girl* and *The Devil is an Ass* have always been part of conversations about transvestism or crossdressing; since the project of queering the Renaissance, the plays have also been sites of lesbian and gay readings, especially readings centered around their two historical queer subjects. However, trans\* and gender studies can open both plays to a broader conversation about queer gender as well; as Mary Weismantel puts it, "Interpreting evidence like this from a transgender perspective doesn't mean artificially forcing ancient phenomena into a new and ill-fitting category. If anything, the opposite seems true. It is as if the premodern past had to wait for transgender scholarship to arrive."<sup>64</sup>

Trans\* studies has changed the ways that we think and talk about early modern queerness, as if Mary Frith/Moll Cutpurse and Wittipol/Richard Robinson were waiting for additional language to describe their queer ways of being and to explain the cultural attraction to and interest in their gendered embodiments. By attending to early modern FTM crossdressers, this project helps to fill critical lacunae in trans\* studies around crossdressing, presentations of queer femininity, and queer attraction outside of a homo/hetero binary. While there has been some serious scholarship on crossdressing, much of it on drag as an example of hyperbolic gender performativity, little serious attention has been paid to crossdressers, especially to male-bodied crossdressers who dress in feminine clothes.<sup>65</sup> Miqqi Alicia Gilbert articulates this marginalization by claiming that “Transsexuals often view cross-dressers as dilettantes, wannabes, or unsophisticated amateurs.”<sup>66</sup> In other cases, since many contemporary MTF crossdressers identify as heterosexual cisgender men, they are excluded from broader queer scholarship and communities. By identifying episodes of early modern MTF crossdressing and by highlighting the queer impact of MTF crossdressing, I offer a contribution toward filling that gap. Similarly, while feminist scholarship has long attended to gender roles and gender issues for women and female characters, queer scholarship has tended to focus on queer masculinity over queer femininity; this is true in the early modern focus on FTM crossdressers, to be sure, but it is mirrored in an imbalance between scholarship about FTM trans\* identity, trans\* masculinities, and female masculinity, and the more underrepresented MTF trans\* identity, trans\* femininities, and male femininity.<sup>67</sup> Early modern MTF crossdressers offer many iterations of queer femininity; further, they show the ways in which femininity is beneficial and aspirational. Finally, trans\* studies has opened a conversation about sexuality, erotics, and desire. This project joins in that work by considering various early modern sexual acts, practices, and desires as they were depicted through the figures of MTF crossdressers for the enjoyment of readers, audiences, and performers. These early modern crossdressers participate in demonstrating and theorizing the erotics of trans-gender figures, particularly by modeling desire toward queer femininity and gender variance. They thus enable conversations about queer sexualities outside of male-male and female-female homosexuality to include queer heterosexuality and the intimacy of collaborative gender labor. Thus, even as contemporary theory and language offer new, queer ways of reading early modern sources, historically grounded readings of early modern queer genders and desires—especially surrounding the oft-ignored figures of MTF crossdressers—offer deep roots and meaningful context for queer studies.

## Chapter Breakdown

In each of the book’s four chapters, I explore aspects of the relational ways in which MTF crossdressers use their queer gender presentation to rework

societal conventions, often to their own advantage. Though each chapter focuses on the impact of the crossdresser's gender not only on his own identity but also within a larger context, the book is organized from the broadest relational context to the most intimate. Thus, the first two chapters of the book examine the impact of crossdressing on large social systems with many players; the first chapter sees this impact on the scale of the entire sex/gender system as it is depicted in a given text, while the second chapter investigates the impact of MTF crossdressing on one major apparatus within the sex/gender system, the marriage economy.

In Chapter 1, "Doublecrossdressing Encounters," I use examples of MTF crossdressers who are in paired relationships with their seeming opposites, FTM crossdressers. These doublecrossed scenarios make up one of the largest categories of crossdressing texts and are especially popular in plays, though I also discuss pamphlets, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and a Robin Hood Ballad. By writing or staging MTF and FTM crossdressing pairs, authors create a scenario in which characters crossdress in relation to one another, in which they witness and evaluate each other's gender performances, and in which they see the other crossdresser step, sometimes literally, into their discarded clothing and gender roles. Doublecrossdressing texts therefore allow and encourage empathy, mirroring, and perspective not dissimilar to modern experiments with genderswapping through virtual reality: one crossdressed character sees his or her gender performed by the other, watching that performance from the subject position previously occupied by the performer. From the character's point of view—and also potentially from the perspective of the audience or reader—the seeming symmetry of the MTF and FTM crossdressers works to denaturalize both of the crossdressers' sexed bodies and show the performativity of all genders, including cisgenders, in the world of the text and beyond. Doublecrossdressing narratives show a fascination with the idea that gender presentation—and with it, certain set amounts of power, masculinity, and femininity—might be swapped "betwixt sex and sex." The act of participating in or witnessing such a genderswap had, and still has, the capacity to generate empathy, provoke identification, and sustain queer disorientation about gender norms. Doublecrossdressing extends the queerness of the solitary MTF crossdresser by demonstrating the ripple effect and connective relationality between the crossdresser and his FTM pair, and beyond them into their community and its attitudes toward sex and gender. In doublecrossdressing narratives, one queer act enables and encourages another, and what begins as a gimmicky thought experiment in fiction holds the capacity to trouble gender and sex categories more broadly.

In Chapter 2, "Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market," I take on the question of MTF crossdressing in a gendered marriage economy. Subverting Gayle Rubin's seminal idea of "traffic in women," I use examples of men who dress as women in order to gain control of their inheritances and incomes to show that there may be some power in the position

of the trafficked female after all. In these instances, which include scenes from Middleton's *Mad World, My Masters*, Riche's "Phylotus and Emelia," and Jonson's *Epicoene*, an MTF crossdresser intentionally enters himself into the marriage market, often replacing a cisgender woman who is herself unwilling to enter an arranged marriage plan. In these circumstances MTF crossdressers queerly cultivate and exploit gendered parent-children relationships and interrupt the normative relationships between male property holders interested in solidifying their relationships through kinship bonds. When MTF crossdressers market themselves as brides, they gain intimacy and access to financial and cultural stakeholders that they otherwise would not have. Further, these episodes demonstrate the competition, comparison, and occasional cooperation between genderqueer MTF crossdressers and the cisgender women whom they replace. Relational gender, then, is deployed not only between the crossdresser and his/her/their target husband, but also between the crossdresser and the company of women that he/she enters in order to execute his/her/their plan.

While the first half of the book demonstrates that MTF crossdressers are in relation to large-scale social structures, the final chapters turn to more interpersonal relational gender models. Chapter 3, "Crossdressing and Queer Heterosexuality," explores the queered desire that female characters feel toward MTF crossdressers because of, not despite of, their gender presentation. One major anxiety about crossdressers (both modern and early modern) is that their sexuality is ambiguous or unknown; the texts themselves, and their readers, focus intensely on this issue. However, what are we to make of the partners (usually represented as cisgender women) who are seduced by, or who seduce, MTF crossdressers? By selecting and enjoying genderqueer love objects, these female characters upend traditional readings of crossdressing narratives to include possibilities for queer desire as well as empowerment. Moreover, a queer reading of these sexual encounters creates space for the possibility of a voyeuristic queer readership of these texts, which include Sidney's *Arcadia*, Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Montgomerie's Urania*, John Day's *The Isle of the Gulls*, and ballad and sonnet poetry.

The fourth and final chapter of the book, "Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labor," explores a new idea in gender and sexuality theory, the notion of "gender labor," in which a cisgender (not crossdressed or trans\*) partner participates in cocreating his or her partner's queer gender. While work on gender labor thus far has focused on contemporary subjects, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which the concept can be generatively applied to an early modern context. For example, in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*, Lady Happy asks the MTF crossdressed "Princess" to play the role of a male suitor in the convent's theatrical productions. In doing so, she takes the lead in creating a moment of male-to-female-to-male-crossdressing, and in initiating gender play and performance with her crossdressed love interest. This concept is pushed to

its extremes in John Lyly's *Gallathea*, in which two genderqueer crossdressers, Gallathea and Phillida, each thinking that the other is male, create and enact romantic love scenes that involve gender play and a cocreated divestment from anatomical sex. In this final chapter, in addition to introducing a lone instance of FTM crossdressing with *Gallathea*, I present an instance of intersex representation through the ballad "The Male and Female Husband." Though these final two examples bend the rules of *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature*, they productively work alongside MTF crossdressing examples of gender labor to show an unexpected, exciting aspect of partnered investment in queer gender.

## Conclusions

I began this discussion by dismissing Shakespeare's most famous MTF crossdresser, Falstaff, because of his representational limitations as a functional punchline and a target of violence. In Sidney's *Arcadia*, the Renaissance's other most canonical MTF crossdresser, Pyrocles, offers a counterpoint to Falstaff's "cod drag."<sup>68</sup> Already dressed in his Amazonian splendor, Pyrocles tells his audience: "Neither doubt you, because I wear a woman's apparel, I will be the more womanish; since, I assure you, for all my apparel, there is nothing I desire more than to fully prove myself a man in this enterprise" (21). For Pyrocles, then, crossdressing is less a humiliation than an opportunity to test his mettle and achieve his goals. Though his assurance that he will not be made "womanish" by his attire indicates some anxiety about the transformative potential of crossdressing, Pyrocles nevertheless sees dressing as a woman as an ideal way to show the sort of man he is. Over the course of the romance, his various admirers will simultaneously read his queer gender as masculine, feminine, and ambiguous. His crossdressing will cause a ripple effect of other transformations in the text around him (there is no FTM doublecrossdressing in this instance, but there are still significant and interrelated disguises and instances of classdressing). He will manipulate the marriage economy and the rules of inheritance by exempting himself through his genderqueer presentation. He will woo a lover who will know and desire him first and foremost in his crossdressed appearance. He will depend on the gender labor of friends and lovers to help him sustain and maintain his gender presentation. For Pyrocles, the enterprise of dressing as and passing for a woman is relational and beneficial; dressed as an Amazon, he accesses connections, resources, and power that he could never have as a cisgender prince. Dressed as a woman to prove himself a man, Pyrocles demonstrates the significance of MTF crossdressers in early modern texts; he models a genderqueerness that is both male and female, masculine and feminine, and he shows the possible benefits—political, financial, social, romantic, and sexual—of living and performing that gender. His example, and others like it, show why it is time to attend to MTF crossdressers and their genderqueer, relational impacts on their textual worlds and beyond.

## Notes

1. I discuss Shakespeare's second-most famous (and only other) MTF crossdressing plot, the introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, in Chapter 2.
2. This scene has been commonly dismissed as slapstick or silly: a final humiliation for Falstaff, not a real effort to make him pass for a woman. Roger Moss, for instance, argues that the crossdressing trick is just another way to degrade Falstaff, but that it "adds nothing to these comic twists, and makes them seem merely formulaic," lacking the "surprise or energy" of the previous buckbasket trick (Moss, "Falstaff as a Woman," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 10, no.1 (Fall 1995): 31–41). Others, including W.H. Auden ("The Prince's Dog," in *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* [New York: Random House, 1948], and Grace Tiffany ("Falstaff's False Staff: 'Jonsonian' Asexuality in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Comparative Drama* [Fall 1992], 254–70), have focused on the sexual ambiguity of Falstaff crossdressed: Auden calls him "a cross between a very young child and a pregnant mother," and Tiffany compares Falstaff's expression of sexuality to other crossdressing moments in humors comedy, concluding that "Falstaff's disguise as the 'fat woman of Brainford' during his final escape from Ford's house further muffles an already provisional sexual nature, adding to it another layer of sexual impossibility." As early as 1915, Victor Oscar Freeburg suggested that MTF "boy bride" characters might have had a "dampening effect" on audiences, and further argued that "the conception of a man dressed as a woman is always farce" compared to the more serious conception of a female page, a woman character dressed as a man.
3. William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 3.5.89–90. All other quotations from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are taken from this edition.  
On the significance of Falstaff's buckbasket ride, see Richard Helgerson, "The Buck Basket, the Witch, and the Queen of Faeries: The Women's World of Shakespeare's *Windsor*," in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 162–82.
4. Scholars have focused on Falstaff's beard, and especially on Caius's exclamation, "I like not when a 'oman has a great peard" (4.2.193). See, for example, David Landreth's argument that other men in the play are emasculated by Falstaff's crossdressing because of their failure to recognize that he is male despite evidence like his beard in "Once More into the Preech: The Merry Wives' English Pedagogy" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2004): 420–49. Jonathan Goldberg points out that Falstaff's beating is grounded in the fact that he becomes a masculine women and is thus associated with both witchcraft and with women who had sex with women, in "What Do Women Want?: The Merry Wives of Windsor," *Criticism* 51, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 225–33. On the role of gender in the play, and on the roles of Mistresses Ford and Page in particular, see Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91–93, 114–26; and Patricia Parker, "*The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Shakespearean Translation," *Modern Language Quarterly* 52 (1991): 225–61.
5. In *Vested Interests: Crossdressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), Marjorie Garber uses Falstaff as an example of "cod drag,"

in which “cod” means both scrotum and fool, and in which the crossdresser is “something of an embarrassment” (125).

6. The tension between presentism and historicism, in both the early modern period and the present, is typified by my choice of the term *crossdresser*, as opposed to the more traditional *transvestite*; this choice reflects a modern preference held by self-identified crossdressers today. While both terms are anachronistic, *crossdresser* has more positive, prideful associations and opens more doors than it closes; in particular, *crossdresser* as an identity productively puts an emphasis on the action and intent of cross-gender presentation without carrying as much weight from a history of medicalization and stigma as *transvestite* does. I prefer the compound word *crossdress* over the more-grammatical *cross-dress* for several reasons: while both *crossdress* and *cross-dress* are common uses, and *cross-dress* is more common in academic publications, *crossdress* seems to be the more common use within online and in-person crossdressing communities. The compound term mirrors other compounds in gender and sexuality discourses, including *cisgender* and *transgender*; like those terms, *crossdresser* indicates a category of queer identity, more than simply modifying “-dressing” with the idea of crossing binary gender. I further use *crossdresser* instead of the more dated and clinical *transvestite*, which carries a history of medicalization and stigma and places less emphasis on the potential for positive and prideful action and agency in the act of crossdressing. I prefer the single word because it indicates a category of queer identity, more than simply modifying dressing with the idea of crossing binary gender. Using the term also helps with specificity: while contemporary crossdressing is often included under the asterisked umbrella term *trans\** (though many crossdressers do not identify as trans or even queer). The abbreviations FTM (female to male) and MTF (male to female), which are similarly borrowed from their common use in the *trans\** community, are in some ways in conflict with this turn toward queer gender; after all, they reify a binary male/female system and suggest that there is or should be a unidirectional gender change in *trans\** or crossdressing situations. At the same time, like *crossdresser*, the specificity of MTF and FTM is important for expressing the particular types of queer genders and presentations at play here; further, the use of these abbreviations reiterates my attention toward MTF representations in particular, since they have been so overlooked. Finally, *passing* in this context means the effect, intentional or not, of being read by others as a particular gender, usually not one’s assigned gender; while the Falstaff joke is predicated upon the fact that his beard and body make it difficult for him to pass, or make him pass as an unattractive and masculine woman, many other MTF crossdressers examined in this project pass seamlessly.

Finally, in acknowledgement of the increasingly popular use of “singular they” pronouns by genderqueer, nonbinary, and agender individuals and communities, when describing crossdressed characters I will use “s/he/they,” “his/her/their” and “him/her/them” as hybrid pronouns meant to gesture at the range of available presentations and identifications possible in these queer instances.

7. I use the word *queer* here and throughout this volume as a term that includes what we might today call gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and other sexualities, in addition to trans, gender nonbinary, and genderqueer gender identities. Queer further contains other categories of “not straight” acts and identities, including kink and BDSM practices and intersex identities. Also, queer can refer to an affect or feeling in a person, character or text, a residual use of the word’s original

meaning of odd, strange, or unusual. I use *queer* instead of a more specific label for the crossdressers in this study not only because it is most fluid and accommodates the widest variety of meanings, but also because of its usefulness as a cross-historical term in cases where identity cannot be known: even before the terms and ideas we now use to talk about gender and sexuality, there were certainly queer ways of being and feeling. I should note here also the common caveat about *queer*'s history as a negative and pejorative term, now reclaimed and repurposed by the target group. Queer-identified myself, I use it in the spirit of loving inclusion.

8. On the topic of MTF crossdressing specifically, only a few important contributions stand out. See Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no. 4 [Winter 1998]: 418–40), an essay upon which she expands in *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Other foundational MTF crossdressing scholarship includes Winfried Schleiner, "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances" (*Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 4 [Winter 1988]: 605–19); Steven Mentz, "The Thigh and the Sword: Gender, Genre, and Sexy Dressing in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," in *Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570–1640* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 77–92; David Cressy, "Cross-Dressing in the Birth Room: Gender Trouble and Cultural Boundaries" in *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
 

In her expansive coverage of crossdressing in *Vested Interests*, Garber considers both male-to-female and female-to-male crossdressing. Victor Oscar Freeburger's thorough chapter on "The Boy Bride" in *Disguise Plots in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), while not theoretical, is an incredible resource for locating and comparing male-to-female crossdressing plots.
9. Though these tropes of crossdressing can and do certainly occur, the frequency of their absence, and their queering, is important.
10. Here and throughout I use the asterisked umbrella term *trans\**, which encompasses a whole range of gender presentations and identities, including transsexual, transgender, and genderqueer identities, crossdressers have often been marginalized within the queer community, as I will discuss below. Of the asterisk, A Finn Enke writes, "*Trans-* emphasizes its work as a prefix. It is possible that the asterisk in *trans\** functions as a truncation symbol the way that putting an asterisk after a word or word fragment works in many library search systems [the asterisk and the dash that follows *trans-*] force us to know *trans* as modification and motion across time and space. It is not simply a noun. With its mobilities, it modifies; it is a motion anticipating a second; it enacts, it continues with a question, and a star" ("Introduction: Transfeminist Perspectives," in *Transfeminist Perspectives in and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies* [Temple University Press, 2012], 7–8).
11. Throughout this book I use the term *genderqueer*, which, like *crossdresser*, carries nuanced contemporary meanings but is out of context in early modern literature. While the specificity of *crossdresser* and the umbrella of *trans\** allow me to be specific about the types of gender presentations central to my inquiry, the capaciousness of *genderqueer* has been deeply meaningful in articulating the fullest, and queerest, range of possibilities for any one MTF crossdresser's expression of gender, or for any one reader or audience member's experience

and interpretation of that gender. While not all modern crossdressers identify as *genderqueer* (certainly, the term was not available for early modern individuals), the term captures the openness of a gender that is neither/nor and both/and. By activating the option of identifying fictional MTF crossdressers' genders as inherently queer, I am able to read their representations less in terms of how they fit in a binary male/female system and more in terms of how their ambiguous and ambivalent presentations might be interpreted, interacted with, perceived, and desired. Because each MTF crossdresser discussed in the book moves between gender presentations, sometimes appearing male, sometimes female, and sometimes in between, using *genderqueer* is a way of holding several presentations, and sometimes slippages between presentations, together rather than in conflict.

12. A small sample of influential works on FTM crossdressing includes the following: Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor, U. of Michigan Press, 1994); Garber, *Vested Interests*; Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985) and "Disrupting Sexual Difference" in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Methuen, 1985), 166–90; Karen Newman, "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*," *ELR* 16 (1986): 86–100, and "Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in *The Merchant of Venice*," *SQ* 38 (1987): 19–33; Jonathan Dollimore, "Subjectivity, Sexuality, and Transgression: The Jacobean Connection," *Renaissance Drama* 17 (1987): 53–81; Stephen Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 66–94; Mary Beth Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*," *ELR* 14 (1984): 367–91; Juliet Dusinbere, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (New York: Macmillan, 1975); David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1996): 438–65; Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle"; Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540–1620* (Urbana, U. of Illinois Press, 1984), 139–58; Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Towata, NJ: Harvester, 1983; reprinted NY: Columbia University Press, 1989), 9–36; Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29–41; Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Genre and Gender in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Clare Everett, "Venus in Drag: Female Transvestism and the Construction of Sex Difference in Renaissance England" in *Venus and Mars: Engendering Love and War in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Andrew Lynch and Phillippa C. Madden (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1995), 191–212.
13. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle," 418.
14. *Ibid.*, 435.
15. See especially Traub; Tracey Sedinger, "'If Sight and Shape Be True': The Epistemology of Crossdressing on the London Stage," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 63–79; and Rackin.

16. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle," 424.
17. On boy actors, see the following: Levine, 1–25; Shapiro, *Gender in Play*; and Rose. See also: Kathleen McLuskie, "The Act, the Role, and the Actor: Boy Actresses on the Elizabethan Stage," *New Theatre Quarterly* 3 (1987): 120–30; Rackin; Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction"; Peter Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor" in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 64–83; Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*; Lisa Jardine, "Boy Actors, Female Roles, and Elizabethan Eroticism," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 57–67; Sedinger, "'If Sight and Shape be True'"; Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: or, Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 7–29; Katherine E. Kelly, "The Queen's Two Bodies: Shakespeare's Boy Actress in Breeches," *Theatre Journal* 42 (1990): 81–93; Steve Brown, "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines: Notes on Gender Ambiguity in the Sixteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 30 (1990): 243–63; Ursula K. Heise, "Transvestism and the Stage Controversy in Spain and England, 1580–1680," *Theatre Journal* 44 (1992): 357–74; and Susan Zimmerman, ed., *Erotic Politics*.

18. Orgel, *Impersonations*, 27.

19. I use the term *cisgender* throughout the book as a way of referring to characters whose gender identity and/or is aligned with their anatomical sex, or the sex they were assigned at birth. This term, in use since the 1990s, is not only a helpfully precise tool with which to talk about sex, but it also does the political work of resisting casting "normal" or "biological" individuals against trans\* and genderqueer individuals. I use *cisgender* not only to clarify which characters perform queer genders and which do not, but also to emphasize that all genders are performed, and that there is no natural or default gender linked to anatomical sex or biology. Talking about cisgender characters alongside genderqueer and crossdressing characters is also in keeping with my use of relational gender theory, because keeping cisgender in conversation with queer gender is a crucial reminder that queer genders never happen in a vacuum. Cisgender individuals and representations do not only set the rules for the "normal" sex/gender system; they also reflect, respond, and react to and with their genderqueer family, friends, and culture. In thinking about gender, especially queer gender, as relational, I hope to bring cisgender characters into the conversation about how queerness works and is maintained in early modern crossdressing texts, especially when acts of MTF crossdressing, in particular, mean that such queerness includes queer femininities and MTF crossdressers' interactions with both cisgender men and women.

A. Finn Enke describes the history and etymology of *cisgender* in "The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 234–47. Enke writes, "Biologist Dana Leland Defosse is generally credited as the first person to put the neologism 'cisgender' (based on the Latin root 'cis-', which prefixes things that stay put or do not change property) into publication in 1994, using it in a Web-based call for research on campus climate and transgender subjectivities" (234–35). Enke adds:

Within molecular biology, *cis-* is used as a prefix (as in *cis-acting*) to describe something that acts from the same molecule (intermolecular); in organic

chemistry, cis- refers to substituents or groups that are oriented in the same direction, in contrast to trans-, wherein the substituents are oriented in opposing directions. Defosse—followed by others—saw the potential of cisgender to describe the condition of staying within birth-assigned sex, or congruence between birth-assigned sex and gender identity. Nowadays, cisgender commonly implies staying *within* certain gender parameters (however they may be defined) rather than *crossing* (or trans-ing) those parameters. (235)

20. Thomas Middleton, “Satire 5,” in “Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires,” ed. Wendy Wall, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 1981–1983. later citations are in-text by line number.

While the poem is a satire, I take its eroticized depiction of Pyander seriously: Middleton could just as easily have made a negative crossdressing joke, Falstaff-style, about the genderqueer youth, but instead he describes Pyander’s queer gender in a way that is both beautiful and alluring. This poem was publically burned in 1599, not long after its publication, by the order of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, though the reason for its banning is unclear. Lynda Boose has written about the pornographic aspects of the poem, and the role of sex in the Bishops’ Ban, in “The 1599 Bishops’ Ban, Elizabethan Pornography, and the Sexualization of the Jacobean Stage,” in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994): 185–200.

21. Wall, ed., “Satire 5,” in *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires*, 1982n36.
22. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
23. Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6. An important discussion challenging Laqueur’s one-sex hypothesis, see Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013). For a further discussion of the one-sex body in this volume, see Chapter 1, especially n.13.
24. In addition to Fisher’s analysis of material gender markers, including handkerchiefs, codpieces, beards, and hair in *Materializing Gender*, other materialist approaches to clothing in the Renaissance include: Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2001); Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
25. Orgel, *Impersonations*, 23.
26. I discuss the plot of “Phylotus and Emelia” more fully, in the context of doublecrossdressing and the marriage economy, in Chapter 2.
27. Barnabe Riche, “Phylotus and Emelia,” in *Barnabe Riche, His Farewell to the Military Profession*. ed. Donald Beecher (Publications of the Barnabe Riche Society 1, Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1992. (Publications of the Barnabe Riche Society 1: 1992), 303.
28. *Ibid*, 305.
29. *Ibid*, 305. Significantly, Phylerno credits Venus with his sex change, just as Venus is the arbiter of a sex change in the genderqueer conclusion of John Lyly’s *Gallathea*, a topic I discuss in Chapter 4.

30. As part of a larger argument about how the one-sex model of understanding the sexed body was already out of favor by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Donald Beecher claims that, in this scene “it is telling that [Riche] plays out this supposed transformation as a form of deception met with gullibility [...] Riche intimates that any sensible person must know this, despite the old tales.” Donald Beecher, “Concerning Sex Changes: The Cultural Significance of a Renaissance Medical Polemic,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2005): 991–1016. p. 1016.
31. I discuss this issue of boyhood versus manhood throughout this volume, and especially in Chapter 2 (see n.21). For a recent discussion of the technical reasons for certain companies to feature crossdressing plots (including the training of boy actors, the adult company competition with boy companies, and the acoustics of the theaters, see Jennifer A. Low, “Early Modern Audiences and the Pleasure of Cross-dressed Characters,” *Poetics Today* 35:4 (Winter 2014): 561–89.
32. These moments of resolution have been categorized as “the reveal,” a trope in many genderqueer and trans\* narratives. Danielle M. Seid’s discussion of “the reveal” in film also applies to early modern texts: “the reveal stages a denaturalization of widespread assumptions about gender and sex—namely that one’s gender must match one’s sexed body—but it typically does so in a manner that regulates and corrects gender noncompliance, narratively reinscribing a binary gender system as ‘natural’ and desirable.” “Reveal,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1 (May 2014): 177n1–2.
33. Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West, *Doing Gender, Doing Difference: Inequality, Power, and Institutional Change* (New York: Routledge, 2002). See also Candace West and Don Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 1: 125–51.
34. Relational gender theory is separate from the psychological approach of *relational-cultural theory*, which is based in the idea of nurturing therapeutically beneficial relationships. More broadly, the relational approach to psychology and psychoanalysis is one that focuses on interpersonal relationships between the individual and others, especially family members and the therapist. See Virginia Goldner, “Toward a Critical Relational Theory of Gender,” in *Gender in Psychoanalytic Space: Between Clinic and Culture*, ed. Muriel Dimen and Virginia Goldner (New York: Other Press, 200), 63–90. Goldner describes the relational approach as one that characterizes the “analytic situation as a field of intersection between two subjectives” (77). See Natalie Stoljar, “Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2014 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/feminism-autonomy/>; and Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
35. Jocelyn Downie and Jennifer J. Llewellyn, “Introduction,” in *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012), 4.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations,” *Gender and Society* 18, no. 5 (August 2004): 510–31, 520.
38. Cecelia L. Ridgeway, “Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations,” *Gender and Society* 23, no. 2 (April 2009): 145–60, 153–54.
39. Kristen W. Springer, “Gender and Health: Relational, Intersectional, and Biosocial Approaches,” *Social Science & Medicine* 74 (2012): 1661–66, 1677.

40. Queer gender performances, including crossdressing, were at the center of skimmington rituals, which offered an opportunity to play at queer gender through a carnivalesque release, all the while surrounding it with state- and community-sanctioned violence and humiliation designed to contain that same queerness and minimize the impact of that same subversion. Though there was a fear of violence and shame associated with all forms of gender variance, it is perhaps most acutely articulated around male femininity and MTF crossdressing; Shapiro suggests in *Gender in Play* that “the greater prevalence of female pages [than MTF crossdressers] reflects the culture’s belief that it is more shameful for men to impersonate women or to crossdress than vice vers.” Historical evidence of skimmingtons and literary representations of the ritual do demonstrate that, while unbridled wives were common targets, the brunt of punishment often focused on the husbands who failed to control them; this may indeed be why there were fewer representations of MTF crossdressing in literary and dramatic works, or at least why scholarship has directed less attention in this direction. Alexandra Shepherd describes skimmingtons as “forms of violent correction [that] were designed to humiliate offenders with public shaming rituals and with symbolic gestures of debasement” (*Meanings of Manhood*, 131) while Rosemary Kegl describes the overlapping influences of local/popular and governmental/systemic ideologies on the sometimes-violent and often shaming rituals by pointing out, “In practice, these popular rituals often helped to maintain a social order—particularly a gender order—which the governing burgesses and the central government endorsed” (“The Adoption of Abominable Terms: The Insults that Shape Windsor’s Middle Class,” *ELH* 1, no. 2 [Summer 1994]: 253–78, 265).

For more on ritual punishments for gender digression, see the following: Martin Ingram, “Rough Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England,” in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 166–97; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116–36; Natalie Zemon Davis, “Woman on Top: Symbolic Inversion in Early Modern Europe” in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara Babcock (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 147–90; and Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586–1660* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 104; 41. Natalie Zemon Davis also cites English examples in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 147–49.

41. 5.5.169–77.
42. Pepys 3.249, which can be found in the English Broadside Ballad Archive at [http://emc.english.ucsb.edu/ballad\\_project/ballad\\_image.asp?id=21263](http://emc.english.ucsb.edu/ballad_project/ballad_image.asp?id=21263).
43. In “The Countrey Cozen,” the husband directs his violence toward the cousin, not the wife. For a discussion of violence between married spouses in cheap print, see Joy Wiltenberg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992).
44. Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 35. For other work on violent punishment toward contemporary trans and genderqueer individuals, see Richard Juang, who, building on the work of Barbara Perry, argues that violence against those with transgressive genders is “significantly oriented

toward creating a spectacle of subordination, as well as physical harm.” Viviane Namaste argues that “perceived transgression of normative sex/gender relations motivates much of the violence against sexual minorities, and that an assault on these ‘transgender’ bodies is fundamentally concerned with policing gender presentation through public and private space.” Though the early modern cross-dressers that I discuss do not and could not identify as “transgender,” or even as “sexual minorities,” they do transgress sex/gender relations in ways that threaten the system and that make them vulnerable to violent policing, including but not limited to punishments like skimmingtons.

45. As I mention in a note above, I use the asterisked umbrella term *trans\** to encompass the broadest possible spectrum of gender identities and presentations, since crossdressers have often been marginalized within the queer community. Used transhistorically, *trans\** can refer to early modern crossdressers, boy actors, roaring girls, fops, and a whole range of early modern gender variations.
46. Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is an annual observance on November 20 that honors the memory of those whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. See <http://www.glaad.org/tdor>.
47. Janet Mock, “Quiet Reflections: Why I Chose Silence on Trans Day of Remembrance,” November 22, 2013, <http://janetmock.com/2013/11/22/transgender-day-of-remembrance/>.

See also Sarah Lamble, “Retelling Racialized Violence, Remaking White Innocence: The Politics of Interlocking Oppressions in Transgender Day of Remembrance,” *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 5, no. 1 (March 2008): 24–42.

48. Mock ends the article by listing a few living *trans\** women activists and organizers. In the spirit of her argument, I am including Mock’s list here: “Tita Aida, Ryka Aoki, Lorena Borjas, DeeDee Chamblee, Cecilia Chung, Ruby Corado, Cheryl Courtney-Evans, Katherine Cross, Toni D’orsay, Ceyenne Doroshow, Ayana Elliott, Tracy Garza, Cecilia Gentili, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Cristina Herrera, Trisha Lee Holloway, Lourdes Hunter, Andrea Jenkins, Janetta Johnson, KOKUMO Kinetic, CeCe McDonald, Monika MHz, Tracie O’Brien, Pauline Park, Channyn Lynn Parker, Stefanie Rivera, Monica Roberts, Elena Rose, Angelica Ross, Mey Rude, Bamby Salcedo, Kiara St James, Ja’Briel Walthour, Bali White, and hundreds of others I may not have named here whose work is just as vital and valuable.”
49. Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Steven Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–17, 3. As a field, transgender studies emerged in the 1980s and 90s, first responding to the pathologizing of *trans\** and gender-variant individuals, and then, further, reacting to their marginalization in and exclusion from the developing gay, lesbian, and feminist rights movements.
50. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, “Introduction: Transgender Studies 2.0” in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–12, 1. Stryker and others mark a turn toward uncoupling gender from sexuality, and of theorizing gender as a performance, with the publication of Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, which came out in 1990. Some recent critical texts about transgender identity and theory include: Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Krista Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006); Butler, *Undoing Gender*; and J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). Though excellent sources for

## 32 Introduction

- information on transgender and transsexual issues, none of these texts engages explicitly with crossdressing.
51. Of scholarship on early modern crossdressing, Stryker and Aizura write that literary criticism “was fascinated with representations of cross-dressing that it fancied to be merely symbolic” (“Introduction,” *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 2). Significantly, there have been some efforts to connect contemporary trans\* discourses with Medieval literary criticism: Karl Whittington’s “Medieval” definition is included in the *TSQ* keywords issue (*TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, special issue: “Postposttranssexual: Key Concepts for a Twenty-First-Century Transgender Studies. 1.1–2 [May, 2014], 125), and Karma Lochrie’s “Before the Tribade: Medieval Anatomies of Female Masculinity and Pleasure” is included in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*.
  52. Jason Crowell, “Queering the Binaries: Transsituated Identities, Bodies, and Sexualities” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 509–20, 509.
  53. Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges,” 13.
  54. Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (New York: New Mermaids, 2000), 2.2.36–37.
  55. Mark Eccles, “Mary Frith, the Roaring Girl,” in *Notes and Queries* 32, no. 1 (March 1985): 65–66; Marjorie Garber, “The Logic of the Transvestite: *The Roaring Girl* (1601)” in *Staging the Renaissance*, 221–34; Denise Wallen, “Constructions of Female Homoerotics in Early Modern Drama,” *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 3 (Oct. 2002): 411–30; Theodora Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginité in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 253n44; and Geraldine Wagner, “Dismembering Desire: Cross(dress)ing the Boundaries of Gender and Genre in *The Life and Death of Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse*,” *English Studies* 92, no. 4 (2009): 375–99.
  56. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, 253n44; Wagner, “Dismembering Desire.”
  57. Wagner, “Dismembering Desire,” 393n76. Wagner describes *Life and Death* as an “autography,” since it is autobiographical, has aspects of fiction or exaggeration, and is mediated through the editor and publication process.
  58. The real Mary Frith (c. 584–1659) was fictionalized and featured in a lost play, John Day’s *The Mad Pranks of Merry Moll of the Backside* (1610) and in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611). A record in the Consistory of London Correction Book (1612) notes that Frith made a cameo appearance at the Fortune theater, appearing on stage and playing her lute. The epilogue of *The Roaring Girl* refers to that event. Interest in Frith’s life continued after her death, with the publication of *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse* (London, 1662). See Paul Mulholland, “The Date of *The Roaring Girl*,” *Review of English Studies*, 28 (1977):18–31; Mary Beth Rose, “Women in Men’s Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 14 (1984): 367–91.
  59. Lucy Munro, “Robinson, Richard (c.1595–1648),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Jan. 2007), accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75572>.
  60. Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, in *The Revels Plays*, ed. Peter Happé (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 2.8.64–74.
  61. *Ibid.*, 2.8.75.
  62. *Ibid.*, 3.4.14–15.

63. Michael Shapiro highlights the tension between knowing and unknowing in his description of the episode: "It is not clear whether the other women knew he was a boy and enjoyed the impersonation as a performance, or whether they were the victims of the joke, and in any case, this anecdote is reported in a play" (*Gender in Play*, 36).
64. Mary Weismantel, "Toward a Transgender Archaeology: A Queer Rampage through Prehistory," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 319–34, 321.
65. There are few examples of historically grounded work in trans\* identity; one example is Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), which seeks (a)historical models for modern trans\* identity.
- MTF crossdressing does get some attention in the 2013 *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, with Robert Hill, "Before Transgender: *Transvestia's* Spectrum of Gender Variance, 1960–1980" (364–79) and Clare Sears, "Electric Brilliancy: Cross-dressing Law and Freak Show Displays in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco" (554–64), but these are both very specific historical approaches, and not about contemporary crossdressers.
66. Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, "Cross-Dresser," *TSQ* keywords issue: 65–67, 66.
67. MTF crossdressers, especially drag queens, are more widely visible in contemporary culture than FTMs (take *RuPaul's Drag Race*, for example), and MTF transsexuality narratives, like Christine Jorgensen's dominated popular discourse about medical transitions. However, in queer and trans\* scholarship, MTF crossdressing outside of drag has been ignored, and there has been a dominance of theorization of FTM trans experience and identity over MTF experience and identity. In 1996, Stephen Whittle wrote:
- For some reason, it has only been trans men who have published in-depth empirical and sociological analyses. Extensive and in-depth social and legal studies on what it means to be a trans man have come from Aaron Devor (1997), Jason Cromwell (1999), Henry Rubin (2003), Jamison Green (2004), and me (2002). This highlights the serious lack of such a body of work representing trans women's voices. Despite the significant theoretical perspectives from trans women such as Sandy Stone (1991), Vivian K. Namaste (2000), Riki Wilchins (1997) and Susan Stryker (1994) there is a need to analyze why there is the difference in the discipline. It may well be that the difficulty in "passing" makes it easier said than done for trans women to access the academy. It may be that the poverty that comes from more often supporting a prior family makes it harder for trans women to put together a research career. Whatever the reason, it highlights what the community already knows: transwomen are most frequently the victims of discrimination because of their visibility. (Whittle, "Forward" in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, xiv).
68. I discuss Pyrocles' crossdressing in the *Arcadia* more fully in Chapter 4. For a definition of "cod drag," see note 5.

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# 1 Doublecrossdressing Encounters

## *Haec Vir and Hic Mulier, The Faerie Queene, May Day, and “Robin Hood and the Bishop”*

In 2014, I watched a popular viral video of a “gender swap” experiment made possible through virtual reality technologies. In the video, a male and female user and performer move simultaneously, each wearing minimal clothing and an Oculus Rift headset. Through a split screen, viewers see how the male, looking down, sees a female body in place of his own, while the female, looking down, sees a male one in place of hers.<sup>1</sup> The video was produced by the “Machine to be Another” project at the international, interdisciplinary collective “Be Another Lab,” and uses a hybrid artistic and technological system—the combination of the virtual-reality system *Oculus Rift* with two volunteers in the roles of “performer” and “user”—to create the phenomenon in which the user looks down and sees his/her/their body as though it was the performer’s, seeing her body where he expects to see his own. The creators of BeAnotherLab frame the gender swap and other similar experiments as an “embodiment experience system,” offering users the “immersive experience of seeing themselves in the body of another person.”<sup>2</sup> In a whitepaper explaining their work, the collective of researchers argue that “the system has great potential as a social tool to stimulate empathy among different groups.”<sup>3</sup> The reasons that this video became a viral sensation—our cultural fascination with what it would feel like to see oneself in another, differently sexed or gendered body, or to see one’s own body and gender from the outside—similarly motivate and help to explain the surprisingly popular plot device of “doublecrossdressing”—instances in prose, poetry, and especially drama where MTF and FTM crossdressing are simultaneously and relationally, even causally, deployed within a single text. Before virtual reality and other virtual methods of gender swapping, doublecrossdressing plots used the symmetry of MTF and FTM pairs in place of avatars to simulate the experience of gender exchange between the sexes and to demonstrate causality in the relationship between the two crossdressers. Setting aside the technology, what mobilizes the scene of gender swapping is the focused encounter between the two people, the relationship between the two as they navigate their gender play together.

In this way, fictional representations of queer gender prefigure the Machine to be Another—the crossdressers experience the perspectival shift that comes from inhabiting someone else’s subject position and seeing

someone else inhabit theirs, and they witness the performance of their own original gender, now anatomized and displayed on another body. This mirroring technique is similar to the virtual reality situations where virtual or online technologies allow users to see and experience themselves in another gender, and it similarly provokes both perspective and empathy across genders. In many early modern doublecrossdressing cases, the pair of crossdressers encounters one another, watching their opposite inhabit their own discarded clothing and mannerisms, just as a modern gamer might encounter a gender-swapped avatar, or a virtual reality user might see his or her own body from a different subject position. Further, just as the user's movements in the Machine to be Another cause equal, mirrored, movement from his partner in the virtual system, actions and decisions made by one crossdresser have direct causal impact on his/her/their doublecrossed pair. This experience is not only transformational for the characters in doublecrossdressing narratives, but possibly also for the texts and plays' readers and audiences, who voyeuristically watch the results with a fascination that explains why these narratives might be such a popular, if not viral, crossdressing theme. By putting an MTF and FTM crossdresser in relationship to one another, doublecrossdressing narratives force them into a kind of confrontation in which one queer gender facilitates another, and both reveal the construction and maintenance of the more normative genders that surround them. Like the Machine to be Another, then, doublecrossdressing texts make visible the artificiality and constructedness not only of the MTF and FTM characters' queer genders but of all genders in and out of the text, in relationship to one another. Further, the perspectival shift forced by doublecrossed encounters promotes empathy, cross-gender identification, and reflection which last even after the plots are resolved and clothing is switched back between the sexes, just as it did in the Machine to be Another experiments.

This chapter's representative sample of early modern doublecrossdressing texts from several genres—the *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* pamphlets, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and George Chapman's *May Day*, and an anonymous Robin Hood ballad—will articulate the queerly symmetrical relationships between MTF and FTM crossdressers and to suggest the possibility that they serve a mirroring avatar-type role for one another and potentially for the reader/audience. Seen in this light, doublecrossdressing plots highlight the characters' experiences of relational and interconnected gender and offer readers and audiences the brief experience of identifying with or imagining themselves in or in relation to their queer and cross-gender experiences. While I'll discuss doublecrossdressing in poetry, prose and cheap print as well as drama, it is important to emphasize that the convention was especially popular on the stage—in the medium where the gender swap is both most embodied and most on display. Michael Shapiro traces doublecrossed plots, which he calls "Lelia motifs" to a genre sixteenth-century Italian secular vernacular neoclassical comedies, *commedia erudite*. In Bibbiena's *Calandria* (1513), a male and female pair of twins disguise

themselves as one another; the doublecrossdressing plot is revisited in the popular and influential play *Gl'Ingannati* (anonymous, 1531), from whose FTM crossdressed heroine Shapiro takes the name “Lelia” for the doublecrossdressing motif, which was performed in Cambridge in the 1540s.<sup>4</sup> In addition to *May Day*, which I’ll discuss below, some of the more significant instances of doublecrossdressing plots on the English stage include *The Wars of Cyrus* (1594), *Englishmen for my Money* (Haughton, 1598), *George a Green* (1599), *Antonio and Mellida* (Marston, c.1599), *Labyrinthus* (Hawkesworth, c.1603), *Amends for Ladies* (Fields, c.1605–15), *Love’s Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Fletcher, c. 1612–15), and *The School of Compliment, or Love Tricks* (Shirley, 1625), *Byrsa Basilica* (Ricketts, c.1633), *The Hollander* (Glaphorpe, 1635), and *Love’s Cure* (1649).<sup>5</sup>

Alone, this set of plays is enough to qualify doublecrossdressing as a comedic sub-genre in its own right. Together with other instances in prose and poetry, doublecrossdressing instances are copious enough to prove that doublecrossdressing plots were one way for authors to articulate a model of gender that was interconnected and communal, flexible but rule-bound; they are a site to test the Machine to be Another hypothesis that gender swapping might provoke cross-gender empathy and identification, as well as a vehicle for showcasing these experiences for audiences concerned with the mechanics and rules of gendered social rules. Further, while doublecrossdressing is a fairly specific literary device, the rules and patterns of gender exchange that are demonstrated through the motif can be applied more abstractly to other expressions of gender in early modern texts. For example, while this chapter discusses the most controlled expressions of gender doublecrossing—instances in which an MTF character is matched by an FTM character, the idea of relational doublecrossdressing, of swapping gender characteristics and roles betwixt sex and sex like clothing, can also be seen in less clear-cut instances, like when an MTF crossdressing character is surrounded by masculine, though not crossdressed, female characters (as in Jonson’s *Epicoene*).

If doublecrossdressing plots prefigure virtual gender swaps, they also are grounded in the discourses around crossdressing in their own historical moment. One of the foremost early modern critiques of crossdressing comes from Philip Stubbes’ 1583 *Anatomie of Abuses*, where he explains the social and cultural purpose of gendered clothing: “Our Apparel was given us as a sign to discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore one to weare the Apparel of another sex is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde.”<sup>6</sup> Even in warning that the exchange of clothing can lead to gender confusion, Stubbes focuses less on a single MTF or FTM crossdresser but on the exchange of clothing “betwixt sex and sex” and the risks that, through crossdressing, a person might “participate” with another sex, adulterating his or her own sex through that participation as much as through the clothing itself. Stubbes’s claim that clothing’s primary purpose is to categorize the sexes and prevent them from participatory exchange is most likely rooted in the biblical edict from Deuteronomy, which says

that “the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment.”<sup>7</sup> While the biblical source, like Stubbe’s polemic, ostensibly forbids any individual act of crossdressing, its symmetrical, almost chiasmic, inversion of men-in-women’s-clothes and women-in-men’s clothes draws specific attention to the relationship between male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing and female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing; by arranging the two types of crossdressing in this way, linked by the “neither,” the passage creates a relationship of exchange between them. The ways that these two key arguments against crossdressing frame it as an act between two people’s sexes/garments, *in relation* to one another helps to generate the idea that a man in women’s clothing might logically find himself reflected in a woman in men’s clothing.

Modeling queer relational gender, these characters offer possible sites for audience and readers to experience, through the doublecrossed characters, some of the experiences and effects of gender swapping. Moderns and early moderns alike want to see what it’s like to experience embodiment in a differently sexed body. In these early modern textual instances, the relationship between the MTF/FTM crossdressing pair whose clothing and gender presentation are swapped “betwixt sex and sex” offers one way of exploring the gender swap experiment and, potentially, generating the kinds of empathy and perspective shifts that come from that experience. In the closed spaces of these textual worlds, just as in the modern virtual ones, one queer gender performance facilitates another, and both reveal the construction and maintenance of the more normative genders that surround them.

It is exciting and pleasurable to read doublecrossdressing plots as a demonstration of a kind of out-of-body genderqueer fluidity in which one queer act of crossdressing enables and even encourages another. However, there are strict limitations and restrictions that come with a relationally queer system of gender exchange. The empathetic mirroring that comes from doublecrossdressing, or from other types of gender “swapping,” is often contained and redirected by the end of the narrative, at least nominally. Thus, even as doublecrossdressing plots reveal and reflect upon the availability of genderqueer fluidity, they also by necessity demonstrate that it is always-already contained within the larger machine of normative sex, sexuality, and gender performance; the same is true of the viral Machine to be Another video, which was popularly reported as creating the experience of seeing yourself in the “opposite” sex. All doublecrossdressing plots in some ways re-conflate sex with gender, linking men to masculinity and women to femininity, because as much as crossdressing can and does indicate disjuncture in the sex-gender system, it also relies on that same system’s stability. As Chris Mounsey puts it, any “successful instance of crossdressing where the crossdressed “passes” as the gender of his or her choice must occur “within a social system that requires for its completion recognition of whether or not the passing has been successful.”<sup>8</sup> If the crux of a doublecrossdressing plot is the moment where the two crossdressers to pass as the “opposite”

sex, the plot reifies the idea that there are opposites in the first place. Despite their radical potential, then, doublecrossdressing and other kinds of gender swapping can therefore be seen as inherently conservative, as they reinforce the idea that there are only two sexes and only two genders (or, to follow Laqueur, only one homologous sex, but only two sexual and gendered presentations), with a very limited and contingent range of movement or exchange between them.<sup>9</sup> Yet, while the many doublecrossdressing plots available in early modern texts reveal a cultural imagination simultaneously invested in a restrictive binary system of gender (one with two defined categories, male and female) they are *simultaneously* aware of and obsessed with the slippage and fluidity between those categories (in which exchange between sexes and genders is inevitable and has global societal effects). In this way, relational doublecrossdressing is compatible with, though distinct from, other dominant non-binary models for thinking about sex and gender in the early modern period, especially Galenic/humoral models and legal/coverture models, both of which see sex and gender difference as relational and, potentially, transferable.<sup>10</sup>

Even as doublecrossdressing narratives can and do have the potential to restrict and limit sexual and gender differences, they also offer opportunities for transformative encounters across gender as it is performed through clothing and behavior. By articulating the action-reaction relationship between and across genders, both cis and queer, by re-orienting point of view and perspective, and by enabling mirroring and empathy within that relationship, plots that feature doublecrossed gender show the rich queer potential of MTF and FTM crossdresser dyads and reach still farther to queer their community and potentially trouble their society's assumptions about sex and gender. To return to Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Jocelyn Downie's definition of relational theory, "We define ourselves *in* relationship to others and *through* relationship with others."<sup>11</sup>

### *Hic Mulier and Haec Vir*

The themes articulated by Philip Stubbes in opposition to cross-gender presentations and clothing are expanded and taken to their furthest extremes in the anonymous pamphlets *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* (1620), which famously capture the early modern debate about men's and women's fashion, and, in doing so, reveal an understanding that some forms of gendered crossdressing can be caused, at least in part, by "equal and opposite" forms of crossdressing. While these pamphlets are meant as critiques and commentaries about changing fashions for men and women, and not about explicit crossdressing in which the crossdresser passes or attempts to pass as a gender different from his or her sex, each pamphlet is concerned with slippage between male and female gender signifiers, and each pamphlet sees clothing and accessories as a site for this slippage. Demonstrating a relational understanding of doublecrossed genders, the two texts' anonymous author(s) ultimately resort

to explaining one type of gender slippage (female-to-male) by measuring the opposite sort of slippage (male-to-female).<sup>12</sup> Further, to articulate their concerns, the pamphlets—especially *Haec Vir*—stage a face-to-face encounter between the two crossdressers, in hopes that each will be impacted by seeing his or her discarded clothes and gender on the other.

*Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* create a dialogue between them, which begins with the (presumably male) pamphleteer's tirade against "Hic Mulier; or, The Man-Woman." Here, the author hopes that his pamphlet will be a "Medicine/ to cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers/ in the Masculine-Feminines of our Times."<sup>13</sup> From this introduction, readers understand the author's primary concern about masculine women's fashions and behaviors. As Shapiro and others have pointed out, *Hic Mulier's* masculine attire and accessories are not necessarily intended for crossdressing in the sense of male disguise; the pamphlet is instead concerned, at least initially, with how women have been using men's clothes to create a strident, often sexual, kind of female masculinity. The polemical title also situates the problem temporally, by considering feminine masculinity to be "of our Times," and therefore a specifically early Jacobean problem. In fact, the author positions seventeenth century crossdressing women within a long history, adding rhetorical power to his statement that "since the days of Adam women were never so Masculine." However, although the title and introductory paragraphs of *Hic Mulier* complain of female masculinity on a broad scale, from behavior to mood and speech, the core of the pamphlet turns its attention specifically to gendered attire. Calling masculine women monstrous, the pamphleteer connects their monstrous bodies (figured as hermaphroditic, or intersex) to their clothes and accessories. He addresses masculine women, saying "You that have made your bodies like antic Boscage or Crotesco work, not half man/half woman, half fish/half flesh, half beast/half Monster, but all Odious, all Devil; that have cast off the ornaments of your sexes to put on the garments of Shame."<sup>14</sup> Further, the pamphleteer describes these garments of shame in great detail, highlighting the role of clothes in the construction of these women's genders and identities:

... you have taken the monstrousness of your deformity in apparel, exchanging the modest attire of the comely Hood, Cowl, Coif, hand-some Dress or Kerchief, to the cloudy Ruffianly broad-brimmed Hat and wanton Feather; the modest upper parts of a concealing straight gown, to the loose, lascivious civil embracement of a French doublet being all unbuttoned to entice, all of one shape to hide deformity, and extreme short waisted to give a most easy way to every luxurious action; the glory of a fair large hair, to the shame of most ruffianly short locks; the side, thick gathered, and close guarding Safeguards to the short, weak, thin, loose, and every hand-entertaining short bases; for Needles, Swords; for Prayerbooks, bawdy legs; for modest gestures, giantlike behaviors; and for women's modesty, all Mimic and apish incivility.<sup>15</sup>

Even here in the early descriptions of masculine women's attire, the author establishes a discourse of exchange, swapping. These women, he explains, have traded their "modest attire" for clothes that carry the double threat of masculinity and continental fashion (the broad-brimmed hat, the French doublet).<sup>16</sup> Jean Howard further reads the threat as one to class and gender privilege: "By wearing ever more ornate clothing, they encroached on the privileges of aristocratic women; by wearing men's clothing they encroached on the privileges of the advantaged sex."<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, many of these fashions are at once critiqued for their masculinity and for the ways that they reveal the immodestly sexualized female body; that is, these masculine women are simultaneously masculine monstrosities and, because men's clothes are more revealing, hyper-sexual, revealed females. This tension points to the sometimes blurry line between gender performance and perceived sex since the author waffles between the idea that the female body itself is transformed or mutated by masculine attire and the idea that the reality of the female body under the clothes asserts itself even—and especially—in the moment of crossdressing. On this point, Rachel Trubowitz argues that *Hic Mulier* allows us to see the 'deviant' breast protruding from the female transvestite's manly attire as the fetishized site of the 'boundary panic' and obsession with origins that rule this historical moment—as the site, that is, for the 'new anxiety' about crossdressed women.<sup>18</sup>

In either case, women in these clothes are marked as others, exposed and aggressive in their attire, sexuality, and actions.<sup>19</sup> Their exchange of needles for swords picks up on a common trope about women's work, but also points toward an obvious conflation of masculine clothing and masculine phallic power; Shapiro argues that "This mingling of codes produced a special kind of androgyny they combined male aggressiveness and female sexuality."<sup>20</sup> Further still, this power is linked to godlessness. Also, if godless, the masculine woman is figured as a racial and national other as well, compared to the "rude Scythian, the untamed Moor, the naked Indian, or the wild Irish." This is not a relational model of gender but an isolating one—for their gender transgressions, masculine women are relegated to cultural otherness and given outsider status. However, the *Hic Mulier* speaker returns to the gender swap theme when, after speaking directly to masculine women and blaming them for exchanging their feminine clothes for masculine (and foreign) ones, he turns his attention to men, and blames *them* for women's masculinization. He tells men:

To you therefore that are Fathers, Husbands, or Sustainers of these new *Hermaphrodites*, belongs this Impostume; it is you who give fuel to the flames of their wild indiscretion. You adde the oyle which makes their stinking Lamps defile the whole house with filthy smoke, and your purses purchase these deformties at rates, both deare and unreasonable.<sup>21</sup>

The anonymous author of *Hic Mulier's* response pamphlet, *Haec Vir*, picks up on this blaming of men—and *their* fashion choices—for the increasing masculinity of women.<sup>22</sup> The mock-meeting that opens the response pamphlet is set up in dramatic dialogue, and the author imagines that the character Hic Mulier meets the author of the original pamphlet, who turns out to be an effeminate man called Haec Vir. Using dialogue to prove the point, the author of *Haec Vir* demonstrates that, if women have become masculine in the Jacobean period, men have become equally and oppositely effeminate. On the street, Haec Vir and Hic Mulier each mistake the other's gender; Haec Vir calls Hic Mulier "Most redoubted and worthy Sir (for lesse then a Knight I cannot take you)," and she calls him a "Most rare and excellent Lady." Both characters are surprised that their sex has been so grossly misread, and each corrects the other. Of their confusion, Tracey Sedinger argues "What this difference between image and text suggests is the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of visually representing the crossdresser—especially the passing crossdresser—as such. Most critics, including Garber, assume that the crossdresser is, in a sense, visible [...] I argue that the crossdresser is not a visible object but rather a structure enacting the failure of a dominate epistemology in which knowledge is equated with visibility."<sup>23</sup> When Hic Mulier and Haec Vir fail to recognize one another, it is evidence that crossdressing enacts a visible bodily change, and has the potential to do so seamlessly, even if their intent is more about style and accessories than changing sex. In their lack of recognition, Hic Mulier and Haec Vir demonstrate the stakes of queer gender presentation *and* its relational and contextual nature: when the crossdressers are surprised that they aren't read or perceived in alignment with their gender of choice, the text insists that cultural perception matters as much or more than personal identification, and that gender is put to work not when a person puts on his or her coded clothing but instead when she or he is seen and assessed in those clothes.

After agreeing to be friends, the mannish woman and womanish man launch into a debate about the state of gender, and of fashion, as they see it. Hic Mulier uses several rhetorical tactics in her debate with Haec Vir, but most interesting to this chapter's study of doublecrossing is the moment where she turns her attention to men's roles in women's increasing masculinity in fashion and behavior. Where the pamphlet *Hic Mulier* points toward men's responsibility for women's gender presentations in terms of finances and in veiled references to the other ways that men might bring "perverse" fashion into their homes or fuel the fashion choices already happening there, the character Hic Mulier makes a much bolder accusation in the pamphlet *Haec Vir*, by highlighting *men's* increasing femininity at the same Jacobean moment where female masculinity is such a concern. Hic Mulier tells Haec Vir:

[M]y dear Feminine-Masculine, tell me what Charter, prescription, or right of claim you have to those things you make our absolute

inheritance? Why do you curl, frizzle, and powder your hairs, bestowing more hours and time in dividing lock from lock, and hair from hair, in giving every thread his posture, and every curl his true sense and circumference, than ever Caesar did in marshalling his Army, either at Pharsalia, in Spain, or Britain? Why do you rob us of our Ruffs, of our Earrings, Carcanets, and Mamillions, of our Fans and Feathers, our Busks, and French bodies, nay, of our Masks, Hoods, Shadows, and Shapinas?<sup>24</sup>

Here, Hic Mulier lists an extensive catalog of *female* gender signifiers that men have “stolen.” She begins with a description of hair and wig styling, and her comparison to classical military<sup>25</sup> figures creates a stark point of comparison to Haec Vir, in all of his elaborate finery. The second half of the passage focuses on the specific types of female attire that Haec Vir has incorporated into his effeminate style. As Hic Mulier enumerates the clothing items, the reader can imagine her being stripped of each garment. In this context, Hic Mulier’s sparse costume is no longer representative of her hypersexuality or her imitation of masculinity; instead, we see her costume as stripped-down, reduced with every “robbery” that Haec Vir makes. They seem to be sharing a set amount of clothing between them, as if there is only one ruff, one set of earrings, one fan. Therefore, with every female gender signifier that Haec Vir takes, Hic Mulier is made masculine to an equal degree. His effeminacy, therefore, directly contributes to her masculinity in a real, material, way. This passage reveals the two characters, Hic Mulier and Haec Vir, to be a kind of closed circuit, with only a limited amount of gender signifiers to split between them. As Michel De Certeau suggests, these pamphlets suggest that gendered bodies are “quite literally formed by the items that are attached to them.”<sup>26</sup> The pamphlet thus stages the virtual moment where one character encounters the other and itemizes his attire from her perspective as the moment where they understand the causality and consequences of their swap. The exchange of clothing in this story is equated with the seeming transformation of the bodies who are dressed in the exchanged clothing, such that the clothing becomes what Will Fisher, following Haraway, Butler, and Freud (as well as Stallybrass and Jones), defines as “auxiliary organs of the body—they work to shape the body and might therefore be considered essential to it.”<sup>27</sup> As Stallybrass and Jones further suggest, “sexual difference may ... seem essentially prosthetic: the addition (or subtraction) of detachable (or growable/cuttable [and in this case, wearable]) parts.”<sup>28</sup> Hic Mulier and Haec Vir’s clothes form them and are essential to the gendering of their bodies, yes. However, they also are removable, adjustable, and available for trade at the moment that the two have their face-to-face encounter and see their queer presentations reflected back at them.

As Hic Mulier continues, she makes it clear that, as gender signifiers are swapped and stolen between masculine women and effeminate men,

it becomes increasingly difficult to locate a stable sex *beneath* the clothing. She attacks Haec Vir for men's use of makeup, telling him, "the very Art of Painting, but you have so greedily engrossed it that were it not for that little fantastical sharp pointed dagger that hangs at your chins, and the cross hilt which guards your upper lip, hardly would there be any difference between the fair Mistress and the foolish Servant." Were it not for some highly stylized facial hair, there would be no way to tell a person's sex (or class, it seems) by looking at his or her face.<sup>29</sup> Worse, the rest of the text makes it clear that these small goatees are at risk since they are figured as little weapons, and Hic Mulier confirms that men are, more and more, giving up their weapons and sports in favor of women's traditional occupations. If men have given up jousting for shuttlecock, her logic seems to suggest, they may soon give up their facial hair for their makeup, rendering anatomical or sex even harder to expose. Hic Mulier sees this shift in occupation and pastime as another form of theft between men and women. She exclaims, "Fie, you have gone a world further and even ravished from us our speech, our actions, sports, and recreations." Not only have men stolen women's clothing off of their bodies, they have "ravished" them of their hobbies, manners and behaviors. In this statement, Hic Mulier constructs women as weaker than men, as having been stripped and raped. This analogy gives her a way to place "blame" for gender transgression even more strongly on Haec Vir. At the same time, though, because she's set up a balanced system of gender, her feeling that men have taken women's milder sports and entertainment must also be read as an excuse for why women have taken on not only men's clothes, but also their mobility and aggressivity. In the pamphlets, any gendered clothing or behavior that is discarded by one sex must be taken up by the other; the pamphlet thus provokes the two into examining one another's presentation of gender and sex in order to understand their own.

In a final rhetorical turn, Hic Mulier suggests that, according to the "Laws of Nature," "the rules of Religion," and the "Customes of all civill Nations," there must be a clear distinction between men and women at all times. By her logic, therefore, if men become effeminate, it is only natural and right that women should mirror them and become masculine to the same degree. She explains that "it is necessary there be a distinct and special difference between Man and Woman, both in their habit and behaviors, what could we poor weak women do less (being far too weak by force to fetch back those spoils you have unjustly taken from us), than to gather up those garments you have proudly cast away and therewith to clothe both our bodies and our minds?" Because the priority in this system of gender is that men and women be "distinct and special" from one another, any shift among men toward femininity *requires* that women, who need to seem somehow different from men, must become more masculine. The two genderqueer characters in *Haec Vir*, when they literally pass a single ruff or a set of earrings between them, serve as an embodied articulation of the causal relationship between their two queer genders. By staging the encounter between the two,

the text demonstrates how, if masculinity is “stolen” from men by women or femininity from women by men, queer gender is the outcome on both sides of the equation.

According to Hic Mulier’s argument in *Haec Vir*, there is no type of crossdressing or cross-gender behavior that wouldn’t cause an equal but opposite relational reaction in that text or society. The bodies of men and women are positioned as diametrically opposed and as fundamentally stable markers of identity, but at the same time, the pamphlet authors make it clear that clothing, more than bodies, establishes and enforces gender. Because Hic Mulier uses a logic of nature and law, her argument initially sets up and reinforces a binary sex system with little flexibility. However, the gender signifiers—clothes, makeup, accessories, even speech and sport—that mark masculinity and femininity are not set, so long as they maintain balance in relation to one another. Hic Mulier explains further how this system works, describing how women “have preserved (though to our own shames) those manly things which you [Haec Vir; men] have forsaken, which would you again accept, and restore to us the Blushes we laid by, when first we put on your Masculine garments.” Here again, the reader imagines the Hic Mulier picking up and wearing each masculine garment that Haec Vir removes; the two are avatars enacting the author’s concept of relational queer gender. If Haec Vir, or any other man, wants to restore a system of gendered order, they have to be part of the solution, accepting their own “manly things” and clothes, and giving up blush and other women’s “things.” If there are naked, sexed, bodies revealed in this exchange of clothes, neither Hic Mulier nor Haec Vir seem aware of or interested in them. This narrative calls into question the ways that clothing marks and genders the body, as if prosthetically. Though the text strictly polices the binary between masculine and feminine, the pair’s bodies are frequently rendered sexless and interchangeable by the ease with which they are transformed by interchangeable gendered clothing.

Toward her conclusion, the author of *Haec Vir* offers a trade to Haec Vir and men like him. She writes:

Cast then from you our ornaments and put on your own armor; be men in shape, men in show, men in words, men in actions, men in counsel, men in example. Then will we love and serve you; then will we hear and obey you; then will we like rich Jewels hang at your ears to take our Instructions, like true friends follow you through all dangers, and like careful leeches pour oil into your wounds. Then shall you find delight in our words, pleasure in our faces, faith in our hearts, chastity in our thoughts, and sweetness both in our inward and outward inclinations.<sup>30</sup>

Here, masculinity and femininity, at their ideal, are figured as symbiotic, like leeches and wounds, and grounded in the relationship between the two queer individuals and the genders they represent. However, this ideal

of appropriate balance depends on a change of clothes, a change of shape, a change in performance, a change in language, a change in behavior, and so forth. Each of these elements can be separated from sex, swapped and traded, so long as a balance remains.<sup>31</sup> Though *Hic Mulier* offers to return to subservient femininity, she also creates a scenario in which *Haec Vir* would have to make major (and perhaps impossible) changes of his own to enable her transformation. In this manner, the pamphlets *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* model an early modern view of gender in which clothes, behaviors, all of the accoutrements of masculinity or femininity are transferable and potentially distinct from biological determinism, as long as each element is doublecrossed, an equal trade between men and women or their fictional representatives in the text. The masculine woman and the feminine man might not find authentic empathy for one another, but the virtual encounter imagined by the pamphlets is the catalyst for their improved understandings of how sex and gender work in their world. The contact between the two is both the cause of and the potential solution for their queerness.

As Shapiro points out, “the author of *Hic Mulier* warns his female readers in particular that such contemporary cross-dressing should not be confused or justified with examples of women warriors in epic and romance.”<sup>32</sup> Though I’d argue that *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*’s cross-gender dressing and presentation are perceived as crossdressing and do the queer work of crossdressing in the world of the pamphlets, I agree that the balanced equation of relational gender is articulated in an even more demonstrative manner when gender presentation is fully doublecrossed, in texts where not only gendered dress and gendered behavior are exchanged between two characters, as they is in *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, but where two characters are actually doublecrossed in an equal but opposite manner. I turn, therefore, to an epic, *The Faerie Queene*, and to the terrain of dramatic comedy with the play *May Day*; in these texts, paired queer performances of crossdressing test, threaten to rupture, and ultimately maintain the cultural norms of gender and sex. In each case, the equal pairing MTF and FTM trajectories demonstrates the rippling effects of gender transgression in a system where gender is interconnected, contingent and dependent. Even more than *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, these overt instances of doublecrossing articulate and imagine confrontations and points of contact between MTF and FTM characters. The relationships and fissures between the texts’ crossdressers can serve as demonstrations or warnings for those who might crossdress or otherwise queer gender, and, to a lesser but still enticing degree, even as invitations or suggestions as to how gender might be queered and what the many impacts and ramifications might be for both the crossdresser and his/her/their community. For the crossdressing pair and their readers and audiences, the exchange of clothing generates an experiment in gender rules and roles.

## The *Faerie Queene*

The predestined romance between Britomart and Artegall in Books III, IV and V of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is a perfect example of doublecrossdressing, especially in the sense that the two lover's gender presentations function in a linked fashion, as two sides of the same coin. Once she has seen Artegall's image in an enchanted mirror, Britomart sets off to find him herself, wearing men's armor and fighting along the way.<sup>33</sup> Because of the poem's structure, Britomart spends much of book three crossdressed on her own, dressed as a knight and seeking Artegal. At the point that she decides to become a "mayd Martiall," early in the book, her transformation is figured as an exchange: "she resolv'ed, unwitting to her Sire, / Advent'rous knighthood on her self to don, / And counseld with her Nourse, her Maides attire/ To turne into a massy habergeon, / And bade her all things put in readinesse anon" (3.3.57).<sup>34</sup> Though she does not yet directly exchange her gender with Artegall, she does exchange her maid's attire for a habergeon, setting the stage for the inverse transformation in him in book five. Geraldine Wagner also sees Britomart's transformation as one in which she takes on a form of masculinity inspired by, and borrowed from, Artegall: "That she falls in love with Artegall when she views him in the magic glass where she has been contemplating herself, reveals him as her other self, her inverted mirror image, and symbolizes her own masculine potential."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, when Artegall is disarmed and crossdressed by Radigund, we see that he is stripped of "all the ornaments of knightly name," the signifiers of masculinity, and that "In stead whereof she made him to be dight/ In women's weeds, that is to manhood shame, / And put before his lap an apron white, / Instead of Curiets and bases fit for fight" (5.5.20).<sup>36</sup> Here, Artegall trades his knight's clothes for women's weeds, inverting the process of Britomart's transformation and highlighting his effeminization, which ultimately unsettles the heterosexual erotic bond between the two intended lovers.

Where Wagner sees Artegall and Britomart as "twin souls," Judith H. Anderson sees the link between the lovers at the structural level, and depicts the single unit of their gender functioning even in their connected names. She writes, "Artegall is also related to Britomart ... by the syllabification of their names (Britomartigall), a coincidence implying both concord in their eventual union and androgynous potential within each individually."<sup>37</sup> I see this "androgynous potential" functioning not only within each of the lovers, but also between them, because of constant ebb and flow of gendered signifiers that flow between them throughout the epic poem. Because of the narcissistic mimesis at play from the mirror device at the beginning of their relationship, Britomart and Artegall provide the perfect test-case for an exercise in mirrored empathy across their queer genders. After all, they are literally reflections of one another. As Laura Silberman points out, Britomart and Artegall's "love is beset by the danger of self-delusion: Britomart does not know if she has fallen in love with a man, or, Narcissus-like, with

the image of her own fantasy.”<sup>38</sup> That they are almost a single, hermaphroditic, subject shows that their gender flows between them both, like a shared blood supply.<sup>39</sup> This sameness and connectivity between the lovers is highlighted in book 4 where they fight, evenly matched, and nearly kill one another before their identities (and Britomart’s gender) are revealed, allowing them to finally meet. Marveling at their matched violence, the poet says, “Certes some hellish furie, or some feend/ This mischief framd, for their first loves defeature, / To bath their hands in bloud of dearest freend, / Thereby to make their loves beginning, their lives end” (4.5.17). In this stanza, the lovers, and their blood, are impossible to differentiate; they are defined by their sameness and matched skill and strength. Their close resemblance here buoys their empathetic connection before and after the fight.

The interplay and exchange of genders between Britomart and Artegall comes to a head in the moment of their long-delayed reunion in book five of the *Faerie Queene*, when Britomart saves Artegall from the Herculean punishment of wearing women’s clothes and weaving. Much has been made of Britomart’s masculine dress, and her encounters with men while passing for and fighting as a man.<sup>40</sup> Katherine Schwarz, for example, says that “in Britomart’s quest, as in other encounters between men and women who look like men, the identity constructed by apparent masculinity is at once true and false, illusion and effective performance.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, there has been some attention to Artegall’s women’s clothes and the way they represent his emasculation at the hands of Radigund, and less directly, Britomart.<sup>42</sup> Reading the two as a gender-swapped set, rather than as two individual characters, we can also see the pair of lovers in terms of their related, reciprocal, even causal gender transformations. In the encounter between apparent masculinity and apparent femininity, that is, the pairing of a man who looks like a woman and a woman who looks like a man, Spenser first upsets the system of gender in the *Faerie Queene*, and then tries to restore it with a resolution that is troubling, unexpected, and more or less unresolved; as Woods puts it, the resolution “resists high seriousness.”<sup>43</sup> Artegall’s rescue in book five is set in Radigund’s Amazon city; this space of captivity is ripe for an analysis of gendered order, because Radigund’s city is full of captives, all dressed in women’s clothes and doing women’s weaving work and also full of masculine female Amazons, whom she leads. The entire environment is one of inverted gender, and Britomart and Artegall’s doublecrossed attire marks them as a representative set from within the entire system. Mihoko Suzuki sees causality at work here: “Spenser dramatizes his anxiety concerning what is perceived as the necessary correlation between female ascendancy and male humiliation.”<sup>44</sup>

Britomart, armed and dressed as a knight and bearing a phallic spear, breaks into the iron prison that holds all of Radigund’s prisoners of war, captured knights in dresses, where “she saw that loathly uncouth sight, / Of men disguised in womanish attire, / Her heart gan grudge, for very deepe despight / Of so unmanly masque, in misery misdight” (5.7.37). Why, if Britomart is

herself so comfortable in men's armor, is this sight so deeply disturbing to her? In part, she sees the effeminization of Radigund's captives from the perspective of her own now-proven knighthood; her experience of masculinity has trained her in misogyny and disdain toward expressions of femininity; from the knight's point-of-view that she's inhabiting, the feminine qualities that she's given up look unfamiliar and troubling. In a relational and causal sense, her response makes sense, too: if Artegal is as effeminized as these unmanly captives, the only "cure" will be for Britomart to give up the power and freedom that come with her masculine presentation; if there's only so much masculinity to share between them, Britomart may be realizing—with a grudge and deep despatch—that Artegal can only have his if she gives hers up.

Spenser quickly follows Britomart's reactions from the general to the specific, from her response to the assemblage of men in drag, to her response to her own lover:

At last when as to her owne love she came,  
Whome like disguise no less deformed had,  
At sight thereof abasht with secret shame,  
She turnd her head aside, as nothing glad,  
To have behelt a spectacle so bad. (5.7.38)

That Artegal has been deformed by his forced crossdressing is clear, but it is unclear who has his "like disease." Is Artegal "no less deformed" than the many weaving knights in dresses who surround him, or than his own predestined lover, who stands before him in full men's armor? If Spenser means his readers to understand the latter, then he is highlighting the reciprocal nature of the couple's double crossdressing; the two might be seen to be infected by different strains of the same disease, a metaphor which reflects some of *Haec Vir's* rhetoric and picks up on the medical model of permeable bodies and humors. In either case, Britomart (and perhaps, by extension, the reader) does not appear to consider her form of FTM crossdressing as awful as Artegal's MTF version. For her, the sight of Artegal in a dress is so awful and shameful that she must avert her eyes—and, again, Spenser is ambiguous here: it's unclear if she's ashamed for him or by him, or for her self, for that matter, for being witness to his queered gender presentation. The disappointment of this reunion, after such a protracted quest to find one another, demonstrates the ways that queer gender through crossdressing, even when it is reciprocal and equal, interferes with traditional heterosexuality. Equal and opposite in their crossdressing, the two lovers don't know what to do with one another. Here, as in *Hic Vir*, these issues come to the forefront at the exact moment of encounter between the two. Facing Artegal, Britomart understands his gender and her own—and the relationship between them—with greater clarity.

No matter the cause of Britomart's shame, this is already a fairly deflating reunion—no hugs, no kisses, not even a thank you from Artegal.

Our heroine looks like a man, and our hero looks like a woman. Britomart *needed* to be a knight to fight with Radigund and save Artegall, but, with that task accomplished, her masculinity seems to overpower his. Reflecting her discomfort with their roles, Britomart asks Artegall, “What May-game hath misfortune made of you? / Where is thy dreadful manly looke? [...] Could ought on earth so wondrous change have wrought, / As to have robde you of that manly hew?” (5.7.40). If Artegall has lost his manly look, it’s reflected back at him in his love-object’s own masculinity; the impact of their encounter enables Britomart and Artegall to see, in each other, the wondrous change in their own gender presentations. Also, just like Hic Mulier, Artegall can’t get more masculine unless their genders are symmetrically swapped again, if and when Britomart hands over the trappings of her masculinity. By forcing this encounter between a masculine woman and a feminine man, Spenser creates a situation where gender must be re-manipulated within that relationship in order to be restored to the norm. In her first attempt to restore Artegall’s masculinity, Britomart brings him to a bower, where she dresses him in armor. However, even in men’s clothes, Artegall is inert and silent, hardly the virile knight that he was before his captivity and forced drag performance, and rather an extreme performance of silence and obedience, traditionally stereotypic women’s traits.

Britomart now goes to extreme measures: she takes over temporary leadership of Radigund’s kingdom, where her legislative actions are all about establishing a normative gender status quo, “changing all that forme of common weale, / The liberty of women did repeale, / which they had long usurpt; and them restoring / To men’s subjection, did true justice deale” (5.7.42). A powerful woman herself, Britomart makes the decision to dismantle Radigund’s matriarchy and displace the Amazon women. To solidify this structural shift back to traditional patriarchy, she divides the Amazon’s land among the captive knights, and, finally, makes them “swear fealty to Artegall” (5.7.43). The economies of power, of property, and of gender are restored. As Britomart strips Radigund, the Amazons, and herself of autonomy and power, handing over both property and leadership to the weakened men, the dynamic in the queer relationship between MTFs and FTMs shifts and begins to restore itself. Suddenly, Artegall recovers from the passive swoon he’s been in since Radigund put him in a dress, remembers his original quest, and leaves, all within a matter of stanzas. As soon as the men swear fealty, Artegall “him selfe now well recur’d did see,” and he immediately “purposed to proceed, what so be fall/ Upon his first adventure, which him forth did call” (5.7.43). Completing the circuit of restored gender roles, Britomart stays behind and “wisely moderated her own smart, / Seeing his honor, which she tendred chief, / Consisted much in that adventures priese” (5.7.44). Returning for the first time since book three to the passive role of woman and eventual wife, Britomart hands her sword over to Artegall and represses her “womanly complaints” about his sudden departure.

Yet, even though Spenser seems to go out of his way here to restore order to the entire Amazon kingdom, this moment in the poem remains deeply unsettling and unresolved. Gender, once crossed, is not so neatly restored to its original body. Britomart, still in her armor, demonstrates J. Halberstam's argument about drag kings, that there is a "fear that the costume may never come off, that the performance will become a reality, and that some kind of authentic femininity will be damaged or contaminated by the very impersonation of masculinity."<sup>45</sup> Britomart's unresolved gender is not only about the threat to her authentic femininity, but also about the potential damage that her gender slippage can have on the entire system of gender; evidence of this risk is right there, in the wreckage of Radigund's queer community. Judith Butler argues that "The loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilizing substantive identity, and depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman.'"<sup>46</sup> Britomart and Artegall, through their doublecrossed gender presentations, their unsatisfying reunion, and their slapdash and unconvincing efforts to return to normative masculinity and femininity, demonstrate this destabilization of identity. Though traditional heterosexuality and sex/gender alignment are established in book five, compulsory heterosexuality and masculine and feminine gender roles are rendered foreign, nonnormative, and strange after our extended exposure to queer and doublecrossed representations. Though the perspectival shift of the gender swap encounter is ultimately temporary in the face of conservative and repressive forces that limits gender expression and tethers an individual gender to its relational function in a dyad, the sustained experience of the gender swap encounter nevertheless hints at the subversive power of doublecrossed genders. Though bounded in a binary way of thinking, the experiment of gender swapping reveals that there is no "original" gender; by copying masculinity so well, Britomart shows us that "original" masculinity (Artegall's, for example) is actually a copy or fabrication itself. In cases of double crossdressing like this one, copies of copies reflect on one another like a hall of mirrors, leaving no original at all. In the end, even though they attempt to right things, neither Britomart nor Artegall have stable genders, only a sort surface solution that allows the story arc of the poem to continue. As if to drive this point home, Spenser never puts Britomart back in her dress; she ends the book and leaves the poem still dressed in her armor.

### *May Day*

George Chapman's play *May Day* (1611) takes on the ambiguity of unfixed sex and gender with a plot that not only includes both MTF and FTM doublecrossdressing but also explores the dynamics of a romantic relationship between these two crossdressed characters. Not only does this play stage the relational encounter between two crossdressers who exchange gender,

demonstrating the prosthetic production of sexual difference through the means of clothing, but Chapman further complicates the relationship between the doublecrossed characters by exploring the emotional and physical attraction between them. Beyond the central doublecrossdressing plot, *May Day* demonstrates the relational effects of queer gender, because crossdressing plots proliferate throughout the play. As Alan Sinfield puts it, “*May-Day* succumbs to an epidemic of cross-dressing; it seems to be a way of getting a quick buzz around risky dealings. Chapman contrives a sequence of embarrassing gender errors, from casual kissing to intimate groping.” In this play, like Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene*, a crossdresser is introduced already in disguise: unbeknownst to the audience, Lionell, a page, is actually a woman, Theagine, crossdressed. Chapman adds a second layer of crossdressing to the first here, when the boy Lionell (really Theagine), is required to dress as a “Gentlewoman” for a different trick; because Theagine-Lionell-Gentlewoman is played by a boy actor, the confusing and queer effect is one of MTFTMTF crossdressing. According to Shapiro, “*May Day* was the first play to achieve a surprise ending by concealing the identity of the heroine from the audience beneath the first of her disguises.”<sup>47</sup> However, as Freeburg notes, while “the dénouement is a surprise to many spectators. Others, however, have been led to suspect the existence of the disguise by hints made in the dialogue.”<sup>48</sup> This divide in the audience reflects the fact that there is no single way to understand the genders deployed on the stage; only to experience their interrelated and reciprocal performances. The very title of *May Day* picks up the idea of world-turned-upside-down gender confusion that Britomart references when she asks Artegal what “May-game” has caused his feminine attire.

In addition to Lionell-Theagine, *May Day* includes another FTM character, Fransceschina, who dresses as a boy, and an MTF crossdresser, Lucretio, Theagine’s lover, who is disguised as Lucretia.<sup>49</sup> Like his lover Theagine, who is introduced in the play already crossdressed as Lionell, Lucretio makes his first appearances already crossdressed and performs Lucretia as the ideal woman; Lucretia is chaste and tells her suitors that she loves a gentleman named Theagines and will not betray him by taking other lovers.<sup>50</sup> In an aside, though, Lucretio tells the audience or reader that he is really a man, and that his love is really a *woman* named Theagine. He says, “O my Theagine, not Theagines, /thy love hath turned me woman like thyself, / shall thy sight never turn me man again?”<sup>51</sup> Lucretio tells us that he crossdresses because his love for Theagine has effeminized him; he makes the Petrarchan metaphor of effeminizing love literal and physical through his MTF transformation. Meanwhile, the play toys with the idea that that petrarchan model might be bidirectional; if love for Theagine makes Lucretio into a woman, her symmetrical love for him causes her to be masculinized to an equal but opposite extent.

The play uses doublecrossdressing to demonstrate this reciprocal relationship between the lovers, even when they are apart. Even though the play

presents the two crossdressing devices as causal—Lucretio crossdresses because he loves Theagine; Theagine crossdresses to be close to Lucretio—the fact that the lovers do not initially know about each other’s crossdressing demonstrates that their doublecrossdressing was somehow the natural or logical response to their situation; their gender-swapped relationship is normalized through the matter-of-fact presentation of crossdressing as the inevitable solution to each of their troubles in love. However, their romantic attraction to one another, originally straightforward and heterosexual, is queered when they exchange clothes and gender presentations. Though they remain a cisgender man and woman in love, when Theagine becomes Lionell, she becomes a boy in love with a man, not knowing that that man has, in turn, become a woman. Similarly, Lucretio becomes Lucretia and is rendered a woman in love with a woman, though that woman appears to be a boy.<sup>52</sup> Chapman might have reduced the queer dynamic of the play by creating a corrective resolution. However, even as the doublecrossed gender trouble is theoretically resolved when Lucretio sees Theagine again, the nature of their genders in that final scene is so complex that it’s hard to tell if Chapman is even attempting to, let alone succeeding at, restoration of order. Instead, as the play builds up to the doublecrossdressed encounter, the crossdressing folds in on itself, doubling and tripling before it is resolved.

Theagine-as-Lionell is an especially pretty boy; he is so pretty, in fact, that his master and his friends decide to dress him in women’s clothes, as a May Day trick: Leonoro tells his MTF page “there I must needs be, and haue thee disguis’d like a woman.” Rather than admitting that her male attire is itself a disguise, Theagine-as-Lionell responds with a neutral “Me sir?” to which her master instructs:

for thou shall dance with him [Innocentio, the Lieutenant that they are attempting to gull], and I will thrust him vpon thee, and then for courting and gifts, which we will tell him he must win thee withall, I hope thou wilt have wit enough to recieue the tone, and pay him again with the t’other. (4.5)<sup>53</sup>

Finally, and with great irony, Leonoro asks, “come *Lionell*, let me see how naturally thou canst play the woman” (4.5.87–91). This double disguise within the doublecrossing plot, overlapping against the more sustained doublecrossing of Theagine and Lucretio, calls into question how “natural” any gender performance might be; obviously, Theagine has been passing for Lionell so well that Leonardo thinks it might be a challenge for her to pass for female and seduce a man. Theagine’s character in particular shows the layering of one gender on top of another and another. There is no single stable or true gender, only the layered prostheses of clothes on top of clothes, all informing and modifying the body beneath. Simultaneously, there is the matter of this character’s desire, which is directed toward Lucretio no matter

how s/he/they is dressed. The play thus offers the queerly heterosexual desire of a boy dressed as a woman dressed as a boy dressed as a woman toward a man dressed as a woman, soon to wear men's clothes again. Like her gender, Theagine's sexuality is double—even triple—crossed by the situation that unfolds after she exchanges genders with her lover. At the end of *May Day*, rather than a scene of restored gender, the sight of Theagine in a dress is a mirror hall trick, with copies of copies of gender presentations (and with them, sexualities) and no confirmed originals in sight.<sup>54</sup> The play stages this encounter to the same effect as the Machine to be Another; we see the refracted genders of the characters dislocated from their bodies and anatomies, made virtual rather than real.

The stage directions further complicate the matter when Lucretio enters the scene, finally dressed as a man. The note says “*enter Lucretia in mans dress.*” Why Lucretia instead of Lucretio, and “man's dress” instead of his own dress? The text resists a pat confirmation of a match between sex and performed gender. In closing scene, Theagine and Lucretio stand on stage in clothes that match their assigned birth genders, and yet, in the fictional world of the play and the real world of the theater, both are being seen by their peers and the audience as crossdressing now for the first time. Lucretio claims that “this habit truly doth suit my sexe, howsoever my hard fortunes have made me a while reiect it,” but Theagine's original gender is not so neatly restored. Though she is attending the party in women's clothes, dressed as a boy dressed as a girl, not even her own lover recognizes her (5.1.223–25). Theagine, still called Lionell in the stage notes, reveals that “yet whoeuer had seene that *Theagine* since might have taken him for a man.” Still taking Theagine for the gentlewoman that she, as Lionell, is performing, Lucretio asks, “do you know her, gentlewoman?” and Theagine replies, “it seems you will not know her” (5.1.231–38). Lucretio's inability to recognize Theagine, even when she is dressed in women's clothes, demonstrates that her return to femininity has been done incorrectly through the device of triple crossdressing rather than *uncrossdressing*, and has therefore upended the balance between the lovers. In other words, even when Theagine and Lucertio's doublecrossed genders are reversed, they do not return to their original selves—Lucretio becomes Lucretia in man's dress, and Theagine stays Lionell in a gentlewoman's costume. The doublecrossed lovers are modified by their experience, changed internally by the disguises that first transformed them externally. Though each crossdresser is restored to his or her “proper” clothes, their romantic relationship is forever transformed and queered by their experiences of life as another gender. Even though Theagine and Lucretio are reunited, blessed by Lucretio's adoptive father, and happily married, their doublecrossed genders remain prosthetic, external, and unfixed. Observing these queered and crossed lovers reunited, Leonoro announces: “this shall be a warning to me while I liue, how I iudge of the instrument by the case againe” (5.1.256–57). Truly, the instruments

cannot be judged by their cases; in the end, doublecrossed genders, intertwined and dependent, are an important starting place for rethinking the construction, or self fashioning, or imagining, of early modern subjectivities and genders.

### “Robin Hood & the Bishop”

As intertwined and reciprocal as Britomart and Artegall and Lucretio and Theagine’s genders are in *The Faerie Queen* and *May Day*, the materials that mark their genders are only metaphorically, not literally, exchanged between them—Britomart wears armor, but not specifically Artegall’s; Lucretia wears a dress, but he doesn’t take it from Theagine. In the anonymous seventeenth-century crossdressing ballad “Robin Hood & the Bishop” a young man and an old woman literally swap clothing, in an arrangement (reminiscent of *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*) that serves to be mutually beneficial and entertaining to an audience or reader.<sup>55</sup> The full title of the ballad describes the literal exchange of clothes between the Robin Hood character and an old woman, a swap then enables Robin’s usual antics: “how Robin Hood went to an Old Woman’s House, and changed Cloaths with her, to escape from the/ Bishop; and how he robbed him of all his Gold, and made him Sing Mass.”<sup>56</sup>

When Robin Hood, on the run from the law, convinces the old woman to change clothes with him, the ballad maintains that their doublecrossed gender transformations are successful; despite their age and sexual differences, they are rendered unrecognizable as their original selves. By exchanging the outer vestiges of their genders, her “Coat of Grey” for his “mantle of green, and her “Spindle and twine” for his “arrows so keen,” Robin Hood and the old woman seem to show that gender is fluid, not moored in the body but only in its prosthetic attachments. Indeed, in the old woman’s clothes Robin Hood is nearly shot by his own men (the disguise is so thorough that they mistake her for a trespasser: “So like an Old Witch looks she”), and the old woman passes so thoroughly for Robin that she is arrested by the Bishop (“and for joy he had got Robin Hood, / He went laughing all the way”). The first woodcut (Figure 1.1) for the ballad emphasizes the balance of their gender exchange by depicting two figures, one in a dress and holding a hunter’s bow and the other in men’s clothes and holding a spindle.<sup>57</sup> The image captures the moment of doublecrossing, but we don’t know which side of the transformation we are seeing: either the two have already switched clothes and are now swapping their gendered tools, or they are beginning the exchange and will soon make the crossdressing switch. The woodcut renders their anatomical sex indistinguishable, so the clothing, which can be exchanged, again replaces the body as the primary demonstration of gender. The first image shows, then, how feasible it is for a man and woman to exchange gender, so long as they pass all of the right accessories back and forth.



Figure 1.1 Woodcut from first column of “Robin Hood and the Bishop,” Pepys 2.109. By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Despite this promising evidence that gender is fluid or unfixed, the ballad ultimately resolves itself by insisting on the fixed, binary, body. Robin Hood and the Old Woman can make an exact trade of their clothes, and they can pass for as long as they both maintain their equal but opposite disguises. However, in the punch line of the ballad, the old woman laughs at her mistaken captor, telling him, “Why I am a woman thou Cuckoldy Bishop/Lift up my Leg and see.” The text thus neatly demonstrates the pull between fluid and binary gender ideology, as it simultaneously deploys a fluid exchange between masculinity and femininity and insists on binary “truths” about the characters beneath the clothes.<sup>58</sup> Gender is therefore not only limited by the terms of its exchange, but also by the ultimate limit of determinist sex/gender connections. The ballad reminds us that, in our haste to find an exciting and potentially liberating pre-modern fluidity and flexibility that complicated sexual and gender difference, we must take care not to erase or ignore models that remain, stubbornly and annoyingly, engaged “lifting up the leg to see.” The ballad shows that characters might be able to switch betwixt sex and sex, but that those changes can never stick so long as the swap is contained in a binary system obsessed with biological determinism.

Nevertheless, even in moments where the transformational experiment of doublecrossdressing seems entirely contained by fixed sex and gender, the ballad hints that the system is never entirely successful. In the second woodcut (Figure 1.2), the Old Woman and Robin Hood wear matching smirking faces at the moment of the ballad’s triumphant climax, where they have successfully fooled the Bishop and stolen the gold. In the woodcut, at least, no one is lifting her leg and ruining the symmetry of their effortlessly

doublecrossed genders. Instead, both parties appear to be benefiting from and enjoying the success of their trade. Thus, even as the ballad's conclusion restores gendered order and mocks the Bishop for having been so easily fooled, the ballad's playful and successful swapping of clothes and accessories between Robin Hood and the Old Woman shows that gender swapping can be a potentially revolutionary and subversive tool. Indeed, in the end the character who faces the greatest embarrassment is the Bishop, who is punished for not reading gender, even as gender is proven illegible.



Figure 1.2 Woodcut from second column of “Robin Hood and the Bishop,”  
Pepys 2.109. By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College,  
Cambridge.

## Conclusion

In his review of an exhibit featuring the Machine to be Another, Kel O’Neill writes, “Their empathy machine is a prototype. Over time, the image resolution and sound quality will become exponentially better. The headsets will become smaller, then disappear. We will live each other’s lives, and, in turn, understand each other’s pleasure and pain.”<sup>59</sup> However, theater and literature have always been empathy machines, and this function is made especially clear through the device of doublecrossdressing. *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, *The Faerie Queene*, *May Day*, and *Robin Hood and the Bishop* each stage encounters between MTF and FTM crossdressers, face-to-face or simply linked through their relational roles in the same text. The virtual reality enabled by their gender swaps lets them literally live one another’s lives and gender roles, at least for a while. Through that swap, through the perspectival shift that comes from seeing themselves from someone else’s position and place, they earn glimpses of each other’s pleasures, pain, resources and limitations. Each of these experiments is bound by time, the sex/gender system, the rules of passing and of containment; in each resolution, the clothes

are swapped back and masculinity and femininity are confirmed as separate and distinct, though intertwined. However, at the same time, the experience of empathetic cross-identification reveals that gender is no more than a series of machinations and that sexual difference is open to slippage and inconsistencies. Even once nominally restored to order, doublecrossed genders remain disruptive and unsettled. The routine and repetitive manifestation of empathetic gender exchange in doublecrossdressing texts ultimately shows the very queer machine of shifting and relational gender in the early modern imagination.

## Notes

1. The video can be found at <https://vimeo.com/84150219>. In the video, the roles of user and performer are not clearly differentiated in the clip; some descriptions of the project say that the two are both users and performers, mirroring each other's movements in tandem.
2. Philippe Bertrand, Daniel Gonzalez-Franco, Christian Cherene, and Arthur Pointeau. "The Machine to Be Another': Embodiment Performance to Promote Empathy Among Individuals," [http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/09/THE\\_MACHINE\\_TO\\_BE\\_ANOTHER\\_PAPER\\_2014.pdf](http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/09/THE_MACHINE_TO_BE_ANOTHER_PAPER_2014.pdf); p. 1. In addition to the gender swap male/female pairs, the lab's other experiments have involved mother/daughter pairs, native/immigrant pairs, and able-bodied/disabled pairs.
3. Ibid, p. 4. The Machine to Be Another virtual reality experiment is perhaps the most embodied version of virtual gender swapping through technology, which has also been studied in the use of cross-gender avatars in other kinds of immersive virtual and online experiences, especially video gaming; scholarship in this area shows that inhabiting a gender swapped avatar has real impact on the user's behavior and identity both during and after the game. In particular, popular games like *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft* offer "three-dimensional virtual worlds" for users; see *Queer Online: Media, Technology and Sexuality*, eds. Kate O'Riordan and David J. Philips (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Robert Alan Brookey and Kristopher L. Cannon, "Sex Lives in Second Life," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 26:2 (2009), 145–64; Lina Eklund, "Doing Gender in Cyberspace: The Performance of Gender by Female World of Warcraft Players," *Convergence*, 17(3) (2011), 323–42; Searle Huh and Dmitri Williams, "Dude Looks Like a Lady: Gender Swapping in an Online Game" in *Online Worlds: Convergence of the Real and the Virtual, Human-Computer Interaction Series*, ed. WS Bainbridge (London: Springer-Verlag, 2010), 161–74; J. Juul, *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and their Players* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010); Christian Schmieder, "World of Maskcraft vs. World of Queercraft? Communication, Sex and Gender in the Online Role-Playing Game World of Warcraft," *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 1, no. 1 (2009): 5–21.
4. Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, pp. 218–219.
5. Shapiro lists some of these plays in a short section of his book called "Contrasting Boy Brides with Female Pages" (pp. 116–17); others are listed in

Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1915), especially in Chapter V, “The Boy Bride” (pp. 101–20).

6. Phillip Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583). Ed FJ Furnivall. London: New Shakespeare Society 1877–79). pp. 73–4; The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography lists Stubbes (b. c.1555, d. in or after 1610) as a “semi-professional author” who was best known for his ballads in the late 1580’s. *Anatomie of Abuses* was very popular (four editions were printed before 1595), but also earned Stubbes the reputation of being a “puritan spoilsport and killjoy.” Set up as a thinly veiled allegorical dialogue between Philoponus and Spudeus about the “Ilande called Ailgna,” The *Anatomie* not only opposes crossdressing and “excesses” of apparel, but also dancing, bowling, and gaming of all kinds.
7. King James Bible, Deutoronomy 22:5; Interestingly, the Old Testament Hebrew text for this passage, *על־אִשָּׁה וְלֹא־יִלְבָּשׁ גְּבוֹר שְׂמֵלַת אִשָּׁה כִּי תוֹעֵבַת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כָּל־עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה:*, translates slightly differently: “A man’s item shall not be on a woman, and a man shall not wear a woman’s garment; whoever does such a thing is an abhorrence unto God.” The King James translation silently erases the passive voice from the Hebrew original, giving women greater responsibility and blame for crossdressing and also unbalancing the equation between MTF and FTM cross gender dressing.
8. Chris Mounsey, “Introduction,” in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early Modern Culture*. Chris Mounsey (ed.), (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 14.
9. In many ways, this problem of a queerness that reifies rather than dismantles the norm echoes recent conversations about bisexuality, an identity category that emphasizes a gender binary in its name. While some bisexual activists have done interesting work to keep the name while modifying what it might mean to identify as bisexual, I see many young queers identifying instead as pansexual. This move runs parallel to a trend away from identifications with crossdressing, and increasing identifications as genderqueer, agender, etc. Crossdressing has, of course, often been a ground on which scholars talk about radical flexible and fluid early modern genders, just as I do throughout this book. For a few examples of this work, which uses crossdressing to open queer avenues of scholarship, see Carolyn D. Williams. “Women Behaving Well: Early Modern Images of Female Courage,” in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early Modern Culture*, Chris Mounsey ed. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press 2001); Jean Howard, p. 418; Clare Everett, “Venus in Drag: Female Transvestism and the Construction of Sex Difference in Renaissance England” in *Venus and Mars: Engendering Love and War in Early Modern Europe*. Andrew Lynch and Phillipa Maddern eds. (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1995), p. 208; Joanna Thompson, *The Character of Britomart in Spenser’s The Faerie Queene*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), p. 70.
10. Helen King and Donald Beecher have convincingly argued that the Galenic one-sex model in which spontaneous anatomical sex change could happen was already out of medical and even popular belief in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Beecher, “Concerning Sex Changes: The Cultural Significance of a Renaissance Medical Polemic,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2005), pp. 991–1016; Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013). But there

are other models, both medical and legal that still presented masculinity and femininity as interrelated and causal: In *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Gail Kern Paster describes the humoral model as “a continuous, dynamic reciprocity within and outside the body in question.” Further, she continues, “all the factors, involving body, mind, and emotions interact with each other and with an environment construed holistically to include both the physical world and the sociocultural context” (8–9). Since the humors and their temperatures were seen as regulating sex and gendered temperament, the possibility of humorous exchange between bodies might also be a way of understanding a system where one person can gain femininity only if another person gives it up. Just as each body had to maintain internal stability with its humors, stability and balance needed to be maintained between bodies. Humoral theory therefore supports the idea that cross-gender pairs might share a causally related gender. The humoral idea of fluidity and interchangeability *within* an individual body-without-boundaries that comes from the humoral perspective can also be read *outside* of a single individual body and onto a larger system of “porous and permeable bodies.

In much the same way, legal coverture demonstrates a kind of gender swap or exchangeable gender. Under the legal notion of coverture, a husband subsumes or “covers” his wife. Once an early modern woman married, therefore, she was considered a “femme covert,” and no longer had the individual rights to inherit property or speak for herself in court. Part of this legal force was the idea of the “unity of person” between a husband and wife; once married, the law considered a man and his wife to be essentially one permeable body. In “Battered Women, Petty Traitors, and the Legacy of Coverture,” Frances E. Dolan comments on this as the “notion that marriage only has room for one person” (*Feminist Studies* 29.2 [Summer 2003]: 249–77, 250). Dolan’s argument, which draws a comparison between modern representations of “battered women” who kill their husbands and representations of the “femme covert” in early modern models of marriage, shows that early modern rhetoric about marriage functioned as a way of conceptualizing marriage as part of an economy of scarcity, in which there is not enough subjectivity for two complete subjects, causing one to be subsumed by the other. Hartog adds to this argument by describing the legal connection between a married man and his wife as a “zero-sum universe where what the husband had, the wife did not, and vice versa” (45). In a system like this, therefore, to give a married woman legal rights or autonomy always meant *taking away* legal rights or autonomy from her husband.

11. “Introduction,” in *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law*, Jennifer J. Lewellyn and Jocelyn Downie, eds. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012), p. 4.
12. Scholarship on these pamphlets has focused primarily on the treatment of *Hic Mulier* as an example of the treatment of women in the period, while less attention has focused on *Haec Vir*’s equal-but-opposite femininity. See, for example, Michael Shapiro; Rachel Trubowitz, “Crossdressed Women and Natural Mothers: ‘Boundary Panic’ in *Hic Mulier*” in *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500–1700*, eds. Cristina Malcomson and Mihoko Suzuki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 185–208; Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social*

*Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2004); Denise Wallen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).

13. All quotations for *Hic Vir* and *Haec Mulier* are taken from facsimile reproductions of the pamphlets, reproduced by Barbara J. Baines, in the book *Three Pamphlets of the Jacobean Antifeminist Controversy* (New York: 1978). The titles of *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* are puns since they misuse Latin pronouns, pairing the masculine “hic” with the word for “woman,” “mulier,” and the feminine “haec” with the word for “man,” “vir.”
14. *Hic Mulier*, A5.
15. *Hic Mulier*, A4.
16. This contradiction is further complicated by the notion of the potentially queer sexualities and desires at play here, something I discuss further in Chapters 3 and 4.
17. Howard, 420.
18. Trubowitz, 203; Trubowitz further argues that “By gendering the unisex ‘pap,’ maternal lactation disrupts Galenism’s mirror-model of human sexuality and reproduction” (190).
19. On the sexual desirability for FTM crossdressers, see Orgel, *Impersonations*, 106–26.
20. Shapiro, 21.
21. *Hic Mulier*, C2v.
22. This author is anonymous, and his or her gender is unknown. It is possible that both pamphlets are written by the same male author, or that two men wrote the pamphlets, or that a woman writes the response *Haec Vir*. Interestingly, while there is a healthy body of criticism surrounding *Hic Mulier*’s pamphlet and her queer gender, there is less work specifically about *Haec Vir*’s presentation in the second pamphlet.
23. Tracey Sedinger, “If sight and shape be true: The Epistemology of Crossdressing on the London Stage,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 63–79, 64.
24. *Haec Vir*, C.
25. Here, the reference (to Caesar and his military) is used to set a norm, and is a nostalgic way to remember a time “before” gender confusion or crossdressing; this stands out in contrast to other classical references that I mention elsewhere in the dissertation, where authors refer to classical examples of gender transformation) as a way to explain that crossdressing or gender fluidity has a history.
26. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Stephen Randal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 147.
27. Fisher, p. 18. The idea of clothing as prosthesis productively disrupts a contemporary obsession with literal prosthesis—fake penises for trans men and FTM crossdressers, and fake breasts for trans women and MTF crossdressers. This focus, from both within the community (consider online forums on prostheses, for example), and from outside (consider cisgender male actors public discussion of their crossdressing, like a recent interview with Dustin Hoffman about *Tootsie*, or Jared Leto’s recent award speeches about his role as Rayon in *The Dallas Buyers Club*, both of which focused on the mechanics of passing, including tucking, hair removal, and prosthetic breasts).

28. Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*. *Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 208.
29. For more on the use of facial hair as a prosthetic marker of gender, see Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
30. *Haec Vir*, C3v.
31. At the same time as it indicates possibilities and outlines rules for cross-gender behaviors, this closing argument from *Hic Mulier* also hints at the risks of gender swapping. Until men resume their original gender performances, women will not attend to them, hearing and obeying their instructions. They will not fulfill their role as supporters and assistants. This alone is a destabilizing risk. But the final lines of this warning also imply that, until men give up their effeminacy, they will not “find delight” in women at all. Possibly, these lines indicate, swapping genders can also cause sexual confusion.
32. Shapiro, 22.
33. It is worth noting that, just as he argues that *Hic Mulier* is not crossdressed but instead articulating a sexually aggressive masculine femininity, Shapiro describes Britomart as participating in a special category of not-crossdressing-to-pass woman warriors, along with Moll Cutpurse: “Like the classical models, the viragos of Renaissance epics do not actually adopt cross-gender disguise, but when they are dressed for battle, they are sometimes mistaken for men” (210). Here again, I’d argue that the character’s identification and intent are not sufficient arguments for whether or not s/he is a legitimate crossdresser; in a relational gender system, the way that the character is perceived as s/he moves in his/her/their world matters, and Britomart certainly uses her armor to move in the world as a man. Sedinger, on the other hand, sees Britomart’s transformation as one of deep identification with Artegall: “Britomart identifies with Artegall at the level of imaginary resemblance, and therefore disguises herself as a knight. Identification is, after all, a sort of incorporation, and one which is, as Kaja Silverman has pointed out, profoundly implicated with one’s bodily imago” (101).
34. All *Faerie Queene* quotations are from AC Hamilton’s edition: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*. AC Hamilton, ed. (New York: Longman Press, 1977).
35. Wagner, 386.
36. For a discussion of the similarities and differences between Britomart and Radigund, see Susanne Woods, “Amazonian Tyranny: Spenser’s Radigund and Diachronic Mimesis” in *Playing with Gender*, ed. Jean R Brink et al, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 52–61, and Josephine Roberts, “Radigund Revisited: Perspectives on Women Rulers in Lady Mary Writh’s *Urania*,” in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, eds. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S Travitsky (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 187–207.
37. Wagner, 387–88. Judith H. Anderson, “Artegall,” *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 62. Later, Anderson expands her notion of the balance between the lovers: “Variouly theirs is a potential for balance and synthesis or for imbalance and antithesis.”
38. Laura Silberman, “The Hermaphrodite and the Metamorphosis of Spenserian Allegory,” *English Literary Renaissance* 17.2 (March 1987): 207–23. p. 217.
39. This allusion to conjoined, hermaphroditic lovers is of course an echo of the actual pair of lovers, Scudamore and Amoret, who are conjoined in the original

ending of Book III. Spenser's inclusion of such a binding of lovers in Britomart's book of Chastity suggests that the exchange of gender and gendered dress between Britomart and Artegall has a similar effect of joining the two individuals together as part of one closed system.

40. A few notable discussions of Britomart's gender presentation include: Judith Anderson, "Britomart's Armor in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*": Reopening Cultural Matters of Gender and Figuration," in *English Literary Renaissance* 39.1 (2009), 74–96, Donald Stump, "Fashioning Gender: Cross-Dressing in Spenser's Legend of Britomart and Artegall," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 15 (2001), 95–119, Jessica C. Murphy, "'of the Sicke Virgin': Britomart, Greensickness, and the Man in the Mirror." *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 25 (2010): 109–27, and Maureen Quilligan's chapter on "Spenser's Britomart," in *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 134–64.
41. Katherine Schwarz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
42. On Artegall's gender in particular, see Stump, "Fashioning Gender."
43. Woods, 154.
44. Mihoko Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p. 180.
45. J. Halberstam, *The Drag King Book* (Serpent's Tail Press, 1999), p. 120.
46. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 186.
47. Shapio, 137. Shapiro also connects the play to its Italian source, Piccolomini's *Alessandro* (1544), and lists it as an example of the the Lelia tradition, in which each member of a separated couple adopts cross-gender disguise.
48. Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama: A Study in Stage Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), p. 87.
49. For more on the FTM disguise, see Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 50. She explains: "Although Theagine and Lucretio camouflage themselves with little difficulty, Franceschina's disguise is rumbled immediately by her husband Quintiliano, who is nonetheless oblivious to her true identity [...] Franceschina is also, however, played by a boy, so any recognizably feminine characteristics such as 'bigge thighs' and 'splay feet' can only be an edict of costuming. May Day thus blurs the boundaries between woman and boy even as it insists on the existence of such boundaries." Shapiro adds, "Unlike the boy actor playing Lionell, who represents a girl who can pass for a boy in the world of the play, the boy actor playing Franceschina represents a woman supposedly incapable of passing for a boy!" (138).
50. This emphasis on chastity is meant to protect Lucretio-as-Lucretia from unwanted sexual advances, but it fails to do so; in Act 4 Lucretio/Lucretia defends his/her/their honor in a sword fight against a man, Lodovico, who has also gained access to her/his chamber. As they fight with rapiers, Lucretio reveals that he is male, but then demands that his would-be-ravisher be complicit in keeping the secret of his sex.
51. This and all quotes from *May Day* are from *The Plays of George Chapman: A Critical Edition—The Comedies*. Allan Holaday, ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970); 2.1.33–35.

52. I discuss similar erotic encounters with MTF crossdressers, though not in doublecrossed situations, in Chapters 3 and 4.
53. Note here a further example of the idea, discussed in Chapter 2, that MTF crossdressing could be a good way for a man, passing for female, to gain access to another man's wealth by trafficking himself.
54. Michael Shapiro discusses the complexity for an actor playing a cross-gender role in his chapter "Cross-Gender Disguise plus Cross-Gender Casting." He writes: "This phenomenological reality, combined with the illusion of depth created by his/her/his multiple gender identities and with the virtuosity required to maneuver rapidly among them, enabled this figure to achieve an effect I term *theatrical vibrancy*" (52).
55. Robin Hood, a trickster figure, often appears in disguise. Notably, there is another MTF crossdressed Robin Hood in the 1600 play *Look About You*. For a discussion of earlier Robin Hood Ballads, see Christine Chism, "Robin Hood: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally in the Fifteenth-Century Ballads" in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, eds. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 12–39. See also Peter Stallybrass, "'Drunk with the cup of livery': Robin Hood, the Carnavalesque, and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England," in *Robin Hood: And Anthology*, ed. Stephen Knight (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1999), pp. 297–328.
56. Pepys 2.109: <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20731/image>; another, very slightly variant copy is Pepys 2.122, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31630/image>. See also Roxburgh 1.362–63. <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30245/image> and Euing 303 <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31720/image>.
57. Interestingly, the ballad's two woodcuts are inverted in the Euing 303 version of the ballad, so that this image comes at the conclusion of the ballad, rather than the start.
58. The lifting of the leg to prove sex is a neat echo of the scene in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* where the puppet Dionysius lifts "his" garment, revealing that the puppet body beneath is neither male nor female. If the ballad author was familiar with that scene, the old woman's joke would be nuanced with the possibility that she is, under her skirt, a blank slate open to influence and change.
59. Kel O'Neill, "Dispatches from IDFA," <http://www.pbs.org/pov/blog/news/2014/11/dispatches-from-idfa-the-third-entity/>.

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## 2 Crossdressed Brides and the Marriage Market

### *A Mad World, My Master, Epicoene, and “Phylotus and Emelia”*

In doublecrossdressing plots, the most synergetic relationship in the text is the one between the MTF and FTM crossdressers; even when they don't have face-to-face contact, the causal-relational connection between the two crossdressers' clothing and genders enables the fantasy of gender swapping and the perspectival shift of seeing gender from the outside in. However, even as doublecrossdressing plots explore the possibility that gender might be transferable and contingent, they most frequently end their cross-gender experiment by reinforcing traditional gender norms even as they undermine them. Though both the MTF and FTM crossdressers in each text are transformed by their queer presentations, at the resolution of doublecrossdressing plots, MTFs arguably fare better than their partners. When they take off their women's clothes, they regain access to male authority and social status. Ultimately, in the relationship between two types of queer gender, these texts as a group consistently privilege cisgender masculinity. However, what about texts that emphasize the power that happens *during*, not after, the MTF crossdressing moment? This chapter takes on another common trope of MTF crossdressing, the boy bride motif, in which the MTF crossdresser puts himself in relationship to a male suitor or husband, because s/he stands to gain from the queer dynamic of that encounter. Paired with a cisgender male, as opposed to an equal-but-opposite MTF match in the text, these boy bride crossdressers show how queer femininity—feminine masculinity—can be a tool of agency and empowerment.

In each of the texts that I examine in this chapter, MTF crossdressed characters find reason—political, financial, and personal—to intentionally enter themselves as tradable goods within the marriage economy. Not only does this marriage dynamic put the crossdresser in relationship with a potential husband, but the plot device also requires the crossdresser to navigate and relate within social and cultural norms, rituals, and routines. The motif of MTF crossdressing for the purpose of marriage complicates Gayle Rubin's argument about “traffic in women” by exploring the reasons that a man might want to put himself in the position of trafficked woman in the first place.<sup>1</sup> When MTF crossdressers reveal the power available in the trafficked position, they reveal possibility for cisgender women who generally occupy those trafficked positions; crossdressing again appears to blur gender roles

and relationships. Just as with doublecrossdressing scenarios, though, the reach of these queer implication is limited when MTF crossdressers in the marriage economy generally fall back on their cisgender male privilege, containing and restricting the radical potential of their disruption of the trafficking system.

Feminist scholars have used Rubin's model of "traffic in women" to demonstrate that there is little power or agency in the female position within an erotic triangle or within a marriage exchange.<sup>2</sup> Though MTF crossdressers and their fictional actions do not lessen the reality of many women's real experiences of powerlessness and objectification (in early modern life and representation and today), the many texts where MTF crossdressers intentionally take the place of cisgender women in marriage reveal that there are potential benefits, however limited, and points of subversive strength, however tenuous, available from within the traffic economy. However, putting themselves in relation to husbands, fathers, and society in the usually disempowered position of bride, MTF crossdressers can make visible the potential benefits and strengths available uniquely in that position. At the same time, because they are able to uncrossdress and return to their male presentations at any time, MTF crossdressers are protected from some of the real risks and dangers faced by trafficked women. Thus, MTF crossdressers, often considered as perverse or degraded (if not just satirical and silly), reveal themselves through their manipulation of the marriage market, to be serious players in a complicated and high-stakes system, navigating and controlling marriage economies from the position usually considered weakest. Lorna Hudson argues that MTF crossdressing marriage tricks, along with other fraudulent marriage plots, are evidence of anxiety among men as the kinship system that assured the traffic in women was changing and losing power. As she puts it, where once "women had, in their transition from being one man's daughter to another man's wife, symbolized the assurance of alliance-friendships between men, and the orderly channeling of wealth from one 'house' or lineage to another," now "humanism textualized the friendships between men, or made their value turn upon persuasive skill," such that "men's uncertainty about the place of 'assurance' in the conveyance of benefits through friendship was expressed in a range of discourses in narratives of credit-fraud—of false claims to kinship, disguises, stolen marriages—in which the agents were prodigal unthrifts, pitiless usurers and daughters or wives."<sup>3</sup>

Hudson's analysis locates anxiety about the traffic in women in the potential grooms, who worry that they won't have the assurances they once might have expected to get through the marriage system. However, MTF crossdressed brides demonstrate that there is anxiety from other quarters, too, especially from the position of younger men who are excluded from both the older kinship model and the newer humanist friendship model while they wait to come into their inheritances. By replacing the female bride meant to be trafficked between two more powerful men, the

crossdressed brides put themselves at one corner of the “erotic triangle” that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described as being formed by the homo-social bonds between two men through a woman. They thus exploit and benefit from what Sedgwick describes as “the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power”<sup>4</sup> By queering the relationship between trafficked woman and her traffickers, MTF crossdressers reveal the workings of the marriage economy, and they benefit from their role in it. While these instances do offer a significant, though limited, suggestion that there might be liberatory agency for some trafficked cisgender women, they wholeheartedly demonstrate that MTF crossdressing, queer gender and male femininity are productive presentations that can be rewarded, rather than shamed.

By looking specifically at four instances in which men dress as women in order to gain inheritances, get money, or achieve status—Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Master*, Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene*, Barnabe Riche’s prose “Phylotus and Emelia” from *A Farewell to the Military Profession*, and an anonymous poem called *Phylotus*,—this chapter offers a way to complicate our understanding of the relationship between gender and power in the Renaissance, and to reimagine the gendered relations within an economy that traffics in women, and to give special attention to the ways that queer femininity, so often imagined as reprehensible, can be advantageous. In 1975, Gayle Rubin explained that there is no easy way out of the traffic in women, that “if two women managed to extricate themselves from the debt nexus, two other women would have to be found to replace them.”<sup>5</sup> The MTF crossdressing texts examined here allow for a different option, for a man dressed as a woman to enter himself into the traffic in women, often replacing a cisgender woman who is herself unwilling to enter an arranged marriage plan. If we understand marriage in these texts to be a special form of gift exchange in which kinship between men is established and maintained, we have to wonder why *some* men find that kinship doesn’t take them far enough, and instead decide that there is potentially more benefit from within the system (as a bride) than from the outside (as a brother, father, or groom).

### *A Mad World, My Masters*

One clear and compelling example of the pattern of a crossdressed man in the role of a woman in an economy controlled by men, pursuing the goal of subterfuge and financial gain, takes place in Thomas Middleton’s city comedy, *A Mad World, My Masters*. In this play, probably performed in 1606 and first entered into the Stationer’s Register and then printed in 1608, Middleton explores attempts at the exploitation of marital trafficking from two possible angles: a courtesan and a crossdresser each attempt to insert themselves into the marital economy in an effort to leverage themselves into the bride’s position of financial access. By including the courtesan

as a legitimate rival—and, in fact, an inspiration—to the MTF crossdresser, Middleton follows Rubin’s original conflation of marriage through kinship as a kind of sanctioned sex work, brokered by fathers instead of pimps. At the same time, by coupling the scheming courtesan with the scheming crossdresser, Middleton imbues both individuals with forms of control and intent that are generally overlooked in trafficking situations involving cisgender brides who are not sex workers. Thus, *A Mad World, My Masters* suggests that there might be a benefit to being a trafficked woman by using prostitution to make visible the ever-present economic stakes of sexual and marital exchange through the figure of the courtesan. From there, the play pushes the idea of intentional self-trafficking to a further extreme, by exploring what can happen when a man, rather than a whore, replaces the bride and aims to earn a profit in her place.

From the beginning of the play, women are very much equated with financial value, and are treated as such.<sup>6</sup> For example, in one of the play’s sub-plots, as early as the second scene, the would-be cuckold Harebrain compares the threat of his wife being seduced to the threat of property theft. He declares, “Let me not be purloined—[aside] purloined indeed, the merry Greeks conceive me.—There’s a gem I would not lose, kept by the Italian under lock and key; we Englishmen are careless creatures” (1.2.19–22). Mistress Harebrain, then, is to her husband the same as any other valuable property, and therefore deserving of being kept locked away with a level of jealous caution normally associated with the stereotype of suspicious Italians.<sup>7</sup> Harebrain considers his wife and her chastity in economic terms, isolating her and exerting financial, rather than emotional, control over her. He says, “Puh, that’s enough. I’ll keep her to her stint, / I’ll put her to her pension; / She gets but her allowance, that’s a bare one; / Few women have that beside their own” (1.2.60–63). Here, Harebrain blends financial and sexual punning to make his wife’s position as a trafficked woman clear; her “stint” has two meanings, a financial restriction, like an allowance, and an “allotted portion of work” or “definite task.”<sup>8</sup> Harebrain, by keeping his wife “to her stint” is restricting her financial independence and reiterating her sexual and reproductive obligations to him. When he says, “I’ll put her to her pension,” he seems to imply that she will have to earn her keep through her chastity and availability to him. He recognizes that all but a “few women” have options beyond accepting their husbands’ allowances and requirements.<sup>9</sup>

With the economy of marriage thus established, Middleton establishes his crossdresser and courtesan in related economic terms. The crossdressed character is a young heir, Follywit, who is living off of a small allowance while he waits for his grandsire, Sir Bounteous Progress, to die and leave him a large inheritance. He says of Sir Bounteous in the first scene of the play, “[his] death makes all possible to me: I shall have all when he has nothing but now he has all I shall have nothing” (1.1.40). This inheritance plan, the motivating force behind the entire plot of *A Mad World, My Masters*,

reflects the standard way for money, land, and property to be exchanged between generations of men, a system that excludes women entirely. Follywit is well aware of the universality of his position as an heir-in-waiting.<sup>10</sup> He explains:

I think one mind runs through a million of ‘em;  
 They love to keep us sober all the while they’re alive,  
 That when they’re dead we may toast to their healths;  
 They cannot abide to see us merry all the while they’re above the  
 ground,  
 And that makes so many laugh at their father’s funerals. (1.1.42–46)

In describing the common thoughts of all fathers, grandfathers and holders of wealth, Follywit effectively indicates an understanding of the patriarchal inheritance system, a system that includes the transference of women along with the transference of wealth since Follywit’s current reduced state also keeps him from attracting the attention of a father willing to give him his daughter to wed.<sup>11</sup>

As a male heir who will most certainly receive his inheritance at some point, and then be able to use it as he likes, Follywit is certainly in a position of privilege; nevertheless, he finds himself impatient, unwilling to wait until his inheritance is available, and uncomfortable with the uncertainty that his grandfather might cut him out of his will at any point. For this reason—for more immediate access to his grandfather’s wealth—he embarks on a series of failed disguises and schemes. Interestingly, these first attempts at disguise involve not *crossdressing* but *classdressing*, where Follywit dresses first as a higher-ranked lord—attempting to exploit his grandsire’s vanity by presenting himself to his grandsire as a lord and asking for loans and gifts—and later as a thieving player. Passing for men of different class backgrounds gives Follywit increased access to his grandfather through the old man’s hospitality and vanity, but prevents him from getting at the more substantial holdings of the estate; As Will Fisher discusses, these preliminary disguise plots also allow him to experiment with gendered performance by donning a false beard to “stage masculinity.”<sup>12</sup> His failure in each of these attempts confirms his earlier understanding that his grandfather’s home and most prized possessions are always carefully protected from other men; this confirmation eventually leads to his decision to pass for female in a final effort to access his grandfather’s wealth as a woman and bride.

Setting the stage for Follywit’s *crossdressing*, and also laying the groundwork of comparing his efforts at self-trafficking to those of a courtesan, Middleton present Follywit’s series of plots against the backdrop of women in the play working to exploit the ways that the marital economy informs sex and marriage for their own gain.<sup>13</sup> The play’s courtesan, punningly named Frank Gullman, aims to trick Sir Bounteous out of his money, and out of Follywit’s inheritance, by offering her false virginity in exchange for

financial gain. Though she has no father to broker a deal Bounteous, her own mother steps into the role of pimp, explaining:

Fifteen times thou knowest I have sold thy maidenhead,  
To make up a dowry for thy marriage, and yet  
There's maidenhead enough for old Sir Bounteous still;  
He'll be all his lifetime about it yet,  
And be as far to seek when he is done. (1.1.145–149)

The mother, a trafficker in women herself, sees Gullman as part of a system of trade in black-market virginity, all sold and traded for parental or familial benefit. She says, “The sums that I have told upon thy pillow! / I shall once see those golden days again; / Though fifteen, all thy maidenheads are not gone” (1.1.150–153).<sup>14</sup> In this way, the play pits the two schemers, Follywit and Frank Gullman, against one another, each armed with different approaches to accessing Bounteous's wealth. Though Follywit's inheritance is near-assured—his grandfather's will, naming him, is locked away—Gullman has more immediate and effective access when her mother pimps her to Bounteous. What's more, Gullman offers more valuable collateral for Bounteous's money than sexual dalliance; using her reproductive body as an object of exchange, she raises the stakes by faking a pregnancy and offering him the potential of creating a new heir, one who would replace Follywit altogether and thereby would secure Gullman's place in Bounteous's household as the mother of his child. A woman, and a particularly lowly one at that, Gullman has little control over her own passage from mother to customer; she is quite literally a commodity. Yet, by virtue of her reproductive capacity (and her knowledge of women's medical bodies, sufficient to fake a pregnancy), Gullman is able to entirely replace Follywit in the economy of inheritance. Though trafficked, she arranges her own trafficking, and thus acts in her own interests. She stands to gain more than the legitimate heir; she gains power not only as the object of exchange, but as the broker of her own exchange.

Even as she is trafficked between mother and lover without the security of marriage, Gullman is able to use the strategy of pregnancy, even (or especially) a false pregnancy, as one way to enter the economy of inheritance at work in this play. True, she receives money less for her own worth or value and more because she carries the potential male heir, but nevertheless, she gains access to power and money, and her claim is strong enough to disinherit a legitimate male heir. Even Follywit recognizes the problem; learning about Frank Gullman's relationship with Bounteous Progress, he says, “I shall hope shorter by that trick; she carries away the thirds at least. ‘Twill prove entailed land, I am afraid, when all is done i'faith.” That is, Frank Gullman, as mother to an heir, could be entitled to a third of Bounteous Progress's property and to his land. Follywit sees that Gullman has displaced him in the economy of inheritance, because Bounteous has “For his blanched

harlot dispossess[ed] his son” (3.3.31–40). Frank Gullman’s female ability to become pregnant and to seduce Bounteous out of his inheritance is one that Follywit has no access to. By offering a specifically female commodity, she pushes her male competition out of the running for Sir Bounteous’ money. Therefore, instead of approaching the problem dressed as a man, Follywit decides that his best approach is to dress himself as a woman. Follywit decides that it’s better to be the woman in the equation—that even a courtesan has more access to wealth than a young heir. Follywit quickly dresses as a woman, and, disguised as a Frank Gullman herself, he heads to Bounteous’ house.

In many MTF crossdressing plays, the actual act of crossdressing happens off stage, or happens onstage with minimal commentary. By contrast, Middleton stretches Follywit’s transformation into a comical scene laden with jokes about gender and performativity. He instructs his assistant, Hoboy: “Lieutenant, step behind yon hanging; if I mistook not at my entrance there hangs the lower part of a gentlewoman’s gown with a mask and a chin-clout; bring all this way” (3.3.76–79). Why should the playwright provide a skirt and mask, but not a full dress? This focus on the lower body as the locus of gender reveals a social understanding of the of sexual difference, again under the skirt, even as it provides comic fodder for the conversation amongst a group of men as they dress their friend as a woman. Hoboy asks, “But prithee what will thou do with a gentlewoman’s lower part?” and Follywit responds, “Why, use it” (3.3.81–82). His lewd joke also emphasizes the very real *use* of Follywit’s female disguise—dressed like Gullman, passing for a woman, he can use the traffic in women to get is the inheritance that is beyond his reach in his men’s attire.<sup>15</sup>

Arriving disguised at his grandfather’s house, Follywit-as-Gullman is escorted into a private room where “she” is left alone with a casket full of jewels; this is Bounteous’s private chamber, where he has sent the seeming Gullman for the sake of privacy for a sexual encounter. Assumed to be female and pregnant, Follywit is left in the counting room with all of the other valuables. As a man, he is shocked at how easy it is to steal from Bounteous. Comparing the casket to a bride, he assesses its value and exclaims, “Ha! Now by my faith, a gentlewoman of very good parts: diamond, ruby, sapphire, *onyx cum prole silexque*” (4.3.37–38). As impressed as Follywit is with the value of this bounty, he is equally shocked at how easily available the riches are, and how they were so well guarded from him as a grandson and so little guarded from him as a whore.<sup>16</sup> He explains, “If I do not wonder how the queen ‘scaped tempting I’m an hermaphrodite” (4.3.38–40). The gendered nature of his oath (If I do not wonder ... I’m an hermaphrodite) is especially strange considering that Follywit stands on the stage crossdressed. However, his genuine confusion over why a woman has not already stolen the goods that are only now accessible to him, only now that he is passing for female, demonstrates at once the reality of and limits to the idea that a woman, trafficked, has unique resources.

On the one hand, Follywit correctly assesses that Gullman has the opportunity to steal in a single moment more money than he can embezzle in a year.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Follywit's inability to understand why Gullman has not already stolen Bounteous's jewels reveals how much he misunderstands the relationship between a whore and her client; true, Gullman could have stolen from Bounteous Progress, but only with high stakes. Ultimately she knows that her chances of long term prosperity are dependent upon securing a place in the household. In any case, Follywit takes the money and leaves, expecting all of the blame to fall on the courtesan. Indeed, when Bounteous sees that he has been robbed, he immediately blames Gullman. He cries, "Ha? Wench? Frank Gullman! Why, body of me, what's here?? My casket wide open, broke open, my jewels stolen" (4.4.58–59). The words "body" and "casket" here make it clear that the theft, blamed on Gullman, is perceived as a crime against Bounteous himself. Though Gullman is objectified to the point where she is exchangeable with Bounteous' property, when "she" becomes an active subject by stealing property she causes Bounteous near-physical harm.

In *A Mad World, My Masters*, the MTF crossdresser reveals the ways that, from inside the patriarchal system of a gendered economy, women might gain some modicum of power and manipulate their positions to disrupt the smooth transference of wealth from one generation of men to the next. Follywit is shocked at the easy access he has to Bounteous's vulnerable wealth when he takes on the role of his lover. Though we know that the male heir, not the female lover, is the true thief, the image of a female body on the stage stealing from a man who trusts her (or at least fails to consider her a threat) points out a vulnerability in the established system of financial exchange between men. At the same time, the fact that the actual woman's body (already played by a boy actor in women's clothes) is replaced by a male one indicates that the patriarchal system will always privilege relationships between men, even when the men pass for female. The MTF crossdresser's place in the marriage economy thus reveals the fault lines where trafficked parties might have power, even as it troubles the rules about who can take those risks.

The play attempts to clean up this discomfort with a quick marriage fix at the end of the plot, when Follywit meets the real Frank Gullman, and, thinking she's an innocent gentlewoman and a virgin, asks her to marry him, hoping to add to his stolen wealth with her dowry. In the end, the play's trickster is gulled himself, and finds himself stuck with *all* of his grandsire's property, including his scheming courtesan. Of Gullman and Follywit's connection, Leanore Lieblein writes, "The play is divided between the creators of spectacle and their victims. It judges dissembling, but not in relation to traditional moral categories, for the heroes are those who, like Follywit and the Courtesan whom he eventually marries, come to understand the relation between 'art' and 'life.'"<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the two schemers of the play have been interconnected all along, unified in their shared belief that they are entitled

to do whatever it takes to survive the inheritance and marriage systems at work in the play. In the final lines of the play, Bounteous Progress toasts the assembled crowd, including the viewing audience: “Who lives by cunning, mark it, his fate’s cast; / When he has gulled all, then is himself the last” (5.2.280–283). The sum total of the play is that the status quo is resolutely maintained—Follywit ends the play with a new bride but otherwise no new hopes for getting his inheritance earlier, and the real Frank Gullman is traded by her mother to her husband without even making a profit. Both Follywit and Gullman end the play ever more dependent on the system of paternal inheritance. Still, *A Mad World, My Masters* offers one clear instance in which MTF crossdressing enables access to wealth by revealing that women, though brought into a household like objects, could have surprising access to that household’s wealth. What’s more, whatever power a woman might eke out of the system, the ultimate victor is the genderqueer crossdresser, not reduced by his feminine presentation but instead rewarded (albeit partially) for his cleverness. The crossdresser and the courtesan both understand the unlikely power of the trafficked bride and attempt, however unsuccessfully, to channel it for their own gains.

### *Epicoene*

In Ben Jonson’s play *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, first performed in 1609, the MTF crossdressed character is a boy, not a man, and is trafficked himself, even though he is male.<sup>19</sup> Because Epicoene does not stand to gain from his own trafficking in the same way that an heir would, he offers the most complex model for how, and why, a bride might use her position in a for-profit marriage to her own advantage. Further, Epicoene demonstrates why, for the purposes of inheritance, kinship relations, and economic gain, it might be especially advantageous to replace a cisgender bride with an MTF crossdressed one. Like *A Mad World My Masters*, this play’s basic plot is one of inheritance: in order to secure his inheritance from his uncle, Morose, who has a bizarre psychosomatic illness that makes any and all sound painful to him—except the sound of his own voice, the nephew Dauphine hires “Epicoene” to play the part of the impossible ideal, the silent woman.<sup>20</sup> The crossdressing boy, never given a name besides the grammatically queer “Epicoene,” is neither a cisgender woman, trafficked without her consent, nor a self-directed man, crossdressing for his own access to wealth and social gain.<sup>21</sup> As in *A Mad World, My Masters*, *Epicoene* creates a scenario in which inheritance by primogeniture is less immediate and appealing than inheritance through marriage, and in which crossdressing can help to mediate and control that marriage system. However, the fact that Dauphine hires and trains a boy to do the embodied and queer work of crossdressing, rather than crossdressing himself as Follywit did, marks a notable change in the device.<sup>22</sup> In part, Dauphine’s reluctance to crossdress initially confirms the standard idea that feminine presentation is degrading to men since he

outsources the job to an inferior. Dauphine's unwillingness to be trafficked even when it would give him access to his uncle's wealth reminds the audience that fantasies of subverting the marriage economy are contained within a very real world of commodification and objectification, in which playing the bride, whatever the gains, also comes with real risks. Rather than cross-dressing himself and taking part in revealing the fractures in the marriage market system, Dauphine becomes a participant by brokering Epicoene's body in place of his own. The traffic in women, rather than being dismantled by crossdressed subversion, seems to come full circle; though Epicoene holds a potentially libristory secret that could give him agency from within, his position is presented as ultimately too risky for men to take on willingly. Yet, as Jonson's play continues, the crossdressed Epicoene comes to have tremendous power over both husband and master. Having been trafficked, the boy who plays Epicoene holds in his hands both Morose's and Dauphine's financial and social fates. When the MTF crossdresser succeeds beyond even Dauphine's expectations, and then makes choices outside of his assignment, though, the play undercuts the stereotype about crossdressing by showing it yield unexpected gains.

However, why use a boy bride at all, instead of paying a cisgender woman to do the job? From the first act of the play, Jonson reveals the young heir Dauphine's very real anxiety that, because of his tenuous position of having to wait for his uncle's death, he may lose the inheritance altogether: "He will disinherit me, no more. He thinks I and my company are authors of all the ridiculous acts and monuments are told of him" (1.2). Dauphine further understands that the biggest threat to him is for his uncle to take a young bride and produce an heir. This is evident when Dauphine's friends insist that the laws of familial inheritance should protect Dauphine, exclaiming, "Disinherit thee! He cannot, man. Art not thou next of blood, his sister's son?" (1.2). In response, Dauphine clarifies the way in which the trafficking of a woman puts him at risk as a male heir: "Ay, but he will thrust me out of it, he vows, and marry." As Marjorie Swann puts it, "In his city comedy *Epicoene*, Ben Jonson explores how a protocapitalist marketplace could transform social relations predicated on lineal reproduction yet also maintain time-honored hierarchies of rank and gender."<sup>23</sup> Like Follywit before him, who would have lost his inheritance if Frank Gullman conceived, Dauphine understands that heirs are replaceable, especially with such a healthy market economy in young virgin brides. If one heir is displeasing (as Dauphine is, with his loud trickster friends), Morose can always pay for a new one, by using his wealth to secure a relationship with a suitable wife and new, legitimate, son.

The type of bride that Morose is seeking would bring with her not financial gain in the traditional dowry sense, but a particular virtue which is to him worth more than money: she will have to be entirely silent. Toward the end of finding a woman who, in exchange for her silence, can marry him, bear a new heir, and thereby stand to control Morose's wealth in Dauphine's stead, Morose has hired a barber/pimp named Cutbeard to seek out such a

bride. This barber, like Gullman's mother, becomes a financial middleman, making it obvious that marriage, sex, and inheritance are functioning in these texts like any other businesses, and that the marriage marketplace is so successful that it has created other, niche, profit-making trade careers in its wake.<sup>24</sup> Of Cutbeard's assignment from Morose, Dauphine's friend Clerimont reports that "He has employed a fellow this half-year all over England to hearken him out a dumb woman, be she of any form or quality, so she be able to bear children; her silence is dowry enough, he says" (1.2). This information about Morose's search for a bride highlights the misogyny inherent in a purely financially motivated marriage system; the bride's character and personality do not matter so long as she comes with the right assets (in this case the priceless characteristic of muteness in place of a monetary dowry) and the ability to bear a new male heir, one who can unseat Dauphine. By replacing a cisgender bride with an MTF crossdresser, Dauphine is able to block Morose's reproductive futurity and ensure that he remains the sole heir.

Perhaps because the protagonist himself is safely outside of the system, Jonson is able to depict a graphic and sexualized engagement scene, one that reveals the way in which the traded female is treated as property and examined as such. Having called for the silent woman, Morose instructs her not to speak, then examines her in detail. He says:

Very well done, Cutbeard. Give aside now a little, and leave me to examine her condition and aptitude to my affection [*Goes about her and views her.*] She is exceeding fair, and of a special good favor; a sweet composition, or harmony of limbs; her temper of beauty has the full height of my blood. The knave hath exceedingly well fitted me without; I will now try her within. (2.5)

Because of the play's double-narrative—one for audience members who know classical languages and therefore understand from her name that Epicoene is a crossdresser, and one for those who don't—these scenes take on layered meanings. For the audience that is clued in by Epicoene's gender-queer name, then the trick of crossdressing reveals Morose's examinations to be both foolish and ineffective rather than invasive and violating; the old man, not the bride, looks a fool. Part of the joke of the crossdressing in this moment is at Morose's expense, that his sexual desire for Epicoene is misdirected and unproductive. The body and temperament that have "the full height" of his blood, and which he would like to "try ... within" is full of secrets that he is unaware of, and offers neither the type of sexual pleasure that Morose has in mind nor the reproductive opportunities that he seeks.<sup>25</sup> By replacing the cisgender bride with an MTF crossdresser, Jonson suggests here that any kind of trafficked bride might, even in the most humiliating moments of objectification, keep secrets about her own bodies, her own reproductive capacities, and her own "true" identity—secrets that can help her to maintain identity even as she is treated like property. Being

anatomically male does not mean that Epicoene is entirely protected from Morose's intentions. His character is in a vulnerable position where he could be subjected to sexual or corrective violence. However, the play avoids those outcomes almost pointedly, celebrating Epicoene's crossdressing rather than punishing it. Unexpectedly, the play gives power to the crossdresser who uses his queer gender and feminine presentation as an armor or weapon rather than a weakness.

Morose needs this silent bride to control his heir, and the heir's plan depends upon that bride's disruptive presence in Morose's house. The power of Epicoene's performance can make or break Dauphine's fortune, save or ruin Morose's reputation. Perhaps surprising both the old husband and the trickster benefactor, the boy dressed as Epicoene takes control of the play in ways that reassert the potential powers of his position. Epicoene's powers within the marriage to Morose, each of which influences Dauphine's chances of inheriting, are revealed in three ways: First, exploiting the very concerns about reproduction and primogeniture which mobilized the marriage plot, Epicoene is prepared to cuckold "her" new husband, and has already established relationships with several other suitors willing to carry out extra-marital affairs. The bride's power to cuckold her husband, especially in an instance where producing a true heir is so critical, reveals one arena in which a trafficked woman, or even the boy who plays her, yields tremendous power. The second way in which Epicoene expresses power from within his place in the marriage is by giving up his silence. As soon as Epicoene and Morose are married, the new bride transforms not from woman back to boy, but from mute fiancée to shrewish wife. She asks Morose:

Why, did you think you had married a statue, or a motion only? One of the French puppets, with the eyes turned with a wire? Or some innocent out of the hospital, that would stand with her hands thus and a laice-mouth, and look upon you? (3.4)

By comparing himself to a series of objects, and by mocking Morose for imagining that he might treat his bride like any other beautiful home furnishing or foreign oddity, Epicoene makes a bold statement about trafficked women's roles within the household. What's more, Epicoene uses his position as wife to control Morose's household and turn it against him, telling Morose's servant, the aptly named Mute, "I'll have none of this coated, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a family where I govern" (3.4). The cross-dressed boy enacts a common early modern fear that a man can be fooled into marrying a shrew.<sup>26</sup> In fact, though Epicoene's behavior might be seen as a sign of masculinity, Morose, for one, sees it as a sign of Epicoene's deeply female nature. He calls her "a manifest woman!" because of her behavior, and begins a lengthy process of applying for divorce, not because his wife is a boy, but because the boy is such a convincing and intolerable woman.

These first two assertions power (cuckolding and taking control of the household) from the positioned of trafficked boy bride are successful

in undermining Morose, but the play makes it seem likely that the boy Epicoene is merely following orders to be disruptive. However, the third and final risk that Epicoene presents is one that neither Dauphine nor Morose can control. Crossdressed as a bride, Epicoene gains access to a community of married women, to their rituals and their secrets. Perhaps unwittingly, he taps into a closely guarded resource that is totally unavailable to those outside the system; a network of power brokered by the objects of traffic themselves. The women in the play have formed a society of husband haters, called the collegiates, and from there they observe Epicoene's progress as a wife. Once accepted among a community of women who think that he is female, Epicoene, the boy in a dress, the MTF crossdresser, the barren wife, becomes privy to the secrets of women and their reproductive bodies. Among the most guarded of the women-only discussions that Epicoene now joins is one about reproductive freedom and birth control. Epicoene asks, "And have you those excellent receipts, madam, to keep yourselves from bearing of children?" and Mistress Haughty replies, "O yes, Morose. How should we maintain our youth and beauty else?" (3.6).<sup>27</sup> Through Epicoene's question, the audience learns that cisgender women—just like MTF crossdressed boy brides—may have the means and resources to undermine their own trafficking. Mistress Haughty's interest in manipulating her reproductive capacities demonstrates the ways in which she engages in performing and creating her own femininity, much as Epicoene does. Also, her willingness to share this information with the newest wife in her circle reveals the ways in which groups of women, all trafficked from their father's homes to their husband's homes, can nevertheless create networks of information and support. Jonson's inclusion of the collegiates demonstrates another kind of access that Epicoene gains through feminine presentation, and further offers a connection between the crossdressed and cisgender trafficked brides, each using the tools available to her to manipulate her own market value and to find autonomy within married life.<sup>28</sup>

Dauphine's plot to use an MTF crossdresser as a pawn to control his uncle is successful. Totally broken by his marriage to a loud, disobedient woman, Morose is willing to sign his wealth away, telling Dauphine, "Make thine own conditions. My whole estate is thine. Manage it; I will become thy ward" (5.4), and signing a contract to provide Dauphine with a healthy annual allowance of five hundred pounds a year (about a third of Morose's total income) and guaranteeing that Dauphine will be his sole inheritor. In the final moments of the play, Dauphine takes credit for his big stunt by revealing the crossdressing plot he's engineered.<sup>29</sup> To his uncle, in front of an assembled crowd, he announces:

Then here is your release, Sir. [*Takes off Epicoene's peruke*] You have married a boy, a gentlemen's son that I have brought up this year at my great charges, and for this composition with I have just now made with you. (5.4)

Epicoene stands on stage, unwigged but still in his dress, no longer needed for Dauphine's success or Morose's investments, a trafficked object now stripped of trade value. The victory in the play is Dauphine's since he has tricked his uncle and secured his inheritance without even crossdressing himself. Yet, the play does not end with Dauphine's triumph, but rather with Epicoene's. Trafficked by an employer and a husband, a boy dressed as a woman who is traded among men, the former silent woman has the final power, if not the final words, in the play. Speaking to the assembled audience of shocked onlookers, and particularly to the lady collegiates who have shared their secrets with Epicoene, the character Truewit exclaims:

Madams, you are mute upon this new Metamorphosis! But here stands she that has vindicated your fames. Take heed of such insectae hereafter. And let it not trouble you that you have discovered any mysteries to this young gentleman ... we'll all undertake for his secrecy, that can speak so well of his silence. (5.4)

Thus, in the final moments of the play, power is restored to the trafficked body, and to the MTF crossdresser. Undervalued by men and over trusted by women, Epicoene is the centerpiece of the play, a female metamorphosed, a potential vindicator for women, a trustworthy gentleman, and, most powerfully and importantly, a holder of secrets. Among these secrets, is the secret of the subversive power of the trafficked object—a power informed by access to locked-away resources, household secrets, and the potential for change and revolution within, not outside, the trafficked position that is demonstrated by MTF crossdressers.

### “Phylotus and Emelia”

In Barnabe Riche's “Phylotus and Emelia,” a tale in his 1581 *Farewell to the Military Profession*, the incentives for crossdressing within the marriage economy are raised by a doublecrossdressing plot that not only redirects inheritance but also disrupts the kinship system by breaking the contract between a father and a groom to traffic the bride between them through marriage. The tale's argument summarizes the complicated plot:

Phylotus, an old and ancient citizen of Rome, falleth in love with Emelia, a young and beautiful virgin the daughter of Alberto, who, knowing the wonderful wealth of Phylotus, would have forced his daughter to marry him, but in the end was prettily deceived by Phylerno, the brother of Emelia, who married with Phylotus in his sister's stead, and other pretty actions that fell out by the way. (291)

Motivated by Phylotus's “wonderful wealth,” the father Alberto hopes to secure his own financial security by trafficking his virgin daughter,

Emelia, to Phylotus despite her refusal to give consent. Complicating the financial stakes, the story unfolds, the reader discovers that Phylotus's wealth is especially enticing because he has only one child, a daughter named Brisilla, who will probably be married off herself, and is therefore not a rival inheritor. Instead of crossdressing to protect his direct inheritance from Alberto, Phylerno, dressed as his sister Emelia, uses his temporary position as a woman and a wife to interrupt his father's work to create a financial bond with Phylotus by trafficking Emelia *and* to set himself, rather than his sister and her potential children, up as Phylotus' heir.<sup>30</sup> Phylerno and Emelia, are siblings, apparently identical but for their sex and therefore uniquely situated make a doublecrossed exchange of masculine and feminine. However, because of Riche's use of the marriage plot, the tale highlights an inequality that might otherwise be obscured by the equal-but-opposite emphasis of the standard doublecrossdressing plot. With their clothing and their genders crossed, the siblings are exchanged for one another, each filling the role that the other has abandoned. While this is initially beneficial to both, the swap is ultimately better for the brother, Phylerno, who is able to leverage his feminine presentation for quantitative gain, all without giving up the privilege of able to return to cisgender masculinity when he needs it. This double axis of power—controlling femininity for queer benefit *and* maintaining the safety net of masculinity is more that his sister can never acquire, despite borrowing his clothes.

It is clear that marital economies and gender are central to the “Phylotus and Emelia” story; Riche wastes no time in establishing a conventional marriage-for-money, traffic-in-women scenario. Never a passive observer in his role as narrator in his own stories, Riche shares his opinion about Emelia's arranged marriage, declaring that “Alberto, according to the custom of parents that desire to marry their daughters more for goods than for good will between the parties, more for lucre than for love, more for living than for learning, more for wealth than for wit, more for humor than for honesty, and so they may have great store of money, they never consider further of the man” (293). Riche's alliterative repetition in this passage again and again pairs a negative financial term with a positive romantic one.<sup>31</sup> In some ways, verbose judgment against fathers like Alberto who marry off their daughters for profit is a part of the conventional generic way of identifying this story as part of a tradition of didactic literature advising against the marriage of old men and young women. However, Riche's narrative intervention here refocuses the cause for concern, leveling disdain less on Phylotus and Emilia's mismatching as a Winter-Spring romance and more on the father Alberto's financial greediness and short-sighted fixation on financial gain over familial happiness. In his analysis of Alberto's mistake, Riche's primary concern is that Alberto's decision is driven by goods, lucre, living, wealth, and a “great store of money”; the author/narrator fixates on the negative elements of a trafficking system, securing the readers' allegiance to the unlucky bride.

Riche develops his point about Alberto's skewed priorities as he describes the way that Alberto tells his daughter about her fate. He narrates that "Alberto, respecting more the wealth of Phylotus than the liking of his daughter, gave his consent to take him for his son-in-law, and told Emelia how he had disposed of her" (294). Here, there is a very clear pattern of women as property, passed from one man to another to create a financial bond. By narrating about the interchange, rather than using dialogue, Riche renders Emelia's experience more passive. Riche again makes reference to Phylotus's wealth, and the idea that Emelia can be "disposed" of reveals her status as property. Further, when Emelia protests the match, Alberto's final answer is made in no uncertain *financial* terms. He asks her, "doth the tender love or the chargeable cost which I have bestowed on thee deserve no better recompense than to despise those that I would have thee to like of?" (294). In other words, Emelia is an investment already—Alberto has already invested in her (and here even his "tender love" is presented as a loan), and now deserves his recompense. Further, the social, personal and financial systems that allow this structure to function are clearly demonstrated by this father-daughter exchange. Not only can he dispose of her as he wishes, but Alberto has unlimited control over Emelia's future, and he warns her that, if she chooses not to marry Phylotus, she will be cut off financially: "look you go not about to contend against that which I have determined; if you do, never account me for father nor friend" (295).

Trapped in the position of being trafficked, already commodified and objectified, Riche's Emelia finds a way out of the system by crossdressing. Crossdressed as man, she uses the freedom afforded to men to make her escape; thus, Riche first introduces crossdressing in a female to male context, and as a strategy for getting away from, not into, Phylotus's wealthy household. Emelia "quickly shifted herself into a man's apparel, and thus forth of doors she goes to her appointed place where Flanius [her boyfriend] was staying." When Alberto and Phylotus comb the city looking for their property, that is, for Emelia in men's clothes, they catch Phylerno, and think that he *is* Emelia. Because Alberto thinks Phylerno is Emelia, he is undeterred by his masculine presentation and eventually encourages his son to dress in Emelia's actual clothes and, as a woman and a daughter, to fulfill "her" familial obligation by marrying Phylotus. Phylerno agrees and apologizes: "I know I have too far strayed from the limits and bounds of modesty, protesting hereafter so to govern myself that there shall be no sufficient cause whereby to accuse me of such unmaidenlike parts, and will remain with ... duty and obedience" (300). Emelia's act of crossdressing absolutely causes the domino effect of Phylerno's inverse disguise change—he literally has to wear the women's clothes that she steps out of when she steps into men's attire. In Riche's story, Hic Mulier's metaphor that there isn't enough feminine clothing to go around for both men and women is made manifest. Both the men's and the women's clothing must be filled, so that both sides of the equation are balanced.<sup>32</sup> Alberto's response upon catching his supposed

daughter reveals the ways that obedience is linked to economy in his world view. He says, “Stay, stay, most shameless and ungracious girl. Dost thou think that by thy disguising of thyself in this manner thou canst escape unknown to me, who am thy father? Ay, vile strumpet that thou art, what punishment is sufficient for the filthiness of thy fact?” (299). Because she has escaped, Emelia is portrayed as a whore (here echoing Rubin’s point about the link between a kinship system of trafficking and the trafficking associated with sex work) since in running away she has reduced her value as an obedient virgin by taking a lover and by making her body public by its exposure on the street.

When the father and groom capture the seeming runaway bride, and tell “her” that “she” needs to put on female clothes and prepare for her wedding, Phylerno could protest and reveal his true identity. However, he hears Phylotus list the financial gains of the wedding: “thou shalt be dame and mistress of all that ever I have, assuring thee that thou shall never want for gold, gems, jewels, such as be fit and convenient for thy degree” (299). As a young man, Phylerno is similar to Follywit and Dauphine in that he has no access to this kind of money, no matter what sorts of kinship bonds he has; he is dependent on waiting for an inheritance from his father, an inheritance that might fall through for any number of reasons.<sup>33</sup> In his sister’s role, Phylerno sees power and opportunity rather than entrapment. Thus, Phylerno willingly steps into the role that his sister fled, intentionally entering the female position in a gendered economy that uses him as a trade good. Not only does Phylerno submit himself, passing as a woman, to the arranged marriage, he also plays into stereotypic gender roles, promising modesty, duty and obedience to his potential husband and to his father. At the same time, as I discussed in Chapter 1, his submissive speech draws attention to his “unmaidenlike parts,” a pun on his biology that simultaneously reminds us that this is a different sort of bride and seems to say that Phylerno’s penis is only equivalent in unmaidenliness to his sister’s crossdressing escape, a minor and fixable detail. For the reader, knowing that Phylerno-as-Emelia is really a cisgender man brings the possibility of queer sex, gay marriage, and the anxiety around those options to the forefront of the text. However, Phylerno’s choice to enter himself into the market economy of women also indicates a different anxiety, that there might be strategies of control and agency from that inside, commodified position, that currency might have power and a life of its own, secrets that the money handlers can’t see, unmaidenlike bodies and desires lurking behind any marriage plan.

Once the brother-bride is delivered to his future husband’s house, but before the actual wedding takes place, Riche uses “Phylotus and Emelia” to explore just a few of the options that Phylerno-as-Emelia finds for resistance from within his trafficked position as a bought bride. Phylerno-as-Emelia is escorted to Phylotus’s house, where “she” will stay with Phylotus’s daughter Brisilla until the wedding. Alone with his soon to be husband’s daughter, Phylerno mounts an elaborate seduction.<sup>34</sup> Brisilla and the supposed Emelia

commiserate about the fact that they will each be married to old men who disgust them: completing the kinship circuit of traffic in women, Brisilla is to be married to Alberto, the two old men exchanging their young daughters as a mutually beneficial way to solidify their social and economic partnership. Angry, the two women—really Brisilla and Phylerno, though Brisilla thinks she is collaborating with another woman—plot to trick Phylotus out of his money. Like *Epicoene*, Phylerno's crossdressing gives him access to this secret world of female subversive action. They agree that "Emelia" will marry Phylotus, avoid sleeping with him by supplying him with a series of whores through bed tricks, and then live off "her" husband's wealth. In this way, Riche explores the idea that a bride, once trafficked into her new husband's household, can turn his loved ones against him, instigate insubordination, and even expose him to sexual humiliation and the risk of sexually transmitted disease (implied by Phylotus's exposure to the whores, whom Phylerno assumes to be diseased).<sup>35</sup> In these parts of the episode, Phylerno demonstrates an iteration of MTF crossdressing that is virile, attractive, and powerful. Rather than limiting his sexual attractions toward and access to a female lover, his crossdressing allows him to seduce her; rather than making him vulnerable to being "lubber-leaped" by Phylotus, crossdressing positions him to manipulate and even infect the widow. By replacing his sister in the marriage economy, Phylerno offers some ideas for subversive action by cisgender brides even as he reiterates the power and strategy, not humiliation, available to some MTF crossdressers.

As with *Epicoene*, "Phylotus and Emelia" ends with a wedding and reveal. Riche writes, "Alberto gave Phylerno his son in stead of his daughter Emelia to Phylotus for his wife" (305). The simplicity and syntax of this sentence is incredibly telling. Riche ventures no guess as to whether or not Alberto is aware that he is committing fraud; after an incredibly complicated series of plot developments, this unholy marriage, complete with male bride and a cuckolded husband, is described like any other business exchange involving a same-value replacement. Like any objects, Alberto's children are exchangeable. However, contrary to the general idea of traffic in women, a son might be trafficked in place of his sister, and that son might reveal the potential power of being a bride.

In the last pages of "Phylotus and Emelia," after a series of dramatic reveals, Riche resolves the uncomfortable marriage scene with a set of age and gender appropriate marriages (the real Emelia to Flanius, Phylerno to Brisilla). Riche tells us that when the "truth of everything came to light, all parties were well pleased and contented." However, the description of the double nuptials between Phylerno and Brisilla and Flanius and Emelia are only superficially satisfying. Riche tells us that Flanius happily marries Emelia, but only "when he knew she was no devil." More accurately, he was happy to marry her; once he was sure she was no man. Brisilla marries a man, but she was wooed by a woman and embraced by her father's wife, still in a dress. The doublecrossed plot here means that a marriage requires double

checking—there’s no guarantee that that the bride might not be “really” a man, or the groom “really” a bride. The double-ness of the wedding emphasizes this point, with brother and sister side by side and interchangeable, their paired bodies threatening another swap. In fact, no matter what outfits Phylerno and Emelia wear, their genders, having been doublecrossed, can never be fixed. Thus, even in the midst of the resolution, the issue of Phylerno’s crossdressing, and the fissures that that act revealed in the marriage system, remain unsettled.

In the end, because of his insertion into the gendered economy, Phylerno wins a double yield: he manages to inherit all of Phylotus’ wealth after all, by marrying his ultimate possession, his daughter. Unpunished, Phylerno uses the vehicle of marriage, the fact of being trafficked, to gain more than he ever could have by relying of the system of male inheritance. Where Follywit ends the *A Mad World, My Masters* somewhat diminished, having been out-tricked by his bride, fooled into marrying his own whore of a would-be-step-grandmother, and still dependent upon his grandfather’s good will for his inheritance, and where Dauphine ends *Epicoene* overshadowed by the success of the boy-bride he hired, Phylerno, in contrast, becomes the hero of his plot, winning an attractive bride who could double his inheritance if her father (once Phylerno’s husband) chooses to provide a dowry. In each case, the authors use MTF crossdressers to show that there is the potential for significant subversive agency and power in the position of trafficked bride, and, further, that queer feminine presentation can be advantageous, appealing, and even heroic.

### “Phylotus” Ballad

The exact sources for Riche’s “Phylotus and Emelia,” are unknown, but the narrative is certainly in conversation with an anonymous long poem or early play (the print editions are alternately identified as a treatise and a comedy) called “Ane verie excellent and delectable Treatise intituled PHILOTUS quhairwn we may persave the greit inconveniencies that fallis out in the marriage between age and zouth.” Where Riche’s 1581 edition is directed toward English and Irish gentlewomen, this 1603 edition is printed in Edinburgh and maintains Scottish slang, spellings and accents.<sup>36</sup> Not directed specifically toward women, this iteration of the “Phylotus and Emelia” story removes Emelia (here “Emily”) from the title entirely and replaces Riche’s interest in the emotional and economic complexities of arranged marriages with a more didactic goal of denouncing unequal marriages between old men and young women. The author goes so far as to include a didactic inscription on its title page, “Si qua voles apte nubere, nube pari,”<sup>37</sup> framing the story as one about unequal marriage, and not mentioning finances at all.<sup>38</sup> Yet, even as the Edinburgh author reframes the story to be a lesson on lechery more than economics, the narrative remains invested in the financial side of the marriage exchange. This is evident, for

example, in the way that Alberto explains the marital agreement he has arranged for Emily:

For thee a man I have foreweine,  
A man of might and wealth I meine,  
That staitlier may thee susteine  
Nor ony of all thy kin:  
A man of honour and renown,  
One of the Potents of the town:  
Ouhair name may beinlier sit down,  
This Citie all within. (stanza 45)

Here, the author captures the three primary driving forces of Lévi-Strauss's kinship system: Alberto hopes that his daughter will be well cared for, that their family will have greater access to wealth, and that Philotus's reputation will bring new social capital to the family. Driven by this triad of paternal concern, economic investment, and social mobility, Alberto goes so far as to threaten Emily with a year of imprisonment in a pit if she refuses the marriage (stanza 51).

The most notable difference between Riche's "Phylotus and Emelia" and this *Philotus* is the anonymous author's inclusion of a macrell, also called a pandrous—an old woman pimp whom Philotus hires to convince Emily to marry him. This older woman is a liminal figure in the story, just as she is in the system of trafficking that she is a part of. Though she is hired by Philotus, she also seems concerned with Emily's best interests. Like Middleton's Frank Gullman and her macrell mother, this Macrell understands that marriage, like sex, is often a business arrangement in which money and bodies are exchanged; again, prostitutes or panders help other characters to understand the value and power available in being trafficked, at least under certain conditions. Thus, rather than reinforcing the text's dominant idea that Philotus's offer is grotesque, the Macrell sees possibility for Emily in the arrangement, and tries to show the girl this perspective. The old woman begins to articulate the subversive possibilities available to a girl who is trafficked. She explains:

Well wer the woman all hir lyfe,  
Had hap to be his weddit wife,  
She might have gold and geir<sup>39</sup> as ryfe  
As Copper in her kilt:  
Yea not a Ladie in all this Land  
I wait nicht have mair wealth in hand,  
Nor nicht have more at her command,  
To doe with what she list. (stanza 12)

Though the Macrell rehearses the now-familiar convention of enticing a young would-be-bride with the material benefits of the proposed marriage,

she ultimately cannot convince Emily to marry Philotus. Emily tells the old man, “Ga seik ane partie of your peires/ For ye get nane of mee,” thereby making space for the crossdressing element of the plot (stanza 6). As the argument of the 1612 *Philotus* explains it, “*Philerno* the mayds brother laitlie arryved out of other countries, (being verie lyke her) is mistaken by her father & *Philotus* to be *Emelia*, who takes the person of his sister upon him: and after diverse threatenings of his father, consenteth to marrie *Philotus*.” The narrator’s word choice here blurs the differences between *Phylerno* and his sister; when *Philerno* disguises himself as his sister, he takes on not only her clothes but her “person.” He is so very like Emily that he *becomes* Emily, eventually consenting to marry *Philotus* because of the same paternal pressures. In this way, perhaps even more than in Riche’s telling, what *Philerno-as-Emelia* does to “her” husband is presented as something that Emily might have done, had she accepted the marriage.

If this is the case, perhaps it begins to explain the sudden turn at the very end of the *Philotus* poem, in which the narrator suddenly becomes fixated on *Philerno*’s sex. Using lewd humor to make light of the fairly serious problem of a man tricked into marrying a boy, the narrator lewdly reports:

Who ever saw in all their life,  
Two cappit<sup>40</sup> Cairles make such a stryfe,  
To take a young man for his wife,  
Yon cadgell wold be glaid:  
The fiend receive your feckles front,  
Put down thy hand and graip her cunt.  
The Carle kens not he is so blunt,  
If she be a man or maid. (stanza 96)

Where Riche’s narrative ends still focused on economic exchange, and on marital organization, this poem seems fixated on sex and bodies, wondering what sort of man would get married without first checking if the bride is man or maid. However, even here, the text bears traces of economic thinking. The Scottish word “feckles or “feckless” carries a double meaning, implying that *Philotus* has been weak, but simultaneously degrading his *value*.<sup>41</sup> In this way, even as the author appears primarily concerned with the crossdresser’s gender, he also figures the incident as an issue of unfair trade or bad business; in a system that traffics in people, *Philerno*’s crossdressing and queer gender make him a bad purchase that *Philotus* should have been savvy enough to discover. The following stanza confirms the author’s interest in how a MTF crossdresser complicates the financial and economic elements of an exchange:

Olde guckles<sup>42</sup> the mundie she is a gillie,  
She wantes a doue, but hes a pillie,

That will play thee a passe:  
 Put downe thy hand bane carle and grasp,  
 As they had wont to cheite the Paip,<sup>43</sup>  
 For thou hes gottem a jolie jaip  
 In Likenes of a Lasse. (stanza 97)

Still nominally (and comically) focused on the genital joke, even here the author maintains an interest in money matters. “For thou hes gottem a jolie jaip” puts the marriage in terms of what Philotus has gotten, and then defines Philerno’s trick as a “jaip,” a word that means both sexual intercourse, fraud, or, in this case, probably both.<sup>44</sup> Bawdier and more genitally obsessed than Riche’s story, *Mad World My Masters*, or *Epicoene*, the poem nevertheless concludes with the same results: when a man marries a crossdresser “in Likeness of a Lasse,” the joke is on the cisgender man, not the MTF crossdresser. In the economy of marriage, MTF crossdressing provides a mechanism to disrupt the exchange of wealth between old men, inserting trafficked women and crossdressers in the position of power.

## Conclusion

These four examples of men using women’s clothes to enter and manipulate the patriarchal system of exchange—*A Mad World, My Masters* and the two versions of the “Phylotus and Emelia” story—appear to offer, through the rebellious performances of men passing as women, glimpses of potential agency for all women inside the system. They demonstrate a toolkit for trafficked women, with methods of resistance that include collaborating with other women (strategically or sexually), outright theft, trading reproductive power for financial gain, taking advantage of cultural capital, and cuckoldry. In many ways, however, this reading risks minimizing the misogynist structures of marriage and kinship; each MTF crossdresser maintains his disguise for only a short period, and always has the option of disrobing when he really needs his privilege or when the situation becomes unpleasant or unmanageable. Obviously, actual female brides would not have this extra way out. In this way, while MTF crossdressers to model resistance in ways that any bride could access, they also showcase the particular benefits the come from being an MTF crossdresser in relation to a husband, a father, and the marriage market.

In 1975, Rubin wrote, “Marriage transactions—the gifts and materials which circulate in the ceremonies marking a marriage—are a rich source of data for determining exactly who has which rights in whom. It is not difficult to deduce from such transactions that in most cases women’s rights are considered more residual than those of men.”<sup>45</sup> If this is the case, I argue, might the circulating materials have something to say for themselves? Also, might not an already-transgressive figure, the MTF crossdresser, be uniquely poised to explore such a position? Writing for the collection *Transforming*

*Feminisms: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out* in 2006, MTF crossdresser Miqqi Alicia Gilbert considers the role of male crossdressers in the feminist movement. She writes:

I ask myself: if I do this thing, and if, as it seems, I have very little choice about doing it, then how can I incorporate it into my life in such a way that it becomes a vehicle of growth and knowledge? This has led me to exhort my cross-dressing sisters to explore beyond the limits of the erotic fantasy and fetishistic surface of cross-dressing, and use it as a means to better understand womanhood, the meanings of femininity and the importance of feminism.<sup>46</sup>

The crossdressers discussed in this chapter, Epicoene, Follywit, and Phylerno have varied degrees of choice about their crossdressing. Like Gilbert, they are governed by societal expectations of how they should act as men and assumptions about their motives for gender transgression. However, unexpectedly, these early modern crossdressers become a means to better understand the gendered world that they are a part of, and reveal a new approach to a very old theoretical paradigm of oppression. The fact that there are feminist or proto-feminist elements to these acts of crossdressing does not in any way minimize the global effects of a hegemonic system of organized oppression. However, the unusual lens of queer gender performance that Gilbert experiences today, and that Middleton, Riche, an anonymous poet, and Jonson present through their texts, allows for a new and potentially liberatory ending to an old story. Gilbert writes, of herself and other MTF crossdressers, “When we stop to think, when we take a look at the realities, then the difficulties, responsibilities and burdens of womanhood play their role in our psyches as well. That’s when you can become a feminist crossdresser.”<sup>47</sup> Follywit, Phylerno and Epicoene are likely not what Gilbert has in mind when she refers to feminist crossdressers. However, their very presence, disrupting the economic exchange of marriage in their textual worlds, reveals the artificiality, the constructedness and the fragility, of that system.

## Notes

1. Gayle Rubin, “Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210. Rubin articulates her case for the traffic in women in response to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), in which he argues that, within a gift-exchange kinship system between men, women are traded by men in just the same way as other objects of value. For a detailed description of Rubin’s vexed relationship with feminist theory, and her shifting research and activist priorities, see Judith Butler’s helpful essay “Against Proper Objects,” *differences* 6.2–3 (1994): 1–26; reprinted in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed

- and Naomi Schor, 1–30 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). See also Judith Butler and Gayle Rubin's interview about Rubin's career and work: "Interview: Sexual Traffic, in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.2 + 3 (1994). pp. 62–99. Rubin discusses her thinking about traffic in women in "The Trouble with Trafficking: Afterthoughts on 'The Traffic in Women,'" in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 66–86. I am especially interested in Rubin's comments on how her work might have differently engaged with trans\* identities, both in her interview with Butler and in her note, in *Deviations*, about "transgender behavior and individuals" in terms of sex/gender system categorizations (fn. 46, p. 286).
2. Perhaps the most notable recent example of feminist literary use of Rubin's idea is Maureen Quilligan, *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). The idea of "Traffic in Women has also been queered in productive ways: for example, in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that, just as the giving of a woman as a gift between two men creates a bond, so too does the shared erotic rivalry between two men competing over a single woman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
  3. Lorna Hudson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendships and Fictions of Women in 16<sup>th</sup> Century England* (New York, Routledge, 1997), p. 224.
  4. Sedgwick, 25.
  5. Rubin, 124; Rubin here is discussing the impossibility for women to leave the system in order to pursue lesbian relationships.
  6. Despite this play's rather far-fetched plot, confusing entanglement of subplots, and specific city comedy humor, it was enduringly popular: In the 1608 edition of the text (STC 17889), printed by Walter Burre, there are some inconsistencies which indicate that the text was at least partially revised; for example, in the third and fourth acts of the 1608 edition some characters' names are changed from the first three acts (for example, Penitent Brothel becomes Penitent Once-III). By the printing of the second quarto in 1640 (STC 17889), the title page claims that "it hath bin often Acted at the Private House in *Salisbury Court*, by her Majesties Servants," indicating that the play maintained or revived its popularity well into the seventeenth century. The play was also revived during the Restoration (c.1661) and later adapted for production in the eighteenth century (Frost, 3). All quotes are from *A Mad World, My Masters*. In *Thomas Middleton: A Mad World My Masters and Other Plays*. Michael Taylor, ed, 1–66. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.
  7. Though Harebrain here associates male jealousy with Italian temperaments, critics are quick to point out that an association between love and money was a particularly *English* literary trope in this period, and actually is one of the markers of Middleton's city comedies. Michael Taylor writes, "Often in these comedies the act of making money is a substitute for the act of making love; it may even, more perversely, actually become the act of making love" ("Introduction," *Thomas Middleton: A Mad World My Masters and Other Plays*. p. vii).
  8. "Stint" *OED* n1, def 4a, 7a. Interestingly, by the eighteenth century, "stint" is also used to describe the process of "putting a mare to stallion," another form of traffic in the female reproductive body for male profit (not the stallion's profit, in this case, but his owners') *OED* n1, def 3. As a verb, "stint" is associated with restrictive control.

9. Harebrain's exertion of control goes beyond his limits on his wife's bodily circulation and includes her intellectual development and her access to popular culture and community; as part of his restrictive measures against Mistress Harebrain, he removes all of her "wanton" literature, including "*Hero and Leander, Venus and Adonis*, oh two luscious mary-bone pies for a young married wife" (1.2.44–45).
10. Middleton further explores the system of generational inheritance by introducing two minor characters, Inesse and Possibility. These men, each an eldest son in his family, represent the two states of male inheritance: those who own their land "in esse" (in actual possession), and "in posse" (in anticipated possession).
11. For an interesting analysis of the legal elements of primogeniture as they affected early modern women, see Mary Murray, "Primogeniture, Patrilineage, and the Displacement of Women," in *Women, Property and the letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, eds. Nancy E. Wright, Margaret Ferguson, A.R. Buck (University of Toronto Press, 2004): 121–36.
12. Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, pp. 89–90. Fisher's reading is focused on Follywit's (lack of) beard, as a way of exploring whether boys could transform themselves into men.
13. Richard Horwich writes that, for Middleton, marriage (and sex) is "not an escape from the predatory marketplace, but a marketplace itself. See "Wives, Courtesans, and the Economics of Love in Jacobean City Comedies" *Comparative Drama*, 7.4 (Winter 1973–74): 291–309, p. 306.
14. For a discussion of Gullman's mother as a bawd, see Jennifer Panek, "The Mother as Bawd in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *A Mad World, My Masters*," *SEL*43.2 (Spring 2003), pp. 415–37.
15. David Cressy describes Follywit's crossdressing: "The satire [that is] cruel and amusing, skewering both gullible men and predatory women, but Follywit himself is unaffected by his temporary change of attire" (*Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 454). Toward the end of Follywit's transformation, Mawworm repeats Hoboy's concerns about the top half of Follywit's disguise. He asks, "But what shift will you make for your upper bodies, captain?" Follywit responds with a confounding piece of gender theory: "Why, the doublet serves as well as the best and is most in fashion. We're all male to th'middle, mankind from the beaver to th'bum. 'Tis an Amazonian time; you shall see women shortly tread their husbands" (3.3.87–91). Follywit's rhetoric here is a strange mix of misogyny and gender deconstruction, reminiscent of *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*. What does he mean, that we are "all male to th'middle," if not that men and women are, from the waist up, somehow the same. Yet, if the sexes are so similar, why would Follywit perceive the world to be on the verge of a gender war, in which manly wives turn against their husbands? Finally, why would Follywit present either of these positions as he stands, half crossdressed, on the verge of passing for female and using that appearance to "tread" on his grandfather? Follywit's analysis of gender may be rooted in the common early modern concern with increasingly masculine women's clothing and effeminate men's clothing, but his language here at once destabilizes his "real" gender, separates gender from the body, and anticipates a future of gender transgression and revolution.
16. In fact, the reason that Bounteous's property is not guarded from his whore is because he sees the whore *as* his property. Follywit is experiencing total

objectification here, but is also able to use his status as an object to his benefit. To Bounteous, the idea of his whore stealing his jewels must seem equivalent to his jewels stealing his clothing. Still, this marks a moment in which an MTF crossdresser is shocked by what he learns about female experience while he is passing for female.

17. Indeed, Bounteous's servant, Gunwater, tells Follywit-as-Gullman, "There stands a casket. I would my yearly revenue were but worth the wealth that's locked in't, lady; yet I have fifty pound a year, wench" (4.3.5–7). The vastness of Bounteous's treasure, so much more than a working man's annual wages, increases the stakes of this theft.
18. Leanore Lieblein, The Lessons of Feigning in 'A Mad World, My Masters,' in *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1977–78: 23–32.), p. 2.
19. Ari Friedlander discusses Dauphine's trick in terms of "cross-biting," in which a man and a woman work together to gain access to another man's wealth, in "Mastery, Masculinity, and Sexual Cozening in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*." *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 53.2 (Spring 2013): 379–99. Jenny C. Mann reads *Epicoene*'s crossdressing in terms of rhetoric in "The 'Figure of Exchange': Shakespeare's 'Master Mistress,' Jonson's *Epicene*, and the English Art of Rhetoric." *Renaissance Drama* 38 (2010): 173–98.
20. The idea of hiring a MTF boy crossdresser to play an idealized bride is briefly staged in Shakespeare's Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, though that crossdressed page is less fully developed, and, ultimately, less autonomous, than *Epicoene*.
21. By calling *Epicoene* a "boy" here, rather than a man, I am attempting to make a distinction between the meanings of boyhood and manhood in crossdressing. Many of the MTF crossdressers in early modern texts, and all of the crossdressers discussed in this chapter, are young men, poised at the cusp between adolescence and adulthood; this explains why they pass for women with such ease since they are slender and have little facial hair. This calls into question the kinds of genders involved in each act of crossdressing, since boys (like *Epicoene* here) were often considered as similar to women, in that both were not-yet-men. For some discussions on the category "boy" in early modern culture, see Jeffrey Masten, "Editing Boys: The Performance of Gender in Print," in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (New York: Palgrave, 2006): 113–34; David Kathman, "How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?," *Shakespeare Survey*, 28 (2005), 220–46. Lisa Jardine, "Boy Actors, Female Roles, and Elizabethan Eroticism," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 57–67; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Scott McMillan suggests that boy actors were trained through partnership with adult male leads in romance scenes where the boys played women ("The Sharer and his Boy: Rehearsing Shakespeare's Women," in *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Jennifer Low points out the distinctions between crossdressing roles in plays performed by boy's companies and men's companies, and argues that "In the face of the popularity

of boys' companies, I suggest that playwrights for adult companies may have hoped to provide similar pleasures of amusement and sophistication by including one or more crossdressed heroines among their plot complications" (Jennifer A. Low, "Early modern Audiences and the Pleasure of Cross-dressed Characters *Poetics Today* 35:4 (Winter 2014), p. 575).

For a discussion of boy actors, as they specifically influenced Jonson's *Epicoene*, see Blaine Greteman, "Coming of Age on Stage: Jonson's *Epicoene* and the Politics of Childhood in Early Stuart England" in *ELH* 79.1 (2012), p. 135–60, Richard Barbour, "'When I Acted Young Antinous': Boy Actors and the Erotics of Jonsonian Theater," *PMLA* 110 (1995), pp. 1006–22; and Edel Lamb, "Becoming Men: The Child Player in Jonson's *Epicoene*." *Ben Jonson Journal: Literary Contexts in the Age of Elizabeth, James and Charles* 15.2 (2008), p. 175–93. In "Female Spectators and the Erotics of the Diminutive in *Epicoene* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," (*Renaissance Drama*, v. 42, n. 1 (Spring 2014), pp. 1–28), Valerie Billing makes an argument for a queer erotics of smallness centered around the figure of the boy in the play. From the perspective of MTF crossdressing, then, is the case of a boy, rather than man, crossdresser, really so queer? In the cases of Phylerno and Follywit, I maintain that the crossdressers are men, albeit young men, because of their virility, their proximity to marriage, and their engagement in adult society. By this logic, then, *Epicoene* is more boy than man, and this plays into the ways that he is doubly trafficked, by his master *and* his husband.

22. Interestingly, this device enabled Jonson to write a unique and uniquely queer role for his the boy actor who played *Epicoene*, his apprentice Nathan Field. For evidence that Field played *Epicoene*, see Lorraine Helms, "Roaring Girls and Silent Women: The Politics of Androgyny on the Jacobean Stage," *Women in Theatre*, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
23. Marjorie Swann, "Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*. 38, no. 2, (Spring 1998) p. 297–298. Indeed, *Epicoene*'s act of gender transgression calls into question the entire marketplace system, as well as its players. For further analysis of the impact of the emerging English market economy on this play, see Karen Newman, "City Talk: Women and Commodification in Jonson's *Epicoene*," *ELH*, 56, No. 3, (Autumn 1989), pp. 503–18.
24. For some of the sexual connotations of barbering (and barbaray), including associations with castration, circumcision, and sodomy, see Patricia Parker, "Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics," in *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 33 (2004), pp. 201–44. Also, it is relevant here that many of the boys involved in the sex trade were boy actors, already perceived as sexually available because of their performances on stage. One certainly sees an association of barbers and boys in *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, with all of its jokes about cures for STDs and the treatments available in Barbarossa's cave.
25. An alternate reading of this scene would be that Morose does recognize *Epicoene*'s masculinity, and that part of this joke is about the old man's homosexual tendencies and perversity. While this possibility is certainly supported by the text (why, if he was after a female lover, would Morose hire a barber, if barbers were known to traffic in boys?), I think that Jonson uses this scene of humiliation to build the audience's empathy for *Epicoene* and to encourage disdain toward Morose. Also, for the purposes of my argument here, it matters that *Epicoene*

can pass for female because his experience is, in many ways, a way of talking about what a female trafficked bride might go through. By creating such a convincing boy-bride, and by making the boy's circumstances so close to a girl's, Jonson stands to make a more profound statement about women's places within the trafficking system.

26. For a discussion of the punishments for husbands with shrewish wives, see Chapter 4.
27. Mistress Haughty calls Epicoene "Morose" in the collegiate convention of referring to one another by surnames—since Epicoene is already married to Morose, she takes his last name.
28. See Luce Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together" (1981), where she asks, "But what if the *goods* refused to go to market? What if they maintained among themselves another kind of trade?"
29. There is a key difference between the ending of *Epicoene* and the other texts examined in this chapter: Dauphine, the heir, does not get married at the play's conclusion. Mary Beth Rose claims that, through his tricks against Morose, and by allowing Epicoene to marry the old man, Dauphine "has travestied and undone marriage"; *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), p. 63.
30. On the names in this text, see Andrew Hadfield, "The Name 'Philautus': Barnaby Rich and John Lyly." *Notes and Queries* 48.3 (2001).
31. For a discussion of Riche's attitudes toward marriage in general, and his own marriage in particular, see Paul Jorgensen, "Barnaby Rich: Soldierly Suitor and Honest Critic of Women," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1956), pp. 183–88 and Bernard Capp, "The Marital Woes of Barnaby Rich." *Notes and Queries* 47.4 (2000): 469–70.
32. As it turns out, as in *The Faerie Queene* and *May Day*, this perfect exchange of gender is ultimately unsustainable: the balance in the world of the text is destroyed when Emelia, still in hiding, takes off her men's clothing, creating a scenario in which both Emelia and Phylerno are wearing women's clothing at the same time. This overload of femininity, unbalanced by reciprocal masculinity, is the ultimate cause of the unraveling of both disguises.
33. Among these reasons is Phylerno's unexplained absence from his father's household. That Alberto cannot recognize his own son—and that the son has been so distant as to know his father only by name—does not bode well for Phylerno's chances as an heir.
34. I discuss the elaborate sex-change climax of this seduction in Chapter 1.
35. Even though the reader understands that Phylerno is a man, none of these actions are specific to men, and the text implies that a cisgender female bride in Phylerno's position might also undertake them. Further, as a man acting from outside Phylotus's household, Phylerno would not have had the access needed to manage such a diabolical plot.
36. Philotus, STC 19888 (1603); STC 19889 (1612).
37. "If thou wouldst marry wisely, marry thine equal"; Ovid, *Heroides*, IX 32; in *Heroides*. The "equality" mentioned in this passage (from Deinara to Hercules) is about heroism, not age or wealth. Thanks to Sara Lindheim for this point.
38. Though the 1612 4th edition of the "comedy" Philotus includes a summative argument that insists that Alberto was "blinded by the man's wealth," the majority of the argument situates Philotus (here the titular character) as a villain with

- unnatural desires; though he uses his wealth as a tool for his perversion—even hiring a “macrell” to aid him in the seduction, it is the father, as much as, or more than, the potential husband, who is to blame for Emily’s unfair treatment, and the lesson is therefore skewed away from Philotus’s unnatural desire for a woman his daughter’s age and more toward Alberto’s immoral parental involvement in trading his daughter for financial and social capital.
39. “Geir” here is an alternate spelling for “gear,” specifically referring to possessions, wealth, or property (*OED*, “gear,” n. def, 3b).
  40. “Cappit” here seems to be a spelling of “capped,” which can mean, literally, a person wearing a cap (often a friar or military man). “Capped” can also mean puzzled, surprised, or confused, as it likely does in this context (*OED*, “cap” v. def. 4b, or “capped, capt” ppl. a., def. 5). The verb “to cap” can imply a game of one-upmanship or competition, in which one player “caps” the other in a game (*OED*, “cap” v. def.5).
  41. *OED*, feckless, adj. def. 1.
  42. To “gucke” is to play the fool (*OED*, “guck,” v., def. 1).
  43. A “paip” is a game played with a fruit pit, or pip (*OED*, “paip,” n., def 2); Also, of special reference to the card reference “put down thy hand” in the preceding line, a “pip” can be the dot or symbol on a playing card, die, or domino (*OED*, “pip,” n3, def. 1).
  44. *OED*, jape, n., def 1b, 1c.
  45. Rubin, p. 119.
  46. Gilbert, “The Feminist Cross-Dresser,” in *Transforming Feminisms: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out*, ed. Krista Scott-Dixon (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006), p. 106–07.
  47. *Ibid*, p. 111.

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### 3 Crossdressing and Queer Heterosexuality

#### *Arcadia, Urania, Isle of the Gulls, and “Sport Upon Sport”*

In the first two chapters of this book, I explore the figures of male characters who dress as and pass for women in terms of their effect on a sex/gender system and their place in the patriarchal marriage economy. In this chapter and the next, I turn to perhaps the most charged aspect of representing male-to-female (MTF) crossdressers: how desire, sexuality, and sex are represented in the queer context of crossdressing. While the MTF crossdressers I discuss here are still very much in relationship with large-scale systems of power, these chapters turn to a more intimate kind of relationship, a queer dyad. Judith Butler describes the imbrication of gender and desire: “Although being a certain gender does not imply that one will desire a certain way, there is nevertheless a desire that is constitutive of gender itself and, as a result, no quick or easy way to separate the life of gender from the life of desire.”<sup>1</sup> While crossdressed, MTF characters become subjects of the erotic gaze from both men and women and participate in sexual encounters that are technically heterosexual/opposite sex (between a man and a woman), visually homosexual/same sex (between two seeming women), and undeniably queer and grounded in a queer heterosexuality. Moments of desire and sexual encounters in early modern texts representing MTF crossdressing offer a unique opportunity to explore the overlap and interplay of sex, gender, and desire in the early modern imagination. In this chapter, I address this issue through the idea of “queer heterosexuality” in instances of romantic and sexual contact between a MTF crossdressed characters and their lovers; in Chapter 4, I address it through a discussion of “gender labor,” wherein romantic partners co-create their MTF crossdressed lover’s gender.

Through the imagined bodies of crossdressed male characters, authors and artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were able to find a means of investigating the erotic complexities of queer (and even kinky<sup>2</sup>) desire; conversely, through these same scenes contemporary scholars and readers have an opportunity to explore the possible applications of queer, trans, and genderqueer theory in our early modern work. This intervention is not the first time a critic has considered moments of crossdressed sexuality as potentially queer.<sup>3</sup> Readers of texts that present sustained

and eroticized crossdressing may be familiar with readings of certain textual moments as homoerotic (a seeming woman kissing a cisgender woman; a woman who is “really” a man kissing another man) and of other moments as apparently heteroerotic (even though the scene appears to be two women embracing, we “know” that one is a man). Yet few critics have examined the possibility that crossdressing has an erotics of its own, a queer heterosexuality that is separate from same-sex or opposite-sex desire, encompassing *and* excluding both. Tracey Sedinger describes this sort of erotics as “not of the *beyond*-representation (an essentialist thesis), nor of the *produced-by*-representation (a social-constructionist thesis), but of the *failure of* representation.”<sup>4</sup> That is, the erotic charge of these moments is about neither the body nor the dress, but rather their disruptive genderqueer combination, which resists representation and identification.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it is to be expected that authors of texts dealing with MTF crossdressers would want or need to take on the question of these characters’ sexual acts and desires: one major cultural and textual anxiety about both early modern and modern crossdressers is that their sexuality, like their gender presentation, is ambiguous or unknown. However, my reading of texts and images representing crossdressed erotic encounters reveals, an equal or greater representational interest in the nature of the crossdressers’ sexual partners’ desire: that is, in the attractions of the cisgender partners (usually women) who are seduced by, or who seduce, MTF crossdressers. In this chapter, therefore, I focus on instances in which MTF crossdressed characters are involved in sexual or erotic exchanges with normatively gendered female characters, with a special attention to the rhetorical, emotional, and erotic ways that the cisgender females respond to and interact with their MTF crossdressed lovers. The cisgender lovers are not simply attracted to the man beneath the dress or to the woman presented by the dress. Instead, they are depicted as being attracted to the very queerness of the entire gender presented to them—attracted to the idea and the appeal of a genderqueer individual.<sup>6</sup> I begin this inquiry with an analysis of paintings by Anthony van Dyck (*Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis*, 1631–32), Bartholomeus Breenbergh (*Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath*, 1635), and Dirck van der Lisse (*Blind Man’s Buff*, 1635), each of which depicts a “kissing war” scene from Giovanni Battista Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido*, with an MTF crossdresser as the primary kissing subject. From this visual representation of queer heterosexuality, I move on to examples from two early modern English prose romances, Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (published in 1590, revised by Mary Sidney Herbert in 1593) and his niece Lady Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621). Finally, I turn to shorter examples from drama (John Day’s 1606 play *Isle of the Gulls*), cheap print (the 1685 ballad “Sport upon Sport: OR, *The Man in the S*—. Being a true Relation

of a Pleasant Fellow that in the attire of a Woman lay with Several Maids, and got them with Child”), and poetry (Thomas Carew’s “A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon,” printed in 1651). In each of these instances, the queered desire that female characters feel toward MTF crossdressers is *because* of, not in spite of, their gender presentation, and, furthermore, that each cisgender partner’s desire may be the “queerest” part of these cross-dressed sexual encounters. By locating the site of desire in a crossdressed character’s gender—specifically in his/her/their queer gender, as opposed to in his/her/their sex—these scenes offer a different kind of erotic vocabulary, one rarely used to describe early modern subjects. This vocabulary is neither gay nor straight but distinctly queer and plural: it is what Sara Ahmed might call a sexual disorientation toward a queer object.<sup>7</sup>

### *Il Pastor Fido* and Mirtillo’s Kissing War

The crux of the queerness in MTF crossdressing narratives is the disjuncture between how things look or seem (gender) and how they are on an essential level (sex). This crucial disjuncture is especially evident in visual and staged representations of a single scene of early modern queer heterosexualities in action. The scene in question is the “kissing war” that takes place in Giovanni Battista Guarini’s late sixteenth-century Italian pastoral tragicomedy, *Il Pastor Fido*, and in several English translations of that play.<sup>8</sup> In this play, Mirtillo, a male lover, disguises himself as a shepherdess in order to be nearer to his love, Amarillis. When Amarillis’s attendant shepherdesses suggest a sexually charged kissing competition, the disguised Mirtillo wins the game by delivering the best kiss to Amarillis and is crowned the victor. In the anonymous 1602 translation of this play, Mirtillo describes the winning kiss: “Knowing my deed was theft and deceit, / I feared the majestie of her faire face. / But she assures me with a pleasing smile, / And puts me forward more.”<sup>9</sup> Mirtillo’s crossdressed kiss, and the kissing war of which it was a part, became a popular trope for early modern painters and translators. In *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, Valerie Traub uses painted renditions of this scene to propose that, although Mirtillo’s victory would “seem to confirm the status of men as superior lovers,” the background of an “all-female kissing war” means that any semblance of heterosexuality in this moment is propped up by “the performance of a prior and idyllic homoeroticism.”<sup>10</sup> Traub argues, convincingly, that the technical heterosexuality of this scene is, at best, a cover for its lesbian subtext. In the background of the scene, women kiss women with no male interference; in the foreground, Mirtillo is still in drag and appears as female as any of the other players in the kissing game. In her analysis of Van Dyck’s painting of the crowning scene, *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis*, Traub asks, “How *hetero* is Amarillis’s desire if, in the prehistory of the painting and

more explicitly in the play, she has believed this fabulous kisser to be a woman?”<sup>11</sup> Traub sees a scene like this one, or the one in John Lyly’s *Gallathea*, as making lesbian desire visible even while reinforcing its technical impossibility.<sup>12</sup> Because Mirtillo is “really” a man, the audience can look at a stage or painting full of women kissing without having queer guilt or having to acknowledge that lesbian desire is at play. I would, however, like to take Traub’s argument a step further by suggesting that the impossible desire enacted in the scene is not only lesbian (and thus, by definition, in opposition to heterosexuality), but also more broadly and radically *queer*. That is, when Mirtillo kisses Amarillis against the backdrop of kissing shepherdesses, the erotic charge of the moment is not despite his crossdressing (because it is a lesbian scene), but because of it (because it is queer). Amarillis’s desire, and our desiring gaze as readers, audience members, and viewers of art, is neither toward a straight man nor a lesbian woman, but toward a man in a dress.<sup>13</sup>

The eroticism of this scene, and others like it, is neither female-to-male nor female-to-female. The desire is female-to-male-to-female, heterosexual and not, and the queerness of the moment concerns how impossible gender, sex, and representations of gender and sex are to decipher, as well as how sexy their confusion can be. Writing on the topic of transgender and gender variant subjects in film in *In a Queer Time and Place*, Judith Halberstam describes the paradox of trans representation in cinema that is also at work in all of these images:

The transgender film confronts powerfully the way that transgenerism is constituted as a paradox made up in equal parts of visibility and temporality: whenever the transgender character is seen to be transgendered, then he/she is both failing to pass and threatening to expose a rupture between the distinct temporal registers of past, present, and future. The exposure of a trans character whom the audience has already accepted as male or female causes the audience to reorient themselves in relation to the film’s past in order to see the film’s present and prepare themselves for the film’s future. When we “see” the transgender character, then, we are actually seeing cinematic time’s sleight of hand.<sup>14</sup>

Where Halberstam’s assessment equates the problems of visibility and temporality with vulnerability and danger (as they certainly are in the book’s example of *Boys Don’t Cry*), it elides the potential for pleasure, recognition, or interest that comes with “knowing” and “seeing.” In the case of queer heterosexuality, as it is deployed in paintings of Amarillis and Mirtillo, part of the enjoyment (of both the painting and the sexual activities it depicts) comes from the recognition of that same “sleight of hand.”



Figure 3.1 Anthony Van Dyck, *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis*, 1631–32, oil on canvas, by permission of the Graft von Schönborn Collection, Wiesentheid, Germany.

According to Traub's reading of Van Dyck's *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* (Figure 3.1), the visual hierarchy of the painting's composition privileges the cisgender male/female (technically heterosexual) couple at the center of the group, Amarillis and Mirtillo, through placement, lighting, and the gesture of the racialized black nymph at the left of the image.<sup>15</sup> Of this nymph, Traub writes, "Her left hand, grasping the palm of a nymph still engaged in kissing, links her to the circuit of female erotic contact even as she points to the reason for its interruption."<sup>16</sup> In a queer heterosexual reading of this image, though, the nymph's attention indicates simultaneous disruption *and* continuity, highlighting the ways in which the image is playing with gender codes and passing.

On the one hand, Mirtillo does "pass" in this image; true to the play, he is still crossdressed in the painting, and he looks androgynous enough to pass as female even at the moment of his kiss. His face and exposed body are hairless and smooth, mimetically echoing the pale white faces and limbs of the many women around him. Mirtillo is muscular, but not more so than some of the cavorting female kissers (like the pair in the bottom right corner,

who are featured on the cover of *Renaissance of Lesbianism*) or the gesturing nymph, all cisgender females, who surround him. Part of his chest is exposed, but not enough to reveal a nipple or a breast.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, rather than interrupting the female-female erotics that surround them, Mirtillo and Amarillis appear to complete the circuit. On the other hand, though, the painting resists this single-sex reading, which depends upon Mirtillo completely passing for female. Part of the image's charge comes from the ways in which Mirtillo's gender *is* disruptive, despite the ways he passes. Mirtillo's muscular arm and bare chest—his almost but not-quite exposed breast—are at the center of the image. He crowns Amarillis in an active manner often associated with male, rather than female, lovers, and his skirt is raised high, exposing his thigh and hinting at further exposure. Even the painting's title, which calls Mirtillo by his male name, resists his complete passing. In other words, the painting simultaneously allows Mirtillo to pass for female *and* resists that reading with a more genderqueer presentation.

When Amarillis turns away from the maiden who leans on her leg and toward the winner of the kissing contest, she is not choosing a heterosexual partner, or even a homosexual/lesbian partner; rather, she is choosing a partner whose gender is queer—visually, physically, and theoretically. Thus, the picture is less a lesbian scene than a queerly heterosexual one. In the kissing war, Amarillis (and, by extension, the lusty reading and viewing audience that understands Mirtillo's disguise) desires not just a man or a woman but a male body passing (and, simultaneously, queerly failing to pass) as female. The MTF crossdresser is not attractive because of the male body beneath his clothes, nor is he attractive because of his female clothing alone; he is attractive because of the queer combination of the two.

In *Il Pastor Fido*, Mirtillo's description of the kiss demonstrates the act's genderqueer erotic dynamic:

Kissing, I tasted there the honey sweet,  
 But having kist, I felt the lovely Bee  
 Strike through my hart with his sharp piercing sting,  
 And being wounded thus, halfe desperate,  
 I thought t'have bitten those manslaughter'ring lips,  
 But that her odoriferous breath like aire divine,  
 Waken'd my modestie and still my rage. (E2r-v)

Through the kiss, Mirtillo, who is already marked as feminine by his crossdressing and, more generally, by the traditionally effeminizing process of falling in love, takes on a mostly passive role (he only thinks about “bit[ing] those manslaughter'ring lips”) as he is penetrated by the sting of Amarillis's lips. These lips are “manslaughter'ring,” and, through kissing, Mirtillo is increasingly unmanned (indeed, he is slaughtered), increasingly ambiguous, and increasingly a blend of his sex and performed gender. Breathing Amarillis's “aire divine,” Mirtillo feels emotions traditionally associated with both male and female lovers: aggressive rage tempered by virginal modesty. In the

texts and in the Van Dyck image, Mirtillo's gender is an integral part of his sexual encounter: part of how he feels in his arousal and part of what makes him appealing as a sexual partner.

Whereas Van Dyck's crossdressed Mirtillo is somewhat ambiguous, in paintings by Breenbergh and van der Lisse, the Mirtillo character initially appears to pass so thoroughly for female that he is interchangeable with Amarillis.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 3.2 Bartholomeus Breenbergh, *Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath*, 1635, oil on canvas. By permission of The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham.

In Breenbergh's *Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath* (Figure 3.2), one titular character is crowning the other on the middle left of the visual field, while a presumably female-female couple is kissing in the foreground to the right. The kissing women at the right remind the viewer that the formal crowning to the left is part of an erotically charged event and suggest that Mirtillo and Amarillis are headed toward an equally amorous embrace. Without the painting's title, there would be no way to know if Mirtillo is crowning Amarillis or the opposite; more confusingly, without the title it would be difficult to know that one of the lovers is cisgender male. Yet careful viewers might see a small Adam's apple on Mirtillo's throat;<sup>19</sup> furthermore, the painting is titled, and the United Kingdom Museums' online archive goes so far as to include a short description of the Mirtillo story to be sure that viewers understand what they are seeing.<sup>20</sup> The artist, along with subsequent viewers and collectors, highlights the fact that this is a queer

image: there is more to the painting than what can be seen from the surface. Clearly, this already-erotic painting is considered to be kinkier, sexier, and more interesting to viewers if it hints at the fact of MTF crossdressing.

Such is also the case with van der Lisse's interpretation of the story, *Blind Man's Buff* (Figure 3.3),<sup>21</sup> in which neither the title nor the image reveals Mirtillo's biological sex.



Figure 3.3 Dirck van der Lisse, *Blind Man's Buff*, 1635, oil on canvas, 120 × 140 cm, by permission of Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg; photograph by Jörg P. Anders.

In this image, Mirtillo, apparently the central blindfolded figure, is the focus of attention for viewers within and outside the painting; his/her/their costume and posture are identical to those of the other, presumably cisgender, female players in the kissing war. The painted image maintains a certain ambiguity, even as archival tradition has attempted to “correct” Mirtillo’s ability to pass for a woman in the visual text by describing its context and outing the MTF element of the visual plot. Though Mirtillo is the focus of the game in the painting, the rapt attention with which his audience gazes at him reiterates and intensifies our own curious gaze at his hidden body and stylized wardrobe. Blindfolded, he cannot see his audience, but we viewers are as caught up as they are in the erotic scopophilia of watching an

encounter that is queer (between two women), then heterosexual (between one male and one female), and then queer nevertheless (between queerly heterosexual individuals). For viewers who know Mirtillo's story, part of our viewing experience is that we cannot know with any certainty where the male body is in the image, although we are assured that it is there. The known-unknown of the encounter heightens our interest and engagement. Because there is a disjuncture between what we can see and what we can know about the painting, Mirtillo and Amarillis are simultaneously so much alike in costume, build, and posture—visually twinned or interchangeable—and entirely different from one another. Thus, the scene is queered because of both its lesbian undertones and the queered heterosexuality that viewers know to be beneath the surface.

The text of *Il Pastor Fido* picks up on the erotics of watching and of the known-unknown in the moment in which the kissing war is won. As in the paintings, the audience of kissing-game players is rapt, with all eyes focused on the couple: "Ev'ry one / With heedful minds the sentence did attend" (E2v). In this part of the play, Mirtillo recalls the moment of crowning and explains how Amarillis first crowned him and then, at his praiseful urging, crowned herself:

Yet had I power to take the garland off,  
And reach it her, saying to you belongs  
Alone the same. 'Tis due to you, that made  
Mine good, by virtue of your mouth.  
She gently took't and crownd her selfe therewith.  
And with another that she ware crownd mine. (E2v)

The sexually charged exchange of the single symbolic garland, a prize that equally suits either of the interchangeable lovers, plays on the scopophilic experience of watching two seeming women engage in erotic play (even the circular wreath is somewhat yonic). Yet the scene is especially queer not because of its lesbian undertones but because of the confusing sort of heterosexuality that viewers know to be beneath its surface. When Mirtillo describes the garland scene to his friend Ergasto, Ergasto brings the bodies beneath the clothing back to the forefront, reminding the audience that the scene is neither conventionally straight nor conventionally lesbian, but rather somewhere outside the two. Ergasto says, "That werst another *Tantalus* in loves delights, / That of a sport torment true didst make. / Thou pai'st too deare for thy stolne delicates. / But did she ere perceive thy policies?" (E2v). This friend's response mirrors the experience of voyeuristic readers of the text or viewers of the paintings: to a certain extent, we are caught up in the female-female romance of Amarillis and Mirtillo, but, at the same time, Mirtillo's true "policies," and the question of whether or not Amarillis can "perceive" them, are always on our mind. Though Ergasto is invested in hearing the entire story in all of its detail, his listening experience is informed by and related to his interest in how the "policy" of crossdressing affects the

rest of the story. For Ergasto, and, by extension, for the reader who follows Ergasto's line of logic, the fact of crossdressing colors the entire erotic scene, rendering Mirtillo's heterosexual conquest lesbian and his lesbian moment crossdressed and queer.

The *Il Pastor Fido* plot of Mirtillo and Amarillis is especially well suited to ambiguously queer artistic representations because the story's cross-dresser is located in a pastoral, otherworldly space, and perhaps even a pseudoclassical past. By stepping outside of current fashion standards (togas instead of dresses, garlands instead of hats), both textual and visual romances already offer unconventional gender markers and performances, all rendered through an attractive, otherworldly haze of amplified romance beauty standards. Thus, the genres of romance and of pastoral drama and painting create an ideal environment for authors and artists to deploy their visions of erotic crossdressing, and their depictions of these queer moments become voyeuristic opportunities for early modern readers and viewers. It makes sense, therefore, that some of the richest moments of sexual tension and MTF crossdressing are represented in the distinctly Renaissance form of romance, particularly in Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and, a generation later, in Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Romances prove to be perfect vehicles for explorations of crossdressed desire because themes of disguise and passing are so foundational to the genre. Furthermore, romances allow authors and readers alike to maintain a safe distance from explorations of crossdressed sexuality, which are situated in fictional worlds and involve heroic and hyperbolic characters. In prose and not intended for the stage (although Sidney's romance is later staged in Day's *Isle of the Gulls*), romances allow readers to imagine sex and gender presentation in as abstract or specific a way as they prefer; passing is a given, unless they do not want it to be. At the same time, romance conventions include detailed sexual encounters; thus, the genre offers space and opportunity for exploring queer desires.

### **The *Arcadia* and *Isle of the Gulls***

The most extended and elaborate instances of sexual encounters between MTF crossdressers and cisgender love interests (in this case, primarily female, but also male) occur in Sidney's late sixteenth-century *Old Arcadia* and *New Arcadia*,<sup>22</sup> as well as in the *Arcadia's* comedic stage adaptation, Day's 1606 *Isle of the Gulls*. Most striking in this story is the wide range of perceptions and perversions that surround a single crossdressed character: when the protagonist Pyrocles (called Lisander in Day's adaptation) dresses as an Amazon, Cleophila (called Zelmane in the *New Arcadia* and *Isle of the Gulls*),<sup>23</sup> s/he becomes an erotic subject of attraction for three separate members of a single family.<sup>24</sup> Cleophila's admirers are his/her/their own love interest, Philoclea, and Philoclea's parents, the Duke Basilius and Duchess Gynecia. Significantly, each admirer of the Amazon enacts a different category of desire: Basilius

sees Cleophila as a woman, so his desire might be considered heterosexual, even as aware readers may wonder about his attraction to a cisgender man; Gynecia suspects that Cleophila is a man, so she maintains that her desire is toward a man, even though her love object presents as female; finally, their daughter Philoclea is not sure about Cleophila's sex, but she finds herself drawn toward all elements of the genderqueer character.<sup>25</sup>

That both members of a heterosexual marriage are so libidinally attracted to the same crossdressed figure demonstrates Cleophila's uncanny appeal and introduces yet another kind of queer erotics, that of competition in a romantic triad. The competition between husband and wife for Cleophila's attentions comes to a head in the *Arcadia* when the Amazon is injured in her dramatic fight with a lion and both would-be lovers run to comfort him/her/them. Sidney describes the male and female lovers' responses to the MTF crossdresser's injury as though the scene is all part of an experiment in love and sexuality: "It was sport to see how in one instant both Basilius and Gynecia (like a mother and father to a wounded child) came running to see the wound of Cleophila ... for so it seemed that love had purposed to make in those solitary woods a perfect demonstration of [Cleophila's] unresistable force."<sup>26</sup> Both wanting to believe that Cleophila is of the opposite sex and that they are demonstrating the power of their love through heterosexual courtship, the husband and wife share competitive desire in a way that renders straightness queer and queerness heterosexual. In the same moment that Basilius, who understands Cleophila as a woman, finds evidence of Cleophila's feminine valor, Gynecia, who understands Cleophila as a cross-dresser, is increasingly sure that the Amazon is actually a man:

Basilius would sometimes kiss her forehead, blessing the destinies that had joined such beauty and valor together. Gynecia would kiss her more boldly, by the liberty of her womanish show, although her heart were set of nothing less; for already she was fallen into a jealous envy against her daughter Philoclea, because she found Cleophila showed such extraordinarily dutiful favour unto her; and even that settled her opinion the more of her manhood. (OA 45)

In this moment, Cleophila's queer gender renders straightness queer and queerness heterosexual; whether s/he is male or female, his/her/their lovers are participating in a situation that is distinctly queer. Gynecia, in particular, demonstrates queer heterosexuality in her double standards about Cleophila: on the one hand, she is able to kiss Cleophila more demonstratively than Basilius because of the public intimacies allowed between women, but on the other, she uses the fact that Cleophila shows similar female-female attraction to Philoclea as evidence that Cleophila must actually be a man. Her circular reasoning (I can kiss you because you appear to be a woman; because you appear to be a woman, you should not want to kiss other women) demonstrates that at least part of her attraction to Cleophila stems from gender

ambiguity; even if Gynecia is certain that Cleophila is secretly a cisgender man, she appears to enjoy knowing this when others, especially her husband, do not. The games of discovery and secret-keeping, and the benefits of courting a partner who is both male and female, yet neither, seem to be alluring to Gynecia. At the same time, Basilius's consistent belief that Cleophila is a valiant female warrior is rendered kinkier in light of the suspicions that abound about Cleophila's gender. To further complicate the layers of desire in this passage, Sidney uses female pronouns to refer to Cleophila both here and throughout the *Arcadia*, undermining and destabilizing the reader's knowledge of Pyrocles's maleness with a literary insistence on Cleophila's constructed femininity. That is, the pronouns queer or crossdress the text just as the dress and gender performance queer the crossdresser.

In Day's more lighthearted take on Sidney's story in *Isle of the Gulls*, Pyrocles's friend Demetrius (Musidorus in the *Arcadia*) comments on the unlikelihood of this erotic hetero-queer triangle: "That the duke should doate upon thee for a woman, makes for our purpose, but that the dutches should be enamoured on thee for a man, is preposterous."<sup>27</sup> Significantly, of all the components of the situation, Demetrius is least comfortable with a heterosexual one, finding it preposterous that Gynecia should think Cleophila is male and preferring that his crossdressing best friend seduce an older man rather than an older woman.<sup>28</sup> Though Day's dramatic version of the *Arcadia* is less consistent in its pronoun use than its source is, the fact that it was written for the stage, and would have been played with male actors in the female roles, gives it a further aspect of queerness. During the scenes in which the Duke and Duchess both desire Cleophila, audiences would be seeing a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender man (MTM) and a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender woman (MTF) who are competing for the affections of a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender man dressed as a woman who is sometimes read as cisgender and sometimes seen as a crossdresser (MTMTFTF/M).

Playing with the sexual and erotic confusion of the conventional *Arcadia* plot, Day designs an even more convoluted twist in which Basilius instructs Cleophila to dress as a prince and seduce Gynecia as a trick. Cleophila assures him, "Ile warrant you, Ile play the Prince with much art" (3.1.94–95). Gynecia reverses the plot, then, telling Cleophila to continue to trick Basilius by maintaining his/her/their disguise as a woman, though s/he is really a prince. Gleefully, she says, "But the cheefe sports this / To see an old man with a young man kisse," just as, lurking in the background, her husband cackles about the inverse scenario: "To see an old Dutches a young Lady kisse" (3.1.164–166). The husband and wife each imagine how exciting it would be to watch a sexual encounter between their spouse and a person in drag; this shared desire reveals that they each find a voyeuristic erotic charge in seeing their spouse kiss a person that he or she believes is one sex but is "really" the other. By tricking their spouses into what they perceive to be homosexual acts, and in their anticipation of watching the object of their desire crossdress in this queer context, the heterosexual couple participates in a kinky game that reveals how queer their desires really are. The play's

readers and audiences participate in an additional level of queer erotics through knowing the “truth” of Pyrocles’s sex and gender presentation, as well as through anticipating witnessing a man-dressed-as-a-woman-dressed-as-a-man (MTFTM) kissing a woman and a man-dressed-as-a-woman kissing a man. That Day strays from Sidney’s original plot to include this complicated sex play reveals that the early modern author perceived the sexual play between and surrounding this queerly heterosexual couple, and, furthermore, that he, and presumably his audience, wanted to think more about queer sex and see what it might look like on the stage.

Though in some ways Basilius and Gynecia’s playful approaches to queer gender and non-monogamy can be read as entirely kinky and queer in a positive sense, the play nevertheless retains several cautions and safeguards against this sort of desire and practice. First, the entire plot line plays on homophobia through its fundamental device of the “humor” of same-sex kissing, even as it reinforces the sexual enticement of crossdressing. Thus, even as the text certainly hints at pleasurable voyeurism, it also carefully couches that pleasure in an insistence on its strangeness and hilarious perversity. More troublingly, the power dynamics of the situation are skewed firmly in favor of the cisgender players in the love game. Though the audience knows that Pyrocles/Cleophila really loves Philoclea (here Violetta), s/he has a very difficult time extracting him/her/themselves from the Duke and Duchess’s plots, which involve directing his/her/their gender presentation and his/her/their sexual choices. Both Basilius and Gynecia depend upon Pyrocles/Cleophila’s ambiguous gender as part of the means of seducing their spouse, but they give little thought to his/her/their own authority over his/her/their body and presentation.<sup>29</sup> Though Pyrocles/Cleophila’s asides and clever wordplay prevent the character from appearing weak or vulnerable, especially once s/he achieves his/her/their goal at the end of the play, the text nevertheless demonstrates that a genderqueer character, however sexy, is vulnerable to the cisgender characters surrounding him/her/them.

Against the backdrop of her parents’ competing desires toward Cleophila is the princess Philoclea, the actual object of Pyrocles’s attraction and the mobilizing force behind the entire crossdressing device, who spends much of the romances and the play in a quandary about her confused desires. Sidney captures Philoclea’s confused emotional state:

Thus did Cleophila wade betwixt small woes and huge despairs, whilst in the mean time the sweet Philoclea found strange unwonted motions in herself. She found a burning affection towards Cleophila, an unquiet desire to be with her; and yet she found that the very presence kindled the desire. And examining in herself the same desire, yet could she not know to what the desire inclined. Sometimes she would compare the love she bare to Cleophila with the natural goodwill she bare to her sister; but she perceived it had another kind of working. Sometimes she did wish Cleophila had been a man, and her brother; and yet, in truth it was no brotherly love she desired of her. (OA 85–86)

The language of this passage seems at first to show that Cleophila's queer gender presentation upsets, not attracts, Philoclea. Confused by her attraction to another woman, she "wish[es] Cleophila had been a man"; on the surface, her desire leaves no room for a queer heterosexuality that depends on the space between these two options. Yet Philoclea's vacillations between an attraction to both Cleophila's female and male characteristics suggest that what confuses her attraction is that she likes both elements *at once*. Philoclea laments, saying, "It is the impossibility that doth torment me; for unlawful desires are punished after the effect of enjoying, but impossible desires are plagued in the desire itself" (OA 98). Readings of the "impossible desire" that Philoclea admits to in her lament, especially Traub's extended reading of this moment, have seen her desire as homoerotic: from a woman toward a woman. Traub, who reads the scene as, at least in part, a lesbian encounter, sees a connection between "impossible desires" and classical tropes of gender transformation—indeed, Philoclea does wish that "Cleophila might become a young transformed Caeneus"—but also points out that "Philoclea seems to register an ambivalence about bodily metamorphosis."<sup>30</sup> For Traub, this ambivalence means that, while Philoclea claims to wish that Cleophila would be transformed into a boy, she also resists that wish by still desiring a woman. However, I want to insist, Philoclea's ambivalence about bodily metamorphosis does not have to be about wanting either a man or a woman; though the classical allusion seems to show an impossibility (desiring a lover who is poised between being a man and a woman), it simultaneously gestures toward a *queer* possibility (desiring a lover who is not precisely a man or a woman). Though Pyrocles's body, under his disguise, could allow him to "transform" into a man as Caenus did, even that transformation would not un queer this scenario; it would still be informed by queer heterosexuality.

How can we know whether Philoclea's "impossible desires" should be read as queer rather than lesbian (desire for Cleophila) or straight (desire for Pyrocles)? Part of the reason that Philoclea is unconvincing when lamenting that Cleophila is female is because her own mother, Gynecia, has spent much of the plot declaring that *her* attraction to the Amazon is based on the conviction that Cleophila is male. How can Philoclea not wonder about Cleophila's sex, based on her own mother's frequent and convincing assertions? Gynecia's complete conviction about Cleophila's male sex thoroughly undercuts Basilius and Philoclea's beliefs that the female disguise has been impenetrable, and it should logically cause them both to question Cleophila's sex.<sup>31</sup> In the *New Arcadia*, Philoclea uses her mother's desire as a model for her own, saying, "Do I not see my mother as well, at least as furiously as myself, love Zelmane [Cleophila], and should I be wiser than my mother? Either she sees a possibility in that which I think impossible, or else impossible loves need not misbecome me."<sup>32</sup> However, while Gynecia uses her belief that Cleophila is male as evidence of her own heterosexuality (however queer), Philoclea, even if she has more than a clue that Cleophila might be a crossdressed man, does not follow her mother's move to

believing that Cleophila must be or become male. Instead, she continues to speak of her love interest with female pronouns, holding open the status of her desire as an impossible love; impossible not, as Traub suggests, because it is toward a woman, but because it is a type of attraction that eludes representation.

The permanent imprint of queerly heterosexual, rather than lesbian, desire is evident in the romance's big reveal, when Pyrocles reveals the disguise to Philoclea. In this culmination of the romance's building sexual tension, Pyrocles/Cleophila first achieves sexual proximity to Philoclea because of his/her/their womanly appearance, "straightly embracing her, and (warranted by a womanly habit) often kissing her"; only then does Pyrocles reveal himself to be both male and a prince (OA 104). Playing into Philoclea's own fantasy trope of classical transformation, Pyrocles announces, "O only princess attend here a miserable miracle of affection! Behold here before your eyes Pyrocles, prince of Macedon, whom you only have brought to this fall of fortune and unused metamorphosis; whom you only have made neglect his country, forget his father, and lastly forsake himself!" (OA 105). Thus revealed, and expecting a celebration, Pyrocles is surprised by the vehemence of Philoclea's response: "Shall I say, 'O Cleophila'? Alas, your words be against it! Shall I say, 'prince Pyrocles'? Wretch that I am, your show is manifest against it. But this, this, well I may say: if I had continued as I ought Philoclea, you had either never been or ever been Cleophila; you had neither attempted this change, fed with hope, or never discovered it, stopped with despair" (OA 105). In this response, Philoclea shows discomfort regarding Pyrocles's disclosure, especially with the disjuncture between his new name and his usual appearance as Cleophila. She wishes not only that Cleophila had never changed, but also that she had never discovered the disguise, even though she often wished to know the truth. Her attachment to Cleophila's name reveals another attachment to Cleophila's ambiguous gender.

Philoclea continues, "O Cleophila (for so I love to call thee, since in that name my love first began, and in the shade of that name my love shall best lie hidden), that even while so thou wert (what eye bewitched me I know not) my passions were far fitter to desire than to be desired" (OA 107). The parenthetical layering within Philoclea's speech captures the difficulty that she has representing the terms of her desire and her relationship with Cleophila. Rather than being relieved that she is straight after all, Philoclea remains focused on the terms under which her romance "began," and she attempts to maintain the connection between the female name and appearance (Cleophila) and the male revealed beneath them (Pyrocles). Thus, even after Pyrocles seems willing to remove his female disguise, Philoclea demonstrates an urge to keep the terms of their relationship queer (even if technically heterosexual) and cherish her attraction to a crossdressed Cleophila along with, or even above, a securely male Pyrocles.

Finally, just before the couple heads to bed, Philoclea tests Pyrocles for the last time, asking, "What aileth this new conversion? Have you yet another

sleight to play; or do you think to deceive me in Pyrocles' form, as you have done in Cleophila's? Or, rather, now you have betrayed me in both of those, is there some third sex left you into which you can transform yourself, to inveigle my simplicity?" (OA 206). Philoclea is rightly suspicious of Pyrocles and has every reason to ask him whether or not he intends to fool her with a disguise again. Of the romance's resolution, Kathryn Schwarz claims that the "amazonian transvestite disguise plot has focused the text's systems of desire, and its disappearance works less as a triumphantly comic resolution than as a kind of emptying out."<sup>33</sup> This claim presupposes that the female-female desire between Cleophila and Philoclea is the radical or queer thing rather than their straight heterosexuality. However, the erotic charge of the romance is far from empty in this conclusion: in the context of queer desire, queer heterosexualities, and MTF crossdressing, this passage seems also like a hint regarding the kinky potential of Pyrocles and Philoclea's relationship. Heading off to her private chambers with her new lover, Philoclea brings up the possibility of a "third sex," a final transformation that Pyrocles might achieve. Though couched in terms of a trick against Philoclea's modest "simplicity," the option of a third gender lingers in the text, offering the possibility that Philoclea, to the end, sees her lover as having three (or more) erotic possible personas: a man, Pyrocles; a woman, Cleophila; and, perhaps most temptingly, an MTF crossdresser, now revealed but always informed by his/her/their disguise, leading her to bed.<sup>34</sup>

### The *Urania*

Sidney's *Arcadia* demonstrates an early modern interest in queer heterosexuality and showcases the capaciousness of prose romances and MTF crossdressing plots as spaces for testing, presenting, and viewing queer erotic material. Though Lady Mary Wroth's romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* does not feature an MTF crossdresser as prominently as her uncle's *Arcadia* does, it does include a shorter MTF crossdressing plot, which picks up and expands upon similar themes of queer heterosexuality.<sup>35</sup> Never rendered in a painting (like the story of Mirtillo and Amarillis) or performed on a stage (as in the Day version of the *Arcadia*), this prose crossdressing scene is able to more explicitly explore a sexual encounter between a woman and a man dressed as a woman. In this episode, the prince Leonius (brother to the romance's leading male character, Amphilanthus) comes across a beautiful shepherdess, Veralinda. Instantly in love, he rescues her from a bear, but then he is separated from her and longs for a reunion.<sup>36</sup> A shepherd advises Leonius to change his clothing to match his mood and, thus attired, woo Veralinda, explaining, "There is a way whereby you may let her see your love, and yet not speak it ... pull off those habits unfit for these passions, and put on such as I will provide for you, so well agreeing to your humour as the clothes, and the action shall make her unable to withstand so much pity as must breed love, and that love if you then discreetly

governe it, will procure your happinesse.”<sup>37</sup> Significantly, the shepherd never directly indicates that he will bring Leonius *women’s* clothing (which he does), only that the new clothing will better suit the prince’s melancholic heartbroken state. The fact that the shepherd selects women’s clothing, and the fact that Leonius wears it, again demonstrates the belief that love effeminizes men; here, the idea is taken so far to the extreme, perhaps because of the intensity of Leonius’s emotion, as to suggest that his internal feelings are best expressed through his clothing.

The queer tensions in the second meeting between Veralinda and Leonius, which is their first crossdressed encounter, are evident in both the plot and in the structure of the language. Leonia is revealed to the reader in the same moment s/he is revealed to Veralinda. The long sentence that Wroth uses to describe this moment is extended even for the *Urania*, and it lingers on the details of Leonia’s appearance, the immediate connection between the two characters, and the mimetic similarities between the two. Veralinda sees:

... a Forrest Nimph, her apparell of colour and fashion like Diana, buskins upon her leggs of white, her haire tyd up, only some of the shortest, and about the temples curled, crowned with Roses and Hyacinths, she lay with her head toward her, who with a soft pace went on till she came just behind her, then viewing her earnestly, her eyes being so full of love, as all loving creatures found a power in them to draw them to her call, especially those eyes which were so much hers as they could not stirre but to her will, commanding them so, as shee could with her looking on them with loving force, bring them to her owne; and so it now proved, for those eyes which full of teares were seeing themselves in the streame, shewing their watry pictures to each other, her earnest viewing the Nimph with a naturall humblenesse to hers, drew her lookes to her, joy then appear’d in the Nimphes face, yet straight was that clouded with sorrow ... (433)

In this moment, Wroth’s text collaborates with Leonius’s attire, performing a kind of grammatical crossdressing by re-introducing the male lead as a beautiful female nymph through seamlessly female pronouns. The pronouns, in fact, are copious in this moment of meeting, and they blur the distinctions between the lovers. The repeating “her” or “she” occurs sixteen times in this short passage, emphasizing that, at least on the surface, this is a meeting of two female characters, each experiencing similar love. Because of the proliferation of pronouns, the distinctions between subject and object, viewer and viewed, and even male and female are blurred. Wroth writes that emotion “drew her lookes to her,” but it is impossible to know which pronoun represents the shepherdess, cisgender female, and which the nymph, a cross-dresser. The moment becomes a hall of mirrors with four teary eyes reflected in one another and in the stream. The attraction between the two characters is instant, rooted in mirroring and equivalence. Yet, even as readers are

caught up in the characters' likeness and reflectivity, the fact of crossdressing haunts the moment, allowing for a scenario in which sameness and familiarity have a subversive, queered edge. This final layer, the readerly knowledge of crossdressing, is what takes the scene beyond the heterosexual (two women mourn the absence of their male love objects together), beyond the homosexual (a nymph and a shepherdess, abandoned in love, have a homoerotic connection), and to the queer (a shepherdess is attracted to a prince in nymph's clothing, to both the male body and the female performance).

Leonia is the perfect (and queerest) choice for a love object because she represents male and female simultaneously; even as Veralinda sees herself in her new friend, she also recognizes that this "Leonia" looks much like Leonius. Veralinda tells Leonia, "I pitty you ... and love you, for in you I see (O deere remembrance) many things which represent thy love unto mine eyes" (434). This confusing line is one area in the 1621-printed edition of the *Urania* that Wroth puzzled over and worked to clarify: she made handwritten marginal corrections to at least one copy of a published text.<sup>38</sup> In her marginal corrections, Wroth changed "represent" to "report" and "thy love" to "my love," so that the edited sentence would read, "I pitty you ... and love you, for in you I see (O deere remembrance) many things which report my love unto mine eyes." Beyond clarifying the basic meaning of the line (that Leonia somehow reminds Veralinda of Leonius), these key changes also demonstrate the queer eroticism of the episode. If Leonia *represents* Leonius, then she is a female stand-in for the missing male object of desire, and this is a moment between women. However, if Leonia's appearance *reports*, there is a sense that Leonius is somehow present himself, as himself, at that moment; among the early modern meanings of "report," the OED lists "to bring forward, produce, show," "to involve or imply," and, finally, "to be present."<sup>39</sup> In her correction, then, Wroth clarifies that Leonia is more than just a female representation of Leonius and is his actual avatar in the moment. This correction insists that Leonius—the male body beneath the dress—is present in the love scene, that he is not entirely overwritten by the female character created by his MTF crossdressing, and that the encounter remains complicated and queered.

Wroth makes a similar intervention in her choice to revise "thy love" to "my love." What is it that Veralinda really sees in Leonia's eyes? Is it Leonius's love for her, unmasked despite his attire; Leonia's broken heart, a match to her own; or her own love and heartsickness, revealed through the reflective eyes of an empathetic new friend? The interchangeability of "my" and "thy" here indicates that a printer or publisher, or perhaps Wroth herself, could not be sure which reading to make. Wroth's ultimate decision to correct the text to "my love" puts the focus on Veralinda, who is now more clearly depicted as seeing, and liking, hints of Leonius in Leonia's visage. This choice also adds to the queering of the scene because it implies that Veralinda's attraction to Leonia is not purely an attraction to a woman, or to the original man she loves, but rather to the total presentation of her

male lover with female clothing and gender performance. That Veralinda sees “my love” in Leonia hints that she is, on some level, aware that her love *is* the nymph. In response to Veralinda’s praise, Leonius-as-Leonia responds, “I did blush to hear that I should seeme so favourably blessed in your all-conquering eyes, as to bee thought but to resemble him that happy man whom your great goodnesse loves” (434). His response, in the context of her queered impression of him, seems almost tongue-in-cheek since he accepts her praise both as Leonia, honored to be compared with such a worthy love, and Leonius, happy to receive such a compliment.

From the beginning of their encounter, Veralinda and Leonia’s language has been flirtatious, suggestive, and romantic. However, once Veralinda has established the connection between her new friend and her missing lover, once she begins to see that Leonia *is* Leonius (but queered), the relationship steps beyond tropes of female friendship and into the erotic. Veralinda embraces Leonia and says, “Let us still live together fittest for our fortunes, let our teares be shed together, our sighs breathed together, and let us never part, but always keepe together” (435). Though couched in the idea that they will be two women sharing the grief of lost loves, this vision of their long-term intertwining fortunes can also be sexual. At least, it can be sexual to Leonius, for Wroth reports that “this is what the Nymph desired, being so glad of that embracement, as she could have found in her heart to forget her habits” (435). Wroth continues to use female pronouns and the feminine “Nymph” moniker for Leonius, even as she confirms his/her/their attraction to Veralinda. The embrace is described as specifically the nymph’s desire, not the prince’s, and the nymph’s willingness to forget her habits can mean that she is tempted to reveal that she is male, that she is ready to be naked, or that she is ready to break the “habit” of MTF crossdressing. The ambiguity of the passage continues as Leonia decides to keep her dress on for “danger of loosing it all, if not governed with modestie till apter time gain fitter opportunity of discovery” (435). Here, again, Wroth allows for, or even intends, multiple meanings. Perhaps the male Leonius is worried that he will “loose all” if he reveals that he has used the device of crossdressing to trick Veralinda into embracing him.<sup>40</sup> However, this fear is tempered with “modestie,” a traditionally feminine impulse. Thus, Leonius, even in the moment of deciding whether to maintain his disguise, is cross-gendered. His response to the sexualized situation is inherently queer.

This moment of Leonia and Veralinda’s first kiss is marked by the split subjectivity of the sentence. They share “an affectionate kisse, [...] that [Leonia] would not suffer herself to misse, being such an one, as liked Veralinda (for so this Shepherdesse was called) better than any of her fellows kisses, for this seemed more passionately kind, gave liberty to that” (435). We at once understand how both lovers feel about the kiss—it is something Leonia (and Leonius) cannot bear to pass up, and it thrills Veralinda. Veralinda, in her enjoyment of the kiss, compares it to her kisses with her

fellow female shepherdesses; this fact confirms an impression that there is the possibility for sexual tension between two females in this text. At the same time, the kiss is substantively different than other kisses Veralinda has had. Wroth attributes this difference to passion, but the context demands that we also see the kiss as a different sort of sexual encounter: a blend of female companionate homoeroticism and queer heterosexuality.

Even if this moment and those that follow are read as “just” part of a lesbian encounter between two women, even if we ignore the fact of Leonia’s crossdressing for a moment, other gender dynamics make Leonia and Veralinda’s developing erotic relationship distinctly queer.<sup>41</sup> The sexual encounter between a cisgender female character and her genderqueer lover is further queered by gender role-playing.<sup>42</sup> Leonius, dressed as and passing for the nymph Leonia, and wanting to kiss Veralinda, offers to play the sexual role of Leonius. Leonia/Leonius suggests, “Grant mee with your favour, which I will strive like him to merit, let me enjoy those sweete embracements you would upon to him and thinke I am your love, which I will doe by you, and in that thought till wee bee blessed with perfecter enjoyings, we shall have some ease” (435). Here, Leonius, dressed as Leonia, proposes that he should act like himself: that he should engage in male-to-female-to-male crossdressing in order to play at being male. In doing so, he asks Veralinda to perform heterosexuality with him through a queer lens. Even though Leonius could use this role-play as a mechanism to reveal his sex—he is very good at pretending to be a man—he instead emphasizes that their explorations will be “imperfect,” making his female gender a part of their fantasy and reminding his lover and the reader that his femininity changes him and keeps him from playing himself “straight.” The fact of his crossdressing has so changed his perspective of himself, even in fantasy, and Veralinda’s relationship with him, that any gesture toward heterosexuality, even when the bodies are there to back it up, is performative and disrupted.

Veralinda accepts Leonia’s proposal, and so begins an extended erotic sequence between the female shepherdess and male-to-female nymph:

She condescended, and so they kissed againe, wishing and loving, they remained, passing many such pleasant times, till at last the wonder of such affection twixt women was discovered, and it may be, had then been brought to light, had not the Shepherdesses arrived to his grieffe, and no way to her content, who truly loved the sweete conversation and discourse of this Nymph: to the Fountaine they then altogether tooke their way, the Nymph settling her selfe so, as she might both see and touch the loved Shepherdes, all the rest holding this stranger with as much admiration, as shee did their Mistris, thinking no difference betweene them in beauty, save that the new guests faireness seemed more masculine, as fitted with her esteem yet full of grave, modest, and seemly bashfulness. Thus they beheld each other, the Shepherdes

passionately beholding Leonia in memory of her love, and the Nymph amorously gazing on her in her owne passions, till the musick a little awakened them, making their ears prove traytors to their hearts, for letting in any thing to them but love. (435–436)

When the two kiss again, they start their extended relationship as a romantic couple; over the course of the paragraph, time telescopes from those first hours of kissing, past the return of the shepherdess's friends and through their discovery of the new guest and "her" affection toward their mistress. The ambiguous term "wishing and loving" never clarifies what each lover is wishing *for* in the moment of their repeated kissing; presumably, Veralinda is wishing for Leoni<sup>u</sup>s, while Leonia is wishing to reveal her true identity. However, because Wroth never specifies, they may also be wishing for other, queerer things. The text hints at this alternative desire with its reference to "the wonder of such affection twixt women," which reveals a reflexive awareness of the text's queerness. Yet this moment is not exactly about "affection twixt women," as the text makes clear with the differentiation of pronouns in the phrase that follows, with "his grieffe" and "her content." Since Wroth has been consistently using female pronouns for Leonia up until this point, the shift here demands attention. Following so quickly after "affection twixt women," these pronouns, which interrupt a lesbian moment with a rude reminder of Leoni<sup>u</sup>s's sex, insist that we queer our reading further. The attending shepherdesses seem to understand this as well, identifying Leonia as at once similar to and different from their mistress; they recognize Leonia's admiration for Veralinda as at once the same as and different from their own attention to her as a friend and superior. The device of MTF crossdressing further queers what would otherwise be a homoerotic scene, making it simultaneously a moment about affection between women and between a woman and a man dressed as a woman; in other words, it is queerly heterosexual.

The big reveal scene in the *Urania* is a double one. Like many characters in the romance, Veralinda discovers that she has been a princess, not a shepherdess, all along. The revelation that Veralinda has been a princess in shepherdess's garb leads to Leonia's decision to reveal that "she" has been a man in women's clothing for some time as well: "The Nymph knowing her to bee a Princess likewise came, and with a pretty blush discovered himselfe, shewing that hee was ashamed of his habite, and yet that habite became that blush" (456). Here, the repetition of the word "habite" insists that we consider both of its possible meanings: that Leoni<sup>u</sup>s is ashamed of his clothing and his female attire, and that he is ashamed of his "disposition or tendency to act in a certain way,"<sup>43</sup> which is to dress as and pass for a woman, and to have erotic engagements while engaging in that habit. At the same time, the manner in which he demonstrates his shame, his blush, shows how deeply his performance as female has been imprinted upon him and changed him (or, perhaps, that

his female attire has always been an expression or manifestation of some female part of his identity).<sup>44</sup>

Leonius's words to Veralinda demonstrate the ways in which their relationship is permanently, always already queer, even at its most seemingly heterosexual moment. Leonius asks Veralinda, "Fairest Princesse, I hope your estate will not make you forget the estate you lived in love, I am the Knight you loved as a Knight, I am the man, who for feare you lov'd me not, to move your love made my selfe a woman, and the same man that loves if you cheerish, else dies if you forsake" (456). In his most serious bid for love and heterosexual marriage, Leonius marks himself as a man who "made [himself] a woman."<sup>45</sup> He must beg for Veralinda's affection now, as a man, because he won that affection only as a woman. At the same time, though, these words insist that we not break down Leonius's gender into sometimes-male and sometimes-female (not queer then and straight now). He insists that he is both male and female at once, that Leonia and Leonius are a unified person, and that *that* person is the one loved by Veralinda. He does not, therefore, revoke or regret any of his actions as Leonia; he only hopes that Veralinda will be able to integrate their queer courtship with the rest of their lives together. Veralinda, in turn, acknowledges that falling in love with Leonius as a man and then courting him as a woman served as the ideal mode of courtship. She responds to his plea with, "I am (my Lord) [...] the woman who loves you as much, or more, if possible, then I did, having so many more bonds to tye me unto it" (456). Those "bonds"—their days as two seeming women kissing in the shade of the fountain—are the crux of their romantic narrative. Rather than being erased or ignored, the fact of Leonius's MTF crossdressing enhances the couple's romantic, and erotic, connection.

### "Sport upon Sport"

If Veralinda and Leonius demonstrate a sustainable model for explicitly queer heterosexuality, the 1685 ballad "Sport upon Sport: OR, *The Man in the S*— ... Being a true Relation of a Pleasant Fellow that in the attire of a Woman lay with Several Maids, and got them with Child" takes their type of connection a step farther by playing on the implicit sexiness of queer gender, deploying MTF crossdressing as a seduction tool or asset, a sexy thing, rather than an impediment. This ballad, along with the love poem by Thomas Carew with which I will conclude this chapter, shows clear traces of the pastoral and romantic iterations of MTF crossdressing in sexual and erotic contexts that I have discussed thus far. Yet both the ballad and the poem also push beyond the genres of pastoral and romance, asking by necessity harder questions about real-life applications and complications of queer heterosexuality. From its outset, the ballad takes on the question of women's curious attraction to MTF crossdressers and deals with the issue of queer desire and sexuality.



Figure 3.4 “Sport upon Sport: OR, *The Man in the S——*,” Pepys 3.208, 1685. By permission of by permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

As the title relates, the ballad deals with an MTF crossdresser who, while still “in the attire of a woman,” seduces and impregnates several female lovers. The ballad at once addresses the issue of the crossdresser’s desire and the desires of his sexual partners. Even the title establishes these issues, distinguishing between sex, gender presentation, and sexuality by documenting that the lover here is a “fellow” (male) in the “attire of a woman” (presenting as female) who “lay with several maids” (who is attracted to, and by, women). Thus, the anonymous author explains the protagonist’s sex, his gender presentation, and the direction of his desire. Furthermore, the information that these maids eventually become pregnant gives evidence for the crossdresser’s maturity and virility.<sup>46</sup> However, the title also considers the position of the maids in the story, setting the stage for a ballad that will both revel in the maids’ seduction and, nearly simultaneously, serve as a didactic warning to the ballad’s female audience, as if even hearing about this particular MTF crossdresser might tempt women listeners or readers. That the ballad is billed as a “true relation” scandalously implies that women readers must at all times be vigilant against the real threat of seductive crossdressers.

The first stanza of the ballad begins by confirming the masculinity and heterosexuality of the protagonist—he is a “lusty lad” who has devised a trick in order to “lye with melting-Maids all night.”<sup>47</sup> Yet, if these terms were meant to render the lad less queer, that effort is undermined before it gains credibility. The MTF crossdresser is “known by the name of bonny *Kate*,” and, because we never learn a more masculine name for the “lusty lad,”

he is “known” only by this decidedly feminine moniker.<sup>48</sup> While Pyrocles/Cleophila and Leonius/Leonia each have a name to suit them in male and in female attire, and Mirtillo has only his male name, even when he wears a dress, Kate must always be called Kate, no matter how masculine his behavior is. Thus, though the ballad repeatedly uses male and masculine terms to describe Kate, his female attire and female name are constantly undermining those normalizing efforts, queering his heterosexuality. Because Kate has no other name (and no other clothes), we can never avoid his queer gender. Even the ballad woodcuts (Figure 3.4), which do feature two figures in male clothing, also leave an unnamed image of a figure in female dress on the far right of the broadsheet. Thus, while the kissing woodcuts and the woodcut that might show Kate in male dress could undermine his queerness, the ambiguity of the final image leaves the possibility that Kate ends the ballad as he starts it, passing for female.

By refusing readers a birth name for the MTF crossdresser, the ballad keeps Kate’s female identity as central as his/her/their male one. In this way, the text maintains a queer Kate, one who can never be fully seen as male or female. Thus, Kate’s desire, and the desire directed toward him/her/them, is always inherently queer. For example, the ballad continues, “A Gown and Petticoat he wore, / and for a maid he passes / A tender maid that ne’er knew more, / than raw-young Country Lasses.” The male pronoun and the fact that Kate only “passes” as “a maid” seem to prioritize the character’s sex, but the pronoun-free phrase “a tender maid that ne’er knew more” emphasizes how much Kate really *is* a “tender maid” him/her/herself.<sup>49</sup>

Kate’s disguise is not just a device to get him/her/through a lass’s bedroom door; his/her/their femininity is a necessary part of the entire seduction. Still passing as female, s/he/they becomes a bedmate to a shepherdess and continues to relate to her as a female friend: “These two together lay in bed, / and talkt of womens blisses, / Talkt of each others maiden-heads, / and talkt of empty Kisses.”<sup>50</sup> Kate passes for female on social and interpersonal levels, and this internal element of his/her/their crossdressing—the “tender maid” within the man—allows him/her/through intimate access to his/her/through partner’s sexual secrets. As such, the secret sharing between the two seeming lasses becomes a part of the seduction in this ballad, and the likeness between the two, including the fact Kate can talk about his/her/through maidenhead, is part of the allure. Once again, though, the ballad disrupts a single reading of this sexual encounter; the lines about the two soon-to-be-lovers and their mimetic maidenheads might be seen as an instance of same-gender (if not same-sex) attraction. However, the very next lines of the stanza are an insistent reminder of Kate’s male body: their talk “fir’d up the Youth that he began / himself for to discover” by revealing an erection. Later, even Kate’s language insists upon his/her/through doubled gender; Kate calls the maiden “thrice fairer than myself,” reminding her of their similar appearances and feminine beauty; only lines later, s/he/through tells her that her breasts “raise my passion higher.” Thus, the essence of the MTF crossdresser in this ballad is neither male nor female (neither heterosexual nor homosexual) but male

and female (queerly heterosexual): Kate, who has both a maidenhead and an erection, is at once fair as any girl and potent as any man. The cross-dresser never takes off the dress, the lad never stops being called Kate, and the ballad demonstrates that this genderqueer presentation is sexy; over the course of the ballad, this cross-gendered combination proves potently erotic and seductive for at least three young maids, and the ballad warns other young women to protect themselves from similar seductions. If cheap print ballads can be read as reflections of popular culture and attitudes, then this ballad's frank concern about instances of MTF seduction, and about cisgender women's attraction to crossdressed lads, is evidence of an early modern familiarity with the appeals of queer heterosexuality.

### **"A Lover, in Disguise as an Amazon"**

If the short form of the ballad allows for a concentrated focus on the genders and desires that it contains, the same is true for poetic texts that take on the topic of crossdressing. Though crossdressing is not a common early modern poetic conceit, Thomas Carew's poem "A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon, is Dearly Beloved of his Mistress," written as a song for a masque, considers the question of crossdressing and desire from the unusual perspective of the male lover in women's clothes. Without the wordiness of the romances or the required catchiness of a ballad, Carew's crossdressed speaker's desire is strikingly sparse and almost raw:

Cease thou afflicted soul to mourn,  
Whose love and faith are paid with scorn;  
For I am starved that feel the blisses  
Of dear embraces, smiles, and kisses  
From my soul's Idol, yet complain  
Of equal love more than disdain. (lines 1–6)<sup>51</sup>

From its start, the poem deals in contradictions; the speaker is "starved," though he simultaneously feels "the blisses / Of dear embraces, smiles, and kisses." Though the speaker receives these sexual embraces from his beloved, his "soul's Idol," he finds that he complains "Of equal love more than disdain." In fact, though this Amazon apparently used crossdressing as a device to get within intimate proximity of his lover, he seems surprised at how well the device has worked and at how happy his love interest seems to accept a female lover without displaying any sense of loss. Thus, instead of a disdainful lover, the speaker finds himself with the opposite problem: a lover who is very attracted to seemingly same-sex partnering.<sup>52</sup> Schwarz calls this moment one in which "female homoeroticism obscures heterosexual intent," a situation that "both rewards the male lover and leaves him out in the cold."<sup>53</sup> Yet this is more than just a poem about a man who, because of his MTF disguise, discovers that his lover is attracted to women instead of men. Rather, the poem actively asserts the

specific role that crossdressing plays in the desire between these lovers; Carew seems to be interested in what it means for a lover to be attracted to women who are *also* and *simultaneously* men. Though Schwarz calls the task of remembering that one lover is male “a surprisingly difficult project,” some elements of the conceit insist that readers do not elide the MTF crossdresser with a woman.<sup>54</sup>

The poem’s awkwardly long title makes the fact of crossdressing through the Amazonian disguise the first piece of information presented about the lovers, and it also reframes the text of the poem, which might otherwise be ambiguous. While the title strategically situates the poem in the literary canon alongside popular works like the *Arcadia*, it also localizes the issue of crossdressed/queerly heterosexual desire and renders it explicit, rather than ambiguous. The title insists that readers remain aware of the speaker’s dual identity—that he is male and that he seems to be female—in the moment of the erotic encounter. The poem’s second stanza explores this dual identity: “For I in that fair bosom dwell / That is my Paradise and Hell” (l.9–10). In these lines, it is unclear which lover is the owner of this “fair bosom”; conventionally, the male lover, being loved, dwells in the bosom of the female lover who admires him. In this case, the passage takes on a double meaning. On the one hand, it can assert that the speaker, “I,” is the one whom the female lover holds in her “fair bosom” (a necessary clarification because the lover may not realize the true identity of the one she loves); on the other hand, the speaker may be referring to his own, crossdressed “fair bosom,” reminding himself that, beneath the disguise, he is the “I” dwelling inside of his own feminized body. In either case, the experience of being perceived and loved as a woman is at once “Paradise and Hell” for the speaker.

The third and final stanza of Carew’s poem completes the idea that the Amazon lover’s feelings are not simply queer or straight. The act of his crossdressing has changed the dynamics of the sexual relationship and the erotics of the encounter. The speaker now sees his own female self as his main rival, revealing the fearful anxiety that the lover is attracted as much to the gender-queer crossdressed presentation as to the male body beneath. Carew writes:

Cease in cold jealous fears to pine,  
Sad wretch, whom Rivals undermine;  
For though I hold lock’d in mine arms  
My life’s sole joy, a traitor’s charms  
Prevail: whilst I may only blame  
My self, that mine own rival am. (13–18)

Even as he embraces his lover, the crossdressed Amazon recognizes that in gaining access to his love, he has also encountered his love’s interest in his genderqueer presentation. Having successfully seduced the woman, he finds his male self in conflict and competition with the worthy “rival” of his female self-presentation—and perhaps even his female sense of self. Schwarz writes:

The predicament of a man whose disguise has become his competition, of a lover who has what he is after but still cannot get what he wants, is deliberately contrived, and might tempt us only to admire the conceit. But I want to take seriously the rivalry that Carew's poem describes, pursuing the implications of a disguise plot that causally links female homoeroticism to heterosexuality even as it assumes conflict between them. If desire between women enables women to meet men, the relationship of means to end is more complicated than it may appear.<sup>55</sup>

However, where Schwarz, following Traub, sees this disguise plot mainly as one in which the female lover is seduced through homoeroticism that gives way to heterosexual consummation, I want again to insist that, just as Sidney and Wroth's romances do, this poem resists a pat heterosexual conclusion just as much as it resists a lesbian one. The speaker seems to recognize that his erotic appeal (to his lover, and perhaps to himself) is interconnected with this queer gender presentation; though the poem presents this rivalry in the negative sense, with him seeing himself as his own rival, the end result is that the same people are locked in an embrace no matter which persona wins this rivalry. In fact, the poem depends not on that rivalry but on the mimetic confusion of queer heterosexuality to fuel the erotic connection between the crossdresser and his/her/their lover.

Eve Sedgwick defines "queer" in part as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically."<sup>56</sup> Queer heterosexualities and MTF crossdressing in paintings, romances, plays, ballads, and poems show how deep those gaps and dissonances are and how very queer relationships are and can be, not only in modern contexts, but also and perhaps especially in early modern representation. In her seminal, if irreverent, 2003 *Village Voice* article, activist and sex columnist Tristan Taormino grounds the idea of queer heterosexuality in queer activist history and practices: "All this gender fucking is rubbing off on heteros, who are ditching the script in favor of writing their own."<sup>57</sup> The early modern texts and images examined here, along with many others, reveal that these kinds of new scripts have been written, imagined, and fantasized about for a long time. The sexual playfulness and joyful queer explorations depicted between Carew's Amazon and his/her/their lover, Kate and his/her/their lasses, Leonius/Leonia and Veralinda, Pyrocles/Cleophila and Philoclea, and Mirtillo and Amarillis are evidence of an early modern interest in subversive desire, its mechanics, and its consequences. Furthermore, these queer and kinky early modern moments rub off on us, as the increasingly complex possibilities of a queer renaissance, and queer renaissance sex acts, stand to inform our own approaches toward and assumptions about hetero and queer sexualities, desire, and sexual practice.

## Notes

1. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1–2.
2. In this chapter, I use the word “kinky” as an addendum to the idea of queerness, somewhat in line with what Tristan Taormino describes as “queer heterosexuality” (Tristan Taormino, “The Queer Heterosexual,” *The Village Voice*, May 6, 2003). I use kinky here to describe a type of desire that, regardless of the sex or gender of the desirer or object of desire, is non-normative. Furthermore, this playful term is meant to capture some of the pleasure that comes with intentional subversion, a pleasure that is linked to the kinky desires described in this chapter.
3. See the following: Winfried Schleiner, “Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 605–19; Laura Levine, *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Valerie Traub, “The (In)Significance of Lesbian Desire in Early Modern England,” in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). For example, Schleiner concludes his essay on transvestitism in Renaissance romances by stating that “while the episodes in question are ... ultimately heterosexually centered, the ambiguity resulting from cross-dressing becomes a vehicle for discussing homosexuality” (“Male Cross-Dressing,” 619). Considering staged crossdressing, Levine argues that anti-theatrical polemicists like Stephen Gosson considered male audience attraction to boys in women’s clothes an effeminizing process that encouraged homosexuality (see *Men in Women’s Clothing*, 10–25). Finally, Traub famously and compellingly argues that FTM crossdressing plays contain a “theatricalized ‘feminine’ homoeroticism that has no discernible material equivalent in the fantasized typologies in which early modern women were represented” (“(In)Significance of Lesbian Desire,” 79).
4. See Tracey Sedinger, “‘If Sight and Shape be True’: The Epistemology of Cross-dressing on the London Stage,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1997): pp. 63–79, 67. Here, Sedinger is speaking specifically about the boy crossdressers playing female characters on the early modern stage. Nevertheless, her formulation that “the crossdresser exploits or creates an erotics based not on a clear and distinct representation of the object but on a moment that frustrates representation” (68) posits the sort of attraction to and attachment to gender-queerness that is central to my discussion here.
5. Of course, further complicating these arrangements is the idea that *all* of the genders in *any* encounter are performances, not just the cross-gender ones. Butler summarizes this argument, and its messiness, in *Undoing Gender*:  

the widely cited point that *Gender Trouble* made was the following: that categories like butch and femme were not copies of a more originary heterosexuality, but they showed how the so-called originals, men and women within the heterosexual frame, are similarly constructed, performatively established. So the ostensible copy is not explained through reference to an origin, but the origin is understood to be as performative as the copy. Through performativity, normative and nonnormative gender norms are equalized. But some of those performative accomplishments claim the place of nature or claim the place of symbolic necessity, and they do this only by occluding the ways in which they are performatively accomplished. (209)

To claim that “the biological body” beneath the dress has any more real meaning than the performance and appearance of gender is to make an essentialist

assumption, to claim that “gender is a truth that is somehow there, interior to the body, as a core or as an internal essence, something that we cannot deny, something which, natural or not, is treated as given” (Ibid., 212). That said, I think it is right to talk about the essentialized body as part of understanding the queer desire depicted in these early modern texts, because the texts themselves are always aware of and playing with the tensions between body and performance, and because it is the erotic charge of that play that marks the kind of queer heterosexuality I want to discuss.

6. Another way to think about this sort of queer heterosexuality might be in terms of butchness or female masculinity (see Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998)) and effeminacy or “twink” identities (see Mimi Schippers, “Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony,” *Theory and Society* 36(1) (2007); pp. 85–102) in the queer community. Being attracted to masculinity in a cisgender woman or femininity in a cisgender man is not the same as being heterosexual, but it involves attractions to gender play and queerness in a way that may not be strictly homosexual either. Yet another way to think of it would be through the recently coined term “skoliosexual,” which refers to a sexual and romantic attraction toward gender non-binary individuals; the term has been critiqued as potentially fetishizing, but is nevertheless gaining some ground as another form of queer identity.
7. See Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
8. The introduction to Valerie Traub’s *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) begins not precisely with an example of early modern lesbian, or female-female, desire, but rather with the troubling instance of female desire for a male-to-female cross-dresser in the drama *Il Pastor Fido* and in the paintings it inspired.
9. Giovanni Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido: or The Faithfull Shepheard. Translated out of Italian into English* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede for Simon Waterson, 1602), E2. (EEBO notes that the translator is identified on [A]1v as a kinsman of Sir Edward Dymock, possibly John Dymock or Charles Dymock.) Further references to *Il Pastor Fido* are cited in the text.
10. Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 1, 3.
11. Ibid., 3.
12. I discuss *Gallathea* in Chapter 4.
13. This focus on the crossdressed pair is true whether or not the viewer has an interest or investment in crossdressed desire; consider, for example, Dympna Callaghan’s discussion of the photograph *Station of the Cross, Vatican City* (Rotimi Fani-Koyodo, 1991), where she claims that “the axis of vision in the painting is gay regardless of the sexuality, or, for that matter, the gender of the boy, the photographer, or the viewer.” See Dympna Callaghan, “The Terms of Gender: ‘Gay’ and ‘Feminist’ Edward II,” in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 275–79.
14. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 77–78.
15. For more on the racialized aesthetics of this image, particularly the racialized nymph, in whom Traub sees “a resistance to heterosexual coupling” (*Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 362n4), Traub rightly directs the reader to Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Racial Difference in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell

- University Press, 1995), as well as to Hall's "Object into Object?: Some Thoughts on Black Women in Early Modern Culture," in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, eds. Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 346–79. Erickson also refers to this painting in his epilogue to *Early Modern Visual Culture* (380–89).
16. Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 2.
  17. Notice here how the romance/classical setting of the scene allows the painter to further queer Mirtillo's gender presentation. If all of the women were wearing form-fitting seventeenth-century dresses, his ability to pass might be hindered. However, in a scene in which everyone's clothes are loosely draped and varied, his body is less revealed. In fact, the fabric of his dress blends with Amarillis's, emphasizing their similarity and connection. Even when the body does show, though, perhaps it does not matter to a reader/viewer/audience willing to unsee the male body: see Peter Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 64–83.
  18. Of the extant painted versions of the Amarillis and Mirtillo story that I found in my research, only one represents Mirtillo as obviously male: in Adriaen van Nieuwlandt the Younger's *Amarillis Crowning Mirtillo* (1648), Mirtillo's dress is askew, showing a clearly male chest in contrast to Amarillis's revealed breasts. Significantly, this scene is also the only one with no kissing women, and no depicted onlookers; it has no other human subjects. Though it is perhaps more obviously pornographic than the other images (Mirtillo is fondling Amarillis's breast), it lacks the queerly charged erotic subtext of the other images. Significantly, Traub uses the Breenbergh image in her introduction to *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, but not the van der Lisse.
  19. Thanks to Jessica C. Murphy for this observation. It is hard to know whether this apparent Adam's apple is intentional, but it is worth noting that the Adam's apple is a secondary sex characteristic so thoroughly associated with cisgender men that many trans women undergo chondrolaryngoplasty surgery, a tracheal shave intended to reduce the cartilage bump. It is thus especially significant that this detail might be one that queers Mirtillo's gender presentation in Breenbergh's painting.
  20. <http://museumsuk.net/en/collection/object/48632/amarillis-crowning-mirtillo-with-a-floral-wreath>.
  21. This is not a typo. The painting's title is indeed *Blind Man's Buff*, not *Blind Man's Bluff*. The term *buff* in this case refers specifically to the blindfolded player in this game (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "buff," accessed "buff, n.5". OED Online. December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/24296?rskey=phiVRG&result=4> (accessed February 01, 2016)). In this instance, one wonders whether the artist is making a pun on the alternate meaning of "buff," (buff, n.2. OED Online. December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/24292?redirectedFrom=in+the+buff> (accessed February 01, 2016) having to do with nakedness (ibid.). In the instance depicted in the painting, the blindfolded "buff" would only be revealed as a blind *man* if he were in the "buff," stripped of his women's clothing.
  22. The Old Arcadia manuscript is dated to the 1570s and 1580s, before Sidney's 1586 death; Fulke Greville, Dr. Matthew Gwinne, and, possibly, John Florio edited the 1590 edition; Mary Sidney Herbert and Hugh Sanford edited a second edition, printed in 1593. Both editions were printed for William Posonby. For more on the publication history of the Arcadia, and the debates surrounding it, see Joel Davis, "Multiple Arcadias and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke," in *Studies in Philology* v.101n.4 (Fall 2004), pp. 401–30.

23. Because plot details and character names vary so widely between the old and new *Arcadias* and Day's dramatic version, in the interest of clarity I have standardized the names that I use here. Because I most frequently refer to the *Old Arcadia* (1570s), I will refer to characters by their *Old Arcadia* names (Cleophila instead of Zelmane, etc.), except in instances of direct quotation.
24. Amazon crossdressers are a genre of their own; in her chapter "The Probable Impossible: Inventing Lesbians in Arcadia," in *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance*, Kathryn Schwarz calls the device of a crossdressed Amazon "a kind of a repetition compulsion" (177).
25. Cleophila's indomitable and indescribable allure has long been a subject of concern and discomfort for readers and critics of the *Arcadia*. Writing in 1964, Mark Rose captures some of the critical anxiety around Pyrocles's transformation: "This instance of transvestism has often been a source of embarrassment to Sidney's critics. Their sensibilities tell them there is something unseemly in the sight of a man dressed as a woman. Their critical assumptions, however, assure them that as Pyrocles was intended to represent the perfect prince and lover, no action of his is likely to be improper" (See Mark Rose, "Sidney's Womanish Man," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol. 15, No. 60 [Nov 1964]: 353–63, 353). Rose goes on to describe the efforts that critics take to excuse Pyrocles's perversity, including their assertion that Renaissance readers would not have been so affronted by the idea of transvestism. The article concludes, though, with Rose's belief that "Sidney ... intended his readers to find Pyrocles' disguise offensive" ("Sidney's Womanish Man," 354). This argument is, of course, an extreme one, marked by its early date and by its rhetorical stance against the "spiritual effeminacy" caused by love in the Romance.

However, it is safe to suggest that the readerly "embarrassment" that Rose takes as a given is part of the experience of reading the *Arcadia* has as much to do with all of the sexual energy and activity that surrounds Cleophila's every genderqueer move as it has to do with the fact of the crossdressing. Indeed, Steven Mentz isolates Cleophila's clothing as the *source* of his/her/their sexual appeal. He writes, "Above all Zelmane's clothes provoke. They provoke incontinent desire in Basilius ..., a tortured surrender to passion in Gynecia, and a slightly more controlled passion in Philoclea." (See Steven Mentz, "The Thigh and the Sword: Gender, Genre, and Sexy Dressing in Sidney's New Arcadia," *Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570–1640*, eds. Constance C. Relihan and Goran V. Stanivukovic [New York: Palgrave, 2003], 80). Significantly, Mentz uses the term "sexy dressing," which he borrows from modern American legal theory, a term that refers to the ways that women's clothing often distorts the enforcement of sexual harassment and assault laws. "Sexy dressing" also applies in instances of violence or harassment toward genderqueer and crossdressed individuals. For more on sexy dressing, see Duncan Kennedy, "Sexual Abuse, Sexy Dressing, and the Eroticization of Domination," *Sexy Dressing, Etc.: Essays on the Power and Politics of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). The provocation that Metz demonstrates through Cleophila's clothing hinges upon the device of crossdressing. Through his focus on Pyrocles's sexy dress, Metz locates the erotic pull that so many of Sidney's characters feel toward Cleophila in the fact of his/her/their disguise, not, as Rose might imply, despite that disguise.

26. Sir Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan Jones (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), 44. Further references are cited in the text as OA.
27. Day, *Isle of the Gulls*, 3.1.6–8. Further references are cited in the text.

28. Will Fisher's recent work on early modern cougars seems relevant here (papers presented at the 2014 meetings of RSA and SAA); perhaps it is Gynecia's age as much as her gender and her perception of Pyrocles/Cleophila's gender that makes her an unsuitable love interest.
29. This is in contrast to the kinds of gender labor in which other cisgender partners to crossdressers participate, as I discuss in Chapter 6.
30. Sidney, *Old Arcadia*, 98; Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 287. Ovid tells the story of Caeneus-Caenis in Book XII of the *Metamorphoses*; Caenis, a woman, is a virgin of Thessaly who is raped by Neptune. After the rape, Neptune promises to grant Caenis a wish, and she wishes to be transformed into a man named Caeneus, so that she will never be raped again. By bringing up the story of Caeneus, Philoclea voices a tentative desire to see Cleophila metamorphosed into a man.
31. Nevertheless, despite Gynecia's thorough investigation of Cleophila's body, and her insistence that her desire is toward a man, even Gynecia's desire is enhanced and queered by her focus as much on Cleophila's dress as his/her/their body beneath. In the lion scene where Cleophila is wounded, Gynecia conducts a physical examination while dressing the Amazon's wounds, about which Sidney demurely hedges, "I know not whether Gynecia took some greater conjectures of Cleophila's sex" (OA 45).
32. Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 244.
33. Schwarz, *Tough Love*, 201.
34. Another way to look at this moment would be to separate sexuality from romantic attachment (borrowing from the language of the asexual community); according to this model, Philoclea could be heterosexual and homoromantic, for example.
35. Melissa Sanchez queers the Urania in a different way, through her discussion of the "politics of masochism" in the romance. Sanchez argues that "While part one of the Urania focuses on the danger of self-enthrallment to idealized equations of love, loyalty, and suffering, part two of the romance pictures unions that depend less on idealized sacrifice than on mutual concession. Ultimately, the Urania proposes that erotic and political tyranny can be avoided only by relinquishing the fantasies that sustain it. Yet the balanced sovereignty that Wroth prefers may be just as much a fantasy, the elusiveness of which emerges in the fragmented, incomplete narrative of the Urania itself." Melissa E. Sanchez, "The Politics of Masochism in Mary Wroth's *Urania*," *ELH*, v.74,n.2 (Summer, 2007), pp. 449–78, 457.
36. This scene, and several other moments in the Leonius/Veralinda episode, is a direct reference to Sidney's *Arcadia*. Wroth made these allusions intentionally as an homage to Sidney and an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of his *Arcadia*. Simultaneously, though, the distance of time between their two works, and the difference of context given her position as a woman author, mark these scenes as very different from one another.
37. Lady Mary Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Binghamton: Renaissance English Text Society: Medieval and Renaissance texts and Studies, 1995), 431. Further references are cited in the text.
38. This copy of the book, now owned by Dr. Charlotte Kohler, may have been Wroth's own copy of her book, or a presentation copy; Milton presented a similarly revised edition of his prose works to the Bodleian Library. Most of Wroth's comments are marginal, and appear in the same italic script as Wroth's handwritten Folger and

- Newberry manuscripts. For more information on this copy of the *Urania* and on the convention of handwritten revision in the seventeenth century, see Josephine Roberts, "Textural Introduction," pp. cxii–cxviii; Helen Darbishire, "Pen-and-Ink Corrections in Books of the Seventeenth Centuries," *Review of English Studies* 7 (1931): 72–72; Percy Simpson, *Proof-reading in the Sixteenth Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford University Press, 1935): 297–307.
39. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "report," accessed Oct 2015. All these definitions are obsolete and rare.
  40. As Patricia Fumerton observes, Leonius's fear that he might "loose all" might also suggest the possibility of ejaculation.
  41. For a reading of these encounters as potentially lesbian, see Gwynne Kennedy, "Feminine Subjectivity in the Renaissance: The Writings of Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, and Lady Mary Wroth" (PhD diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1989), 242.
  42. For other examples of role-play around queer gender, especially in Margaret Cavendish's *Convent of Pleasure*, see Chapter 6.
  43. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "habit," accessed Oct 2015.
  44. A further reading of Leonius's gendered blush might be that the extended experience of crossdressing has somehow bodily, and perhaps permanently, changed his gender and his approaches to desiring. See Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, 2001), on the early modern ideas that clothing could imprint gender on the body.
  45. This passage also takes on the issue of class-dressing, which I take up in Chapter 5. Leonius has been dressing below his own class in order to have access to Ver-alinda, who, in turn, feared that she was too poor to pursue Leonius the prince. In this moment, both class and gender disguises are resolved at once, demonstrating their interconnectedness.
  46. The question of the crossdresser's sexual maturity is significant because it emphasizes that he is a man, not a boy; see Chapter 1, in which I show that children and women were lumped together in the broad category "not-men" for the purpose of early modern gender differentiation. There, I show that a boy dressed as a woman is less disruptive than a man doing the same.
  47. "Sport upon Sport: OR, *The Man in the S—*."
  48. For more on the layered meanings of the name "Kate," see Laurie Maguire's chapter, "The Diminutive Name: Kate," in her *Shakespeare's Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 120–51.
  49. This is a surprisingly current use of the term "passes," which is still used to discuss a person's successful performance of the gender of their choice. Along with gender performance, "passing" also carries the implied connotation of racial and class passing; thus, Kate's "passing" is imbued here with all of the social anxiety involved with patrolling class, race, and gender.
  50. Crossdressing is a common staple of bed-trick comedy; for more on the convention of men passing for women as part of bed-tricks, see Marliss C. Desens, *The Bed-Trick in English Renaissance Drama: Explorations in Gender, Sexuality, and Power* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1994). That Kate crossdresses as and seduces shepherdesses is a nod to the crossdressing-inclusive romance convention that reaches back to the *Arcadia*.
  51. Thomas Carew, "A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon, is Dearly Beloved of his Mistress," *Poems and a Maske, by Thomas Carew, Esq.* (London: printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1651), 83–84. Further citations are in text.

52. For more on “equal love” and erotic likeness, see Laurie Shannon, “Nature’s Bias: Renaissance Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness,” in “Religion, Gender, and the Writing of Women: Historicist Essays in Honor of Janet Mueller,” special issue, *Modern Philology* 98, no. 2 (Nov. 2000): 183–210.
53. Schwarz, *Tough Love*, 178.
54. *Ibid.*, 179.
55. *Ibid.*, 178.
56. Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993), 8.
57. Tristan Taormino, “The Queer Heterosexual,” *The Village Voice*, May 6, 2003.

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## 4 Crossdressing, Sex, and Gender Labor

### *Convent of Pleasure, Gallathea,* and “The Male and Female Husband”

As in Chapter 3, in this final chapter I am interested in the ways that FTM crossdressers enable new ways of thinking and talking about relational gender and sexualities in romantic dyads in early modern literature and culture; here, though, I want to expand that idea to include not only romantic pairs, but also relationship between MTF crossdressers, their partners, and their communities. In this chapter I use representations of the relationships between MTF crossdressed characters and the cisgender characters around them to explore the notion of “gender labor,” in which a cisgender partner (one whose gender identity matches his or her assigned sex) participates in cocreating his or her partner’s queer gender for the benefit of those around them. As in my discussion of queer heterosexuality, this approach relocates the crux of queerness from the crossdressed or genderqueer partner to include both lovers while considering their sexuality in its shared context. Further, attention to gender labor productively moves the discussion of crossdressers or genderqueer individuals and their partners beyond sex to include other aspects of their lived experience. While work on gender labor thus far has been situated primarily in the social sciences and has focused on contemporary subjects, as I will discuss, in this chapter I demonstrate the ways in which the concept can be generatively applied to literary analysis and fictional characters in an early modern context.

In particular, examining gender labor in drama yields especially rich results, as the co-creation and co-participation of gender and gendered interaction are further produced by the audience’s suspension of disbelief—and simultaneous awareness—of the crossdressed (and sometimes double-crossdressed) actors.<sup>1</sup> For example, in Margaret Cavendish’s *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), the enclastered Lady Happy asks an MTF crossdressed “Princess” to participate in her single-sex convent’s theatrical productions and to play the role of a male suitor. In declaring that it should be so, Lady Happy takes the lead in creating a moment of male-to-female-to-male (MTFTM) crossdressing, while simultaneously initiating gender play and performance with her crossdressed love interest. While Cavendish’s play offers a rich example of the MTF crossdresser’s place in representations of gender labor, it also provides a starting point for a discussion of an FTM crossdressing plot, from John Lyly’s *Gallathea*, while laying the

groundwork for an examination of a *hermaphroditic/intersex* narrative in a late-seventeenth-century ballad.

Why turn now to FTM and genderqueer/intersex characters in relation to MTF crossdressers, after I have argued throughout this book for the necessary recovery of and focus on MTF crossdressers specifically? In the case of *Gallathea*, I could argue that the emphasis on the boys' acting company that produced the play, along with its metatextual awareness of the boy actors' bodies as they play women playing men on the stage, make it arguably as much about boys dressed as women as it is about women dressed as boys.<sup>2</sup> The ballad, by introducing a queer body through its intersex scenario, allows for a discussion of unintentional crossdressing or, more radically, insists on locating queerness in the body itself, outside of clothing and attire.<sup>3</sup> While these are valid reasons to include these two texts in my discussion of gender labor, even more important is the fact that in this final chapter, I now discuss the MTF crossdresser *in relation to* other queer bodies and performances. If I began this text by asking why MTF crossdressers have been so overlooked, here I hope to show how generative and exciting it can be to include MTF crossdressers as central, equal players in broader discussions of early modern gender and sexuality. This work of using MTF, FTM, and intersex representations to demonstrate a single phenomenon mirrors the structure of gender labor itself, work in which two or more participants together shape gender and sexuality in their own way(s) and on their own terms. Making visible the gender labor in these texts reveals a radical, exciting early modern capacity for models of partnered investment in relational queer gender.

## Gender Labor

In "Gender Labor: Transmen, Femmes, and Collective Work of Transgression,"<sup>4</sup> Jane Ward examines a set of femme/FTM<sup>5</sup> sexual relationships as a way of understanding gender as its own form of labor and, further, of illustrating the labors provided by intimate partners to constitute gender subjectivity (237).<sup>6</sup> Because her research focuses in particular on relationships between femme-identified cisgender females in relationships with transgender males, Ward is especially interested in theorizing the feminized labors that "nurture new genders (or new gender formations) into public and private being" (Ibid.). In contrast to Judith Butler's theorization of *self-generated* (original emphasis), often involuntary acts of subject formation and performativity of gender,<sup>7</sup> Ward suggests that gender labor is

the affective and bodily efforts invested in *giving gender* to others, or actively suspending self-focus in the service of helping others achieve the varied forms of self recognition they long for. Gender labor is the work of bolstering someone's gender authenticity, but it is also the work of co-producing someone's gender irony, transgression, or exceptionality. (237)

In other words, the cisgender femme partners of Ward's study do not only bolster their partners' trans\* gender identities through surface reinforcements (such as using chosen pronouns or names); they also do so through the more complex work of actually participating in the production of the partner's gender (through sex acts and roles, through shared gender dynamics, and through the private work of thinking and/or feeling sexual orientation in connection with the partner's gender identity). Ward describes the work of gender labor taking place in the realms of intimacy, homeliness, caring, and witnessing. She categorizes three forms of gender labor in which femme partners co-produce transmasculinity: "the labor of being 'the girl,' the labor of forgetting, and the labor of alliance" (242).

Being "the girl" is perhaps the most apparent way that femme partners of trans\* masculine individuals bolster their partners' genders, one in which a partner develops or exaggerates her own gender performance to supplement and enhance her partner's. By playing "the girl" in appearance, domestic roles, and social situations, the femme partner creates space for her partner to be "the boy," even when that performance is ironic or queer.<sup>8</sup> The labor of forgetting is an internal and external process, one that might bolster the trans\* person's identity; yet it is also a private process of belief and understanding for the cisgender partner. This type of gender labor involves choosing not to know or linger on the trans\* person's full gender history. Importantly, the gender labor of forgetting is not about denial or misinformation, but rather about manipulating memory to make space for queer and inclusive narratives. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith Halberstam makes a broader argument about the queerness of willful forgetting, writing that "the contingency of queer relations, their uncertainty, irregularity, and even perversity disregards the so-called natural bonds between memory and futurity, and in the process makes an implicit argument for forgetfulness" (74).<sup>9</sup> In the gendered labor of forgetting, the femme partner knows and understands that her partner is trans\*, but she actively forgets it or chooses not to know it in order to co-produce her partner's masculinity. Forgetting in this sense can be very active;<sup>10</sup> alternately, forgetting can be passive, too, to the point at which a femme partner's real commitment to and belief in her trans\* partner's gender make the latter's gender history a non-issue in the couple's day-to-day romantic, sexual, and domestic lives. Finally, the labor of alliance is one in which both partners co-create the genders and gendered dynamics that work for them in public and in private. Together, they pick pronouns, develop behavior patterns, and build language and family structures that reflect the truth of their mutually gendered identities. Of course, any of the FTM subjects of Ward's study can constitute gender alone or without a partner. However, Ward's work shows the ways in which partners participate and deepen the development and deployment of queer gender through large and small labors.

These acts of gender labor are not only overlooked in the contemporary trans/femme relationships that Ward examines; they are also overlooked in the

gender work of Renaissance characters in plays (such as Lady Happy and her Princess in *The Convent of Pleasure* and Gallathea and Phyllida in *Gallathea*) and ballads (Mary Jewit in “Male and Female Husband”). In *The Convent of Pleasure*, for example, the cisgender Lady Happy helps her MTF crossdressed partner, the Princess, to play a masculine role well before s/he/they gives up his/her/their crossdressed disguise. To do so, she deploys all three strategies of gender labor: surrounded by a community of women, she agrees to an extended gender role play in which she actually “plays the girl” in masques within the play, thereby creating an opportunity for her partner, the Princess, to more fully take on a masculine presentation and performance. These masques provide ample opportunity for Lady Happy to demonstrate her “alliance” with the Princess’s gender presentation, which she co-creates in the everyday world of the convent as well as in the public forum of the masques. Lady Happy also demonstrates the struggle and conflict involved in the labor of forgetting as she negotiates how much she wants to know about her lover’s sex and gender.

In my discussion of *Gallathea*, I focus on the latter two forms of gender labor, which are less gender-role specific and therefore more available to the play’s double-MTFTM<sup>11</sup> crossdressing device. I contend that the labor of forgetting, of the strange epistemological stance of knowing-unknowing or refusing-to-remember, is especially helpful in understanding how and why Gallathea and Phyllida can be at once committed to each other’s masculine performances and suspicious that the other is female. Similarly, the labor of alliance explains and situates their mimetic commitment to one another despite and outside of their assigned sex. However, even the final type of labor, that of being ‘the girl’ haunts the play through the unresolved conclusion that leaves audiences wondering who will take up the labor of masculinity and femininity when the two lovers, who have thus far expressed only queer gender together, are meant to resolve their love in a heterosexual marriage. Finally, the ballad “The Male and Female Husband” can be read as a narrative describing a cisgender partner’s process of encountering and engaging with all three aspects of gender labor. The ballad suggests the social and community impact that such labor can make in the life of its intersex and genderqueer protagonist, Mary Jewit.

Other contemporary sociological scholarship following Ward continues to have striking parallels to this reading of *Gallathea*. For example, in “Normative Resistance and Inventive Pragmatism: Negotiating Structure and Agency in Transgender Families,” Carla A. Pfeffer also writes about cisgender female partners of trans\*males, asking:

Are relationships between trans people and their partners socially assimilationist and normative or counternormative? [...] How might choosing to ‘pass’ as unremarkably heterosexual hold both pragmatic and limiting potentials for these couples in terms of mediating social identity group membership and accessing valuable social institutions and resources? (577)<sup>12</sup>

Pfeffer's questions are applicable to the core of the discourses surrounding the queerness of the lovers' relationships in *The Convent of Pleasure*, *Gallathea*, and "The Male and Female Husband." Are they counternormative and queer (and, if so, what sort of queer)? Alternately, are they ultimately assimilationist in seeking a heterosexual solution to both the characters' desire and romantic connection? The question about the choice to "pass" is a return to Ward's notion of gender labor in which "passing," when it is the goal, is very much an intentional, mutually constituted project. This too is the crux of the three texts discussed in this chapter: are the lovers ever fully "passing" as their gender of choice, with each other or in the broader world of the play? If they are, or if they seem to be, their success in doing so comes from their mutual labors of forgetting and alliance, and, to a lesser degree, that other labor of "being 'the girl'" (Ward 242), Ward's key form of gender labor. If they are not passing, or are choosing not to pass, then are they (or their authors) intentionally or unintentionally resisting the play's assimilationist, heteronormative drive?

Recent trans\* scholarship has helped to clarify the stakes of gender labor and passing in life and, by extension, in literary representation. For example, Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook demonstrate the ways that queer genders undermine heterosexuality: "Heterosexuality requires a binary sex system, as it is predicated on the seemingly natural attraction between two types of bodies defined as opposites. The taken-for-granted expectation that heterosexuality and gender identity follow from genitalia produces heteronormativity—even though in most social interactions genitals are not actually visible" (443).<sup>13</sup> If and when trans\* people "pass" in their desired social genders, their appearance may be taken (incorrectly) as evidence of their biological or genital sex. Yet sexual encounters can "disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions that people who look like women have vaginas and people who look like men have penises" and, through this disruption, "illuminate the processes and mechanisms behind the everyday unfolding of not just doing gender but also doing heteronormativity" (Ibid., 444). The genital question, or, more broadly, the question of biological and anatomical sex, is one that especially lurks in the literal margins and off-stage areas of *Gallathea* since Phyllida and Gallathea's repeated romantic dalliances take place outside the reader's, or theatrical audience's, view. One of the great unknowns in the play—and I suggest that this unknowing is perhaps best described as the active gender labor of forgetting—is whether Phyllida and Gallathea engage in sexual activity; if so, do the types of sexual activity reveal any anatomical or biological information between them? Theodora Jankowski insists, for example, that the fact that Phyllida and Gallathea continue to claim to be unsure if the other is male or female even after their off-stage dalliance signifies the text is offering an alternative to masculinist and genital-focused sexuality by presenting "the possibility of a kind of desire and an economy of pleasure that is focused on the lovers' entire selves rather than that small portion located between their legs" (263).<sup>14</sup>

While for Jankowski this seems to mean, in part, making room for same-sex desire and sexual practices between women, I suggest instead the new economy of pleasure is grounded in *Gallathea's* suggestion that it might be possible—even optimal—to know *and* not know about a lover's body in several competing and complementary relational ways: by letting them “be the girl,” through the labor of unknowing, by making gender more than anatomical through the labor of forgetting, and by mutually sustaining and enjoying both unknowing and androgyny through the labor of alliance. This erotics of unknowing is described in graphic terms in “The Male and Female Husband,” where a frank description of genitals and sexual mechanics serve as the starting place, not the conclusion, of the ballad's exploration of intersex sexuality. In *The Convent of Pleasure*, shared gender labor toward a mutually constituted anatomical unknowing holds the play's entire erotic charge. As I discuss below, once sex is revealed and given dominance over gender presentation, and heterosexual marriage takes dominance over mutual gender-determining play, Cavendish's text loses its entire erotic energy.

### Gender Labor in *The Convent of Pleasure*

In Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*, Lady Happy has decided that, rather than marry, she will encloister herself in a convent of her own devising, one that worships nature and celebrates pleasure and learning, with only unmarried and widowed women allowed, and no men at all.<sup>15</sup> Her same-sex utopian experiment is a success until a Princess with a “Masculine presence” (1.3, p. 226) joins the convent.<sup>16</sup> The Princess is later revealed to be a crossdressing Prince. Though Lady Happy (and, indeed, the play's audience) does not yet know that the Princess is a cisgender male, she nevertheless notices and admires the Princess's masculine gender presentation. Lady Happy takes this admiration a step further when she agrees to co-create a masculine identity for the Princess, supporting the latter's right to masculine presentation even within the all-female cloister. Katherine Kellett describes *The Convent of Pleasure* as “a play about virginal women who create a separatist community and who are then seemingly reined back into heteronormativity,” which, as Kellett demonstrates, “highlights the instabilities of identity and of performance as a genre” 436).<sup>17</sup> It is true that the play can be read as an exploration of female same-sex desire in which that desire is ultimately contained before it can interrupt heterosexual marriage and reproduction: in this case, the crossdressing device can be seen to further minimize the threat of female queer desire since the eroticized relationship is always technically queer heterosexuality between a cisgender man and woman. However, the way in which Lady Happy and her Princess define and quite literally *stage* their relationship demands that we consider both female-female sexuality and the other gendered arrangements and intentional labor that produces it.<sup>18</sup> While Kellett queers the play

by framing it in terms of Butlerian gender performativity, I want to offer an additional way of organizing and understanding the very strange, and strangely queer, romantic episodes in the play by viewing them through the lens of gender labor.<sup>19</sup>

Within the first few lines of dialogue between Lady Happy and the Princess, the still-stealthy crossdresser requests her host's help, saying, "I desire you would be my Mistress, and I your Servant; and upon this agreement of Friendship I desire you will grant me one Request" (3.1. p. 228). When Lady Happy agrees to grant anything in her power, the Princess requests, "Why then, I observing in your several Recreations, some of your Ladies do accoutre Themselves in Masculine-Habits, and act Lovers-parts; I desire you will give me leave to be sometimes so accoutered and act the part of your loving servant" (3.1).<sup>20</sup> Lady Happy acquiesces, saying, "I shall never desire to have any other loving Servant than your Self" (3.1). Key to this discussion is the fact that the Princess is, so far, passing as a masculine woman. Therefore, her request to Lady Happy, to play a servant and to dress as a man, is a request for Lady Happy's alliance in the labor of creating a masculine presentation, regardless of anatomical gender. Lady Happy also agrees to do the gender labor of "being 'the girl'" (Ward 242): in agreeing to perform the part of the Princess's female lover in a series of performances and plays put on at the convent, she is also agreeing to use her own normative gender to prop up the Princess's masculine performance. While Lady Happy's own gender presentation is not queer, it can bolster and support the Princess's presentation by contrast and collaboration. Through her declaration, "I shall never desire to have any other loving Servant than your Self," she not only gives the Princess permission to crossdress (or, to complicate things, to uncrossdress), but she also declares her support of his masculine self. Readers may wonder here if Lady Happy might know that her Princess is really a Prince and is allowing him to dress in a masculine style in a nod to his true identity. However, the text resists this reading by extending the Princess's (Prince's) secret, costuming and re-costuming him under Lady Happy's supervision several times before his sex is revealed.

Kellett rightly calls these moments "heteronormative performances" (421) that reveal what Butler in turn describes as the "constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original" but the characters' mutual decision about the Princess's presentation within the convent demonstrates that the two lovers are not just revealing that heterosexuality is always-already constructed. Rather, their negotiation about whether the Princess can "play the boy" to Lady Happy's "girl" begins to reveal the intimacy andotics of the very act of constructing any sex/gender dynamic, especially a queer one. Instead of focusing on what Lady Happy does or does not know, a gender-labor reading of the text directs the reader's attention instead to the trust and investment Lady Happy shows through her willing alliance with the Princess's chosen gender identity and presentation. Compare the Princess's crossdressing here, for instance, with the subplot discussion of MTF crossdressing

in 2.4, in which a group of men excluded from the convent consider and reject the idea of engaging in MTF crossdressing to gain access. After listing the many challenges an MTF crossdresser would face in order to pass for female, Adviser says, “we are as untoward to make Courtesies in Petticoats, as Women are to make Legs in Breeches” (2.4). It is remarkable that, only lines away from this harsh but reasonable discussion of how gender performance is difficult and unsustainable, the Princess is passing for female through the act of MTF crossdressing; moreover, s/he/they is actually doublecrossdressing and performing MTFTM crossdressing, without any of the challenges listed by Adviser and his friends. This is a function of the distinction between the main- and sub-plots; it is also evidence that the Prince’s/Princess’s success in inhabiting his/her/their genders of choice is bolstered by the cooperation and co-production of Lady Happy and her convent.

In the middle of the play, Cavendish uses soliloquies and asides to stage some of Lady Happy’s thoughts about her emotions toward the Princess. These lines, including “More innocent Lovers never can there be, /Then my most Princely Lover, that’s a She” (3.2) and “But why may I not love a Woman with the same affection I could a Man?” (4.1), have rightly been read as overt discussions about the possibility of female-female sexuality as it might play out in the convent. At the same time, though, they reveal that Lady Happy, while “happy” to play at heterosexuality with the Princess, nevertheless resists the final act of gender labor or, as Ward articulates it, the work of forgetting. By emphasizing her continual awareness of the discrepancy between the Princess’s masculine appearance, behavior, and attire, and the unforgotten fact of the Princess’s (actually false) female anatomy, Lady Happy lets the audience know that she has not become so fully invested in co-producing the Princess’s masculinity that she has forgotten about his/her/their sex. Further, the scenes keep the reader from fully forgetting as well.

Yet, even as Lady Happy resists forgetting the Princess’s (presumed) sex in full alliance with the latter’s chosen gender performance, the text itself begins to enact the very labor of forgetting that Lady Happy had initially resisted. Lady Happy’s labor of forgetting can be seen unfolding through the stage directions for the series of plays within *The Convent of Pleasure* in which the partners perform, each time in their chosen genders. Because this play was likely written to be read, not seen on stage, it is fair to argue that these stage directions, meant to be a part of the read experience of the play, are a valid and significant part of its meaning and its fullest representation of the gender labor between the lovers.<sup>21</sup> At the beginning of Act 4, the notes state in a straightforward way, “Enter Lady Happy Drest as a Shepherdess ... Enter the Princess in Masculine Shepherd’s clothes” (4.1). This note describes gendered clothing and shows how such clothing demonstrates both Lady Happy’s feminine role and the Princess’s masculine one. A bit later in the scene, the notes go further, showing, “The Scene is changed into a Green, or Plain, where Sheep are feeding, and a May-Pole in the middle. L. Happy as a Shepherdess and the Princess are sitting there. Enter another Shephard

and Wooes the Lady Happy” (Ibid.). The notes continue to call the Princess by his/her/their feminine title; indeed, the play will always maintain this title, even abbreviating it to the gender-neutral “Princ.” all the way through to the play’s heterosexual marriage conclusion. Yet it also shows the lovers performing their agreed-upon gender roles; further, by introducing “another Shephard,” the note does some work to normalize the Princess’s identity as a male shepherd him/her/themself.

There are two other notes which demonstrate the role of gender labor in the play, but both come after the small heading—which is included in only some editions of the text, and printed on a slip of paper pasted between the lines in even those—that informs the reader that parts of all of the final scenes are “written by my Lord Duke” (p. 238).<sup>22</sup> As Amy Greenstadt puts it, this intrusion means that the end of the play, including the Princess’s *uncrossdressing*, contains a “double revelation: as the ostensibly female princess is revealed to be a prince, so the ostensibly female-authored text is revealed to have a male co-author. Also at these moments, marriage enters the scene” (176). Greenstadt and others have argued that the intrusion by the author’s husband William, Duke of Newcastle, means that the end of the play is corrupted by co-authorship: the marriage that ends the play mirrors the collaboration that ends the play. However, the notes, whether Newcastle or Cavendish wrote them, continue the same gender labor work they did before the male co-author’s intrusion. Later, in 4.1, we see that “The Scene is opened, and there is presented a Rock as in the Sea, whereupon sits the Princess and Lady Happy; the Princess as the Sea-God Neptune, the Lady Happy as a Sea-Goddess.” In the final act, the notes explain:

Enter the Princess and Lady Happy; The princess is in a Man’s Apparel as going to Dance; they Whisper sometime; then the Lady Happy takes a Ribbon from her arm, and gives it to the Princess, who gives her another instead of that, and kisses her hand. They go in and come presently out again with all the Company to Dance, the Musick plays. (5.1)

Here, again, the description of the characters’ attire and the fact that both roles are constructed both demonstrate that the lovers are continuing their role play, continuing to invite the reader to see the Princess and Lady Happy perform their chosen genders in relation to one another.

The stage directions that follow Lady Happy’s agreement with the Princess become a series of artful declarations, each helping reader and players alike to forget that the Princess should play any part other than shepherd, Sea-God, or male dancer. The success of this textual gender labor, in support of Lady Happy’s work to bolster the Princess’s masculinity, is evident in the play’s conclusion when, after having been revealed to be a man, the Prince marries Lady Happy. Their wedding, like their courtship, is artfully described in stage directions: “Enter the Prince as Bridegroom, and

the Lady Happy as Bride, hand in hand under a Canopy born over their heads by men; the Magistrates march before, then the Hoboys; and then the Bridal-Guests, as coming from the Church, where they were married” (5.3). The text gives us very few clues to determine whether this marriage is a good thing or not. On the one hand, as Julie Crawford points out, “*The Convent of Pleasure* makes its own case for the restoration of the privileges and status of the nobility, including, and even especially, the Cavendishes themselves” (179); the conclusion can certainly be read in support of Cavendish’s own royalist politics compounded by her personal and familial material investment in a return to royal power. On the other hand, Lady Happy is no longer “Happy,” having married, and the convent is shuttered when she chooses marriage over female enclustering. In either case, however, the stage directions show how little has changed in the co-production of gender performance between the lovers. Other than the switch from Princess to Prince, the wedding’s stage directions shows the exact same couple and organizing of gender as the crossdressed scenes do. Rather than resolving the crossdressing plot with a straight marriage, then, the stage directions show that the gender labor of the couple continues, and, further, that their heterosexual marriage may be as constructed and performed as their played heterosexuality in the convent.

### Gender Labor in *Gallathea*

Gender labor is pushed to its extremes in John Lyly’s *Gallathea* (1592), in which two female-to-male crossdressers, Gallathea and Phyllida, each thinking (perhaps) that the other is male, create and enact romantic love scenes that involve gender play and a co-created divestment from anatomical sex. Interpretations of this undoubtedly queer play have primarily focused on how it can be read for signs of female-female or male-male same-sex attraction (particularly in relation to the bodies of the boy actors of St. Paul’s Cathedral). Here, I offer the alternative possibility that the play is less about any one fixed sexual identity or attraction; it is more about the partnered project of creating and maintaining gender. *Gallathea* has long been of interest to scholars of early modern gender and sexuality, but it has also evaded neat categorizations. Written no earlier than 1583 and no later than 1585 (most likely in early 1584),<sup>23</sup> the pastoral romance was part of the repertoire of the Saint Paul’s Boys’ Acting Company,<sup>24</sup> and it was performed at least once at court for Elizabeth I (hence its focus, however complicated, on virginity and chastity). The play appeared in a 1595 quarto based on an authorial manuscript, and it is usually reprinted with the addition of two songs made in Edward Blount’s 1632 collection of Lyly’s court comedies.

In the primary plot of *Gallathea*, the sea god Neptune demands a sacrifice of a beautiful virgin from the town of Lincolnshire every five years.<sup>25</sup> As the time of the sacrifice approaches, two fathers (each believing his own daughter to be the most beautiful and, therefore, the most likely to be

selected for sacrifice) separately decide to disguise their daughters, Gallathea and Phyllida, as boys and have them hide in the woods to escape detection and death.<sup>26</sup> In the woods, Gallathea and Phyllida meet and fall in love while still in disguise. Each claims to believe that the other is a boy and, simultaneously, often seems to suspect that the boy she loves is perhaps actually a maid. Because the actors performing as Gallathea and Phyllida were boys, the staged effect was of boys, dressed as girls, dressed as boys, in love. Though the crossdressing plot is loosely based upon classical sources, including Ovid's "Iphis and Ianthe,"<sup>27</sup> Lyly invented the double-crossdressing plot. As Michael Shapiro notes, Lyly's use of the "cross-gender disguise is rare for the mid-1580s and does not recur in his later works."<sup>28</sup> In the play's bizarre conclusion, Gallathea and Phyllida's true identities are revealed, as is their love relationship. Venus, judging their love to be true, declares that she can turn one of the lovers into a man, so that they may marry. The play never specifies which of the two will become male, but Gallathea and Phyllida nevertheless agree to the change.

Significantly, the play avoids staging the heterosexual marriage promised in the conclusion, just as it refuses to stage the most intimate scenes between the two lovers in the forest. Thus, the play has been read in many ways: as lesbian, showing love between two female characters through the often-ineffective veil of their male disguises;<sup>29</sup> as gay, showing love between two boy actors, dressed as boys, through the often-ineffective veil of the fact that they are meant to be playing women;<sup>30</sup> as straight since the resolution appears to seek heterosexual closure; and as queer, because the characters' heterosexual closure is elusive, unstaged, and cannot undo the erotic work of the play's body. This complexity and unfixity at the heart of the play also makes it an ideal space to explore the work that Gallathea and Phyllida undertake in creating their own gendered experiences. In turn, adding gender labor to the mix allows for a reading that is less dependent on the play's resolution (or lack thereof), or on the biological aspects of sex in *Gallathea*, than it is on the performance and practice of gendered meaning-making between lovers. In a play that frustratingly keeps sex acts and sex changes off the stage, the labor and mutuality of co-producing and sustaining gender presentation is nevertheless front and center.

The first crossdressing character in the play, Gallathea, initially appears already in her boy's attire (in fact, the audience will never see her dressed in women's clothes, requiring a labor on our parts to know, understand, and remember that the character is female, even though she is played by a boy and dressed as a boy).<sup>31</sup> In the opening act, she asks her father "why you have thus disguised me" (1.1.8). Here, though already passing for male, Gallathea seems detached from her masculine presentation and sees it as something her father has done to her, not as something she is producing on her own. Similarly, when Gallathea's future love Phyllida initially appears (in female clothes), the latter is at first resistant to her father Melebeus's plan. Men's apparel, she says, "will neither become my body nor my mind"

(1.3.16). Here, while her literal meaning is that the men's clothes will not suit her, the dialogue also foreshadows the play's conclusion, in which one of the two lovers will have the chance to *become* male in body and, presumably, in mind.<sup>32</sup> The idea that her clothing cannot, at this point in the play, "become" her matches Phyllida's sense that her gender presentation is exclusively external and unrelated to her sex or identity.

From the start, Phyllida associates crossdressing with sexual activity, telling her father that, "[In boys' clothes] I must keep company with boys, and commit follies unseemly for my sex, or keep company with girls and be more wanton than becometh me" (1.3.18–20). Even here, the text resists a single directionality for Phyllida's crossdressed sexuality; she may commit unseemly follies with boys, *or* she may become wanton with girls. Androgyny (along with boyishness) remains polymorphous in terms of desire and sexual activity. At the same time, Phyllida shows an initial sense of herself as essentially female, regardless of her clothing change. She warns Melebeus, "I shall be ashamed of my long hose and short coat and so unwarily blab out something by blushing at everything" (1.3.20–22), implying that her very body will betray her disguise because of her innate modesty and tendency to blush, both traditionally feminine qualities. The associative connection between femininity and blushing becomes a first bridge of connection between the two crossdressers when Gallathea re-enters the play in Act 2; still dressed as a boy, but now separated from her father, Gallathea worries, just as Phyllida did, that her blushing will "blab." Her first lines of soliloquy mirror Phyllida's: "Blush, Gallathea, that must frame thy affection fit for thy habit, and therefore be thought immodest because thou art unfortunate" (2.1.1–3). The two crossdressers model their sameness in their shared blushes and concern for modesty, which must be abandoned in their new clothes. Each works to "frame [her] affection" to "fit ... [her] habit," a confusing notion in which "affection" can mean both behavior and fondness, and "habit" can mean both attire and an old way of being. Thus, Lyly again resists a single reading of the two crossdressers' relationship: do they develop affections (fondnesses) because of their habits (clothing), desiring one another's masculinity, or because of their habits (ways of being), desiring one another's female bodies or female socialization? Or is their courtship actually motivated by their development of male affections (behaviors) that sexualize their actions and make them wanton, as Phyllida suspected these affections might? In making the decision to hide their blushes and suit their clothes, Gallathea and Phyllida take their first steps toward accepting their temporary masculine identities, a step which enables their queer courtship.

Indeed, initially both Gallathea and Phyllida are resistant to their fathers' crossdressing plans and uncomfortable in their disguises. Crossdressed and alone in the woods, each essentializes her true femaleness, which she fears will reveal her through the physical display of blushing or the emotional limitations of modesty. However, as soon as the characters catch sight of one

another, as soon as there are two crossdressers in relation to one another, their attitudes toward and performances of their genders shift. Together, mutually, they begin the queer gender play that is at the core of *Gallathea*. When Gallathea first spots Phyllida, in the first moment when both are dressed as male and present on the stage at the same time, she says, “But whist, here cometh a lad. I will learn of him how to behave myself” (2.1.11–12). At least at first, Gallathea takes an uncomplicated view of Phyllida’s gender, reading her as male. Significantly, though, Gallathea thinks that she can borrow from “his” masculinity—that Phyllida is a boy who can help her, Gallathea, become better at being a boy herself. Thus, even before the two speak, the play establishes the idea of gender labor: the idea that one boy can hope another can teach him how to wear and navigate the trappings of manhood.

Phyllida takes a similar tack when she sees Gallathea approaching. She tells herself, “It is a pretty boy and fair. He might well have been a woman; but because he is not, I am glad I am, for now under the color of my coat I shall decipher the follies of their kind” (2.1.19–22). These rich lines demonstrate the interconnectivity of the two lovers’ genders, at least in Phyllida’s case. First, she recognizes that Gallathea appears to be a boy, and she sustains that belief even as she observes what a pretty boy “he” is. Further, she chooses to do what Ward would call the labor of forgetting by overlooking Gallathea’s suspicious prettiness and accepting the latter as male, because that work allows her (Phyllida) to “be ‘the girl.’” Phyllida’s admiration for Gallathea, and her work to see the latter as male despite possible evidence to the contrary, allows her to be glad to be (secretly) female. At the same time, her attraction to Gallathea does not inspire her to reveal herself; instead, she wants to go even deeper into disguise, so that “under cover of her coat” she may learn about boys and masculinity by watching Gallathea. Thus, Phyllida’s approach to Gallathea demonstrates the labor of alliance as well as that of forgetting; she understands that she will be able to “do” her gender performance better if she does it in proximity to Gallathea. In considering that Gallathea might be female and crossdressed just as she herself is, and then by denying that idea and suggesting instead that Gallathea has something to teach her about maleness and the follies of boys, Phyllida introduces the idea that she can participate in supporting or dismantling someone else’s gender presentation. She does notice Gallathea’s suspiciously familiar beauty, and she does seem to suspect, here and later, that Gallathea might be female—this option is especially available to Phyllida, as she herself is engaged in MTF crossdressing, so she certainly knows it is a possibility in the world of the play. Instead of pursuing this option, however, she engages in the gender labor of forgetting: she shelves her concern and instead buttresses Gallathea’s performance by intentionally reading the latter’s body as that of a real boy with the capacity to teach her real boy things.

This labor of forgetting occurs in an equal but opposite way during the mimetic moment in which Gallathea similarly wonders at Phyllida’s beauty,

suspicious in a boy: “I know not how it cometh to pass, but yonder boy is in mine eye too beautiful. I pray the gods the ladies think him not their dear” (2.1.44–6).<sup>33</sup> In the first line of the thought, Gallathea brings up the possibility that Phyllida is not passing for male fully, but in the very next line she labors to forget that idea, using a male pronoun and assuming, aggressively, that the nymphs of the woods might be in love with Phyllida-as-boy, thus bolstering both Phyllida’s performed gender and presumed heterosexuality. Even this early in the play, Lyly plays with the queerness of both crossdressers’ genders and highlights their androgynous presentation; not for the last time, the lovers notice and comment upon one another’s femininity. Yet they simultaneously invest in maintaining belief in their disguises: Phyllida plans to learn about masculinity by observing Gallathea, while Gallathea projects male heterosexuality and an imagined female gaze upon Phyllida. While it is possible that Gallathea and Phyllida are each genuinely fooled by the other’s disguise, and that these references to clues about their essential femininity are meant to be moments of dramatic irony for audience members who know the crossdressing plot, the language of their mutual perception is nevertheless doing the work of constituting, validating, and bolstering their crossdressed gender presentations. It is worth noting in this scene, too, that the lovers’ gender labor has an extended effect on the audience, amplifying the disguise plot’s dramatic irony and reminding us, repetitively, that what we see is not what it seems. Even as the lovers practice forgetting, they remind us of the gender labor in their relationship.

If Gallathea and Phyllida’s initial impressions of one another are grounded primarily in the gender labor of forgetting, the actual dialogue between these crossdressers demonstrates the labor of alliance in full effect. Though the text is deliberately evasive as to whether or not either lover knows the truth of the other’s sex, it nevertheless shows them playing together with the queerness of their genders and their relationship. This playful application of alliance is best demonstrated in a long, flirtatious discussion between the lovers in 3.2:

- P: It is a pity that Nature framed you not a woman, having a face so fair, so lovely a countenance, so modest a behavior.
- G: There is a tree in Tylos whose nuts have shells like fire, and, being cracked, the kernel is but water.
- P: What a toy it is to tell me of that tree, being nothing to the purpose! I say ’tis pity you are not a woman.
- G: I would not wish to be a woman, unless it were because thou art a man.
- P: Nay, I do not wish thee to be a woman, for then I should not love thee, for I have sworn never to love a woman.
- G: A strange humor in so pretty a youth, and according to mine, so my self will never love a woman.
- P: It were a shame, if a maiden should be a suitor (a thing hated in that sex), that thou shouldst deny to be her servant.

- G: If it be a shame in me, it can be no commendation in you, for yourself is of that mind.
- P: Suppose I were a virgin (I blush in supposing myself one), and that under the habit of a boy were the person of a maid: if I should utter my affection with sighs, manifest my sweet love by salt tears, and prove my loyalty unspotted and my griefs intolerable, would not then that fair face pity this true heart?
- G: Admit that I were as you would have me suppose that you are, and that I should with entreaties, prayers, oaths, bribes, and whatever can be invented in love, desire your favor, would you not yield?
- P: Tush, you come in with “admit.”
- G: And you with “suppose.”
- P [aside]: What doubtful speeches be these! I fear me he is as I am, a maiden.
- G [aside]: What dread riseth in my mind! I fear the boy to be as I am, a maiden.
- P [aside]: Tush, it cannot be; his voice shows the contrary.
- G [aside]: Yet I do not think it, for he would then have blushed. (3.2.1–34)

Here, the two exchange riddles, jokes, and challenges, openly playing with the idea of gender and the limits of passing. Significantly, they agree to a model of sexuality that is heterosexually oriented (“I would not wish to be a woman, unless it were because thou art a man”), but then queer that model through a series of erotic hypotheticals and double entendres. In fact, at different points in the dialogue, each lover speaks from more than one gender identity; the two are increasing their fluency in switching between male and female voices throughout their flirtation. The series of asides that interrupts their banter demonstrates the laborious part of their gendered alliance. They each suspect, with fear and dread, that the other is female, and that their love, about which they are joking, will therefore be impossible.<sup>34</sup> In their next thoughts, though, they find some way, as if in unison, to forget that queer notion in favor of an ongoing co-production of mutual suspension of disbelief and sustaining of perception as primary evidence. In order for this kind of extended flirtation to work, there must be a co-creation of gender roles and receptions. The lovers together insist on sustaining their mutual masculine identities, even when they might know more than they let on, and they do so with a mimetic alliance that allows each to feel protected in her presentation and in the terms they have set for their relationship. This mutually created dynamic is celebrated in the charged moment in which the lovers head offstage together for a private visit in a grove. Inviting Gallathea, Phyllida says, “Come, let us into the grove and make much of one another, that cannot tell what to think of one another” (3.2.55–6). Here, the language itself supports the idea that Phyllida and Gallathea are creating something together—“mak[ing] much of one another”—though their mutually agreed-upon refusal to reveal their own, or each other’s, sex. In this seductive line (3.2.56), ambiguity is part of the erotic, not-telling part of

the courtship. In flirting this way, Phyllida and Gallathea demonstrate their alliance in one another's gender performance through their willingness to suspend disbelief, accept information at face value, and back up that support with action. Because the text denies the audience a view of whatever intimate or sexual acts that might take place in the grove, gender labor takes the place of the sex act; the mutuality of the couple's interactions, their alliance, and their intentional forgetfulness enable the only visual evidence of their romantic connection.

The two take the co-creation of gender roles in their relationship further when Phyllida suggests, "Seeing we are both boys, and both lovers, that our affection may have some show, and seem as it were love, let me call thee mistress" (4.4.15–17). Here, the two begin to create their own language and terms for their relationship, dependent on the agreed-upon terms of their alliance ("we are both boys, and both lovers"). Phyllida's term of choice, "mistress," also allows her and Gallathea to test the limits of their shared labor of forgetfulness. To call Gallathea "mistress" while also insisting that Gallathea is passing for a boy is possible, but it requires sustained effort to hold both ideas simultaneously. Gallathea pushes the idea still further, replying, "I accept that name, for divers before have call'd me mistress" (4.4.18). How can this not be a confession? How can Gallathea ask Phyllida to integrate this information with their carefully achieved agreement that they are both passing as male? The answer comes in a vague pun, "there lie the mistress," which plays on the homophone of "mistress" and "mysteris" (4.4.20).

The pair of lovers' ability to play, linguistically and personally, with their names and histories demonstrates the success of their gender labor. They appear happy, at least for this scene, to sustain anatomical mystery in favor of role play and agreement. In reading this scene, Kent Cartwright refers to the lovers' enjoyment in "deferring certainty" and "willed uncertainty," capturing the idea of knowing unknowing and demonstrating the pleasure and potential in such an act (219). Just as the couples in Ward's study rely on the labors of forgetting and alliance to pass in the world, so too do Gallathea and Phyllida use these techniques. However, while Ward's criticism focuses on the often-overlooked labor of the cisgender female partners in relationships and their disproportionate, invisible labor to support their trans\* partners' presentation, Lyly's *Gallathea* offers a model of more mutual labor, one in which both partners have gender presentations in need of preservation *and* both participate in the work of sustaining, maintaining, and giving veracity to each other's gender presentations. This mutuality makes sense because of Phyllida and Gallathea's mutual disguises, but it also reflects the broader balance and equality in their relationship. Both queer in gender, both queer in desire, both ambivalent, the two mutually constitute the queer dynamic of their interactions.

Of course, the relationship of utopian queer mutuality that Phyllida and Gallathea co-construct throughout the body of the play is challenged

in the final revelation scene in 5.3. When their fathers reveal Phyllida and Gallathea's sex to Neptune and Venus, the two lovers each lament (with continued mimetic equality) the other's sex:

G: Unfortunate Gallathea, if this be Phyllida!

P: Accursed Phyllida, if that be Gallathea!

G: And wast thou all this while enamored of Phyllida, that sweet Phyllida?

P: And couldst thou dote upon the face of a maiden, thyself being one, on the face of fair Gallathea? (5.3.113–18)

Here, their total denial and disavowal seems at odds with the gender labor that they display elsewhere in the play. Each expresses disbelief that she might have loved another woman, even as she has been playing and hinting at that throughout the play. When first challenged, then, it seems that Gallathea and Phyllida's gender labor is limited to their private play in the forest and will not stand up to social and public pressure. Significantly, both fixate on the impossibility not of loving a woman but of loving a woman *as* a woman. In this sense, they have come full circle from their initial discomfort in wearing boys' clothes to the point where Phyllida regrets herself being female, if she is to love another female. In this moment, it is easy to read their previous alliance of mutually constituted, ambiguous masculinity as more a kind of flirtatious role play than a serious labor of creating, maintaining, and supporting gender presentation in the world.<sup>35</sup> Yet, despite this deflating moment of heteronormative defeat, Venus supports the relationship and suggests that there is an honesty and authenticity to the love that the lovers have built despite—and dependent upon—their crossdressed gender presentations. Venus adjudicates their love and announces, "I like well and allow it. They shall both be possessed of their wishes, for never shall it be said that Nature or Fortune shall overthrow love and faith. Is your love unspotted, begun with truth, continued with constancy, and not to be altered till death?" (5.3.134–38).

By focusing on the couple's love and faith (key components in their gender labor, which have enabled their work at forgetting and alliance), Venus emphasizes the core values that motivate the lovers' relationship but that do not depend on stable gender roles. When she addresses Gallathea and Phyllida directly, she asks them about the purity, honesty, and constancy of their love. Most striking here is Venus's emphasis on honesty. Though their entire relationship hinges on major omissions and intentional or accidental oversights, both lovers can swear honestly that their relationship was "begun with truth." This sort of truth is the essence of the labor of forgetting, in which one partner makes active decisions not to know something about the other. Though this sort of refusal to know could be seen as dishonest, the terms of the play demonstrate how choosing not to know can be honest and a sign of faith if it is generated from mutuality and love. Even as the couple withheld information about their sexes from one another, they also built an honest foundation for a queer relationship on its own terms, and Venus seeks to reward that labor.

Laurie Shannon describes the conclusion of *Gallathea*, in which Venus announces that she intends to turn one of the two lovers into a man, as “the most elaborate and thorough consent process in any play I know, because it involves clear, spoken agreement from three divinities, two fathers, and two lovers” (206). The copiousness of the consent and the complexity of its establishment, which includes debating points that range from the impossibility of a sex change (from Diana) to the risk such a change will have on familial inheritance (Tityrus), is in keeping with the theme of co-production that runs through the play. Phyllida and Gallathea’s consent in particular is once again mimetic, such that their two agreements together form one legal whole: Phyllida says, “I am content, so I may embrace Gallathea,” and Gallathea responds, “I wish it, so I may enjoy Phyllida” (5.3.148–49). While only moments before they were cursing each other’s female names, they now embrace those names in their oaths, happy to sign up for this marital resolution no matter how the mechanics take place. Here, as in *The Convent of Pleasure*, both anatomical sex and sex acts are at the edge of the text, hinted at in the terms “embrace” and “enjoy.” Though the lovers claim that they will happily undergo this change in one of their bodies in order to embrace and enjoy one another, there is nothing explicitly heterosexual about those two acts described in these lines, no physical reason that the lovers would have to be one male and one female to do those things; their agreement, therefore, seems to be more about the social aspects of creating a publicly sanctioned relationship than about rearranging any of the intimate details of their romantic partnership.

In *Gallathea*’s elusive, ambiguous conclusion, Venus announces, “Neither of them shall know whose lot it shall be till they come to the church door. One shall be; doth it suffice?” (5.3.173–75). Scholars’ queer readings of the play have focused on Venus’s plan here, her refusal to reveal which lover will be made male.<sup>36</sup> Further, scholars have emphasized Lyly’s choice to leave the transformation and wedding uncompleted, leaving it to happen or not happen in the imagination of the audience and readers, while never giving a view of Phyllida and Gallathea as man and wife. Yet these discussions often overlook the couple’s last words in the body of the play, which serve as their final, and perhaps best, moment of mutual co-creation and shared gender labor. In a scene crowded with characters, voices, and opinions, the lovers respond to the ambiguity of Venus’s offer by speaking directly and intimately to one another. Phyllida asks, “And satisfy us both, doth it not, Gallathea?”; her lover replies, “Yes, Phyllida” (5.3.176–77). Observed by the Gods and by their entire village, Gallathea and Phyllida make a mutual decision to adapt to whatever sex or gender with which they end up. With a goal of mutual satisfaction grounded in consent and agreement, one that is built on their foundation of crossdressed gender labor, the two are ready to accept whatever future is in store for them (including, but by no means limited to, sex change and heterosexual marriage).

**Gender Labor in “The Male and Female Husband”**

If *Gallathea* moves away from my book’s strict MTF crossdressing theme to include FTM crossdressing as a way of demonstrating gender labor at work, the late-seventeenth-century ballad “The Male and Female Husband” takes yet another step further away from MTF crossdressing, and from FTM crossdressing, with its addition of queer biology. I end this chapter with this intersex narrative because, like *Gallathea*, it deepens my discussion about both intimate and communal gender labor. Further, as I close this book-length discussion of MTF crossdressing, it seems right and productive to use the idea of gender labor as a transition into thinking about ways that MTF crossdressing, like that exhibited in *The Convent of Pleasure*, is also in conversation with both FTM crossdressing (as in *Gallathea*) and other underrepresented queer representations. Though the ballad describes the life of an intersex, or “hermaphroditic” protagonist, it has in common with crossdressing texts concerns about whether clothes can construct and maintain gender identity, and where the limits of cross-dressed performances might fall.<sup>37</sup> As in the plays I discussed above, the ballad demonstrates how, ultimately, sustained gender performance of any kind, but especially of the queer variety, depends not only upon the queer individual, but also upon the co-productive roles of his/her/their lover, and, more broadly, community.

The ballad describes the “Strange and Wonderful Relation how a Midwife living at St. Albans, being brought to Bed of an Hermaphrodite, brought it up in Woman’s Apparel.” Although the hermaphrodite, named Mary Jewit, is intentionally ungendered in the beginning of the ballad, the descriptions of how the midwife raised the intersex child “in Woman’s Apparel” and “in Female habit drest,/ that it might not be known” echo similar descriptions of MTF crossdressers; in this case, Mary Jewit’s ambiguous sex—the ballad refers to him/her/them with the pronoun “it”—makes his/her/their attire a kind of crossdressing no matter what s/he/they wears. Similarly, the mention, twice, that Mary Jewit attended many women’s labors reflects a common concern that men (or, here, intersex individuals) might use crossdressing to gain access to female-only spaces, such as Cavendish’s convent, or, more commonly, birthing spaces.<sup>38</sup> Mary Jewit also represents another common MTF crossdressing trope or anxiety, as seen when the midwife “let it oft with women lye,/ who knew not that it bore/ Of either Sex a signal mark,/ and had each thing in store.” Like many MTF crossdressers, Mary Jewit’s female attire and gender presentation give him/her/them access to intimate women’s spaces, and, like those crossdressers, s/he/they is hiding an aspect of his/her/their anatomy and his/her/their sexual capacity.<sup>39</sup>

The ballad’s main body is spent in a lewd, graphic description of how Mary Jewit came to abuse his/her/their position in a maid’s bed: “The feigned Female that did come/ with Mother-Midnight, why/ Because he had Male-parts as well/ as Female twixt the Thighs./ And that it

being lusty grown,/ surprizd her in her sleep,/ She nothing dreaming of the thing,/ it twixt her Legs did creep." Here, the speaker takes obvious pleasure in describing the extent to which Mary Jewit's femininity is "feigned" by describing his/her/their anatomy; the ambiguous use of "it," which describes both Jewit and his/her/their penis, elides the character with his/her/their anatomy. The initial stanzas describing Jewit's genitals and sexual behavior depict the encounter as nonconsensual and imply that the cisgender female maid, had she known about Jewit's anatomy, would not have willingly participated. Yet the ballad creates space for both queerness and gender labor between Jewit and her partner; after the first surprising sex act, the ballad tells us, "And after that some other Nights/ they did both sport and play;/ The wench being familiar grown,/ said not the Monster nay;/ But in short time shes big with-child/ by this both-Sexed thing." From here, on the ballad demonstrates aspects of gender labor: first, by growing familiar, the maid "forgets" that Jewit is a "Monster," enjoying sex with him/her/them and his/her/their anatomy; further, the maid shows alliance by joining Jewit in their mutual sport and play. The final type of labor, "playing the girl," comes in when the maid becomes pregnant.

On a scientific level, the pregnancy means that the maid is "playing the girl" on the genetic level: her pregnancy seems to prove that Jewit is "the male" in their sexual relationship, and it does the work of confirming that the latter's male anatomy functions not only sexually but also reproductively. More than this, though, the maid's pregnancy enables Jewit to "come out" about his/her/their condition and, together with a lover *and* the bigger community, co-produce a gender of choice for him/her/themself. When the maid tells other "folks" about the nature of her pregnancy since she has conceived while appearing only to sleep with the female-presenting Mary Jewit, they call for a synod to investigate the situation. The findings of this examination are ambiguous, confirming the ballad's assertions from the start that Jewit is a true hermaphrodite, or intersex: "But the good women having searcht/ did find each Member good:/ And that Rogero bove the Cleft,/ most firm and stoutly stood." On these findings alone, the community could not possibly make a decision about how to treat Jewit, who was raised as and had long passed for female. Jewit's alliance with the maid, though, and the two's unified presentation of their circumstances, leads to a different outcome: "When on their words the Justice then/ did bid them both agree:/ for since the wench was got with child/ they both must married be." Even with undeniable evidence of Jewit's queer anatomy, then, the gender labor of the maid's "playing the girl" is enough to convince the community that they should be accepted as a heterosexual couple, a couple in which Jewit "plays the boy." Here, where the body cannot determine which gender is fitting, the decision about how Jewit should live and be seen depends upon the mutual agreement and investment of everyone in his life and community. The ballad concludes: "To which our Hermaphrodite/ did give his free consent:/ And

changing habit for a man, / he to the Church straight went.” Jewit’s consent confirms his choice of masculine gender presentation, but his identity and opinion are not the only factors that go into his ultimate success in trading his dress for men’s attire and in taking on the ballad’s titular husband role. Instead, the success of his gender presentation depends on the co-investment of his partner and, through her, his community.<sup>40</sup>

### Gender Labor and Sex Change

One of the most productive outcomes of applying the theory of gender labor to texts like *Convent of Pleasure*, *Gallathea*, or the Mary Jewit ballad is the effect it has on reframing questions of sex and gender in early modern literary and dramatic representation. For example, scholars have long demonstrated evidence of Thomas Laqueur’s description of a Galenic “one-sex” model—in which biological sex, though not necessarily gender, is fluid and without necessary distinctions between male and female—in plays from this period, though the ubiquity of that belief has since been questioned. Laqueur himself situates the turn from a one-sex to two-sex model as occurring in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries; significantly, current medical and social models for talking about both sex and gender are now returning to a more spectrum-oriented approach.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, the queerness of gender presentation and the relative ease with which characters pass between such presentations in *The Convent of Pleasure*, *Gallathea*, and even “The Male and Female Husband” demonstrate the polymorphousness of gender and, with it, sex. Similarly, each text’s potential to be simultaneously or variously read as female same-sex, male same-sex, queer, and heterosexual indicates a kind of slipperiness around both anatomical sex and sexual preference and practice. Yet the threat of an actual sex change in each play—and of actual sexual ambiguity in the ballad—undermines the sexual fluidity demonstrated elsewhere and suggests there may be a more binary view of sex at work in tension with the Galenic model.

Examining the conclusions of each text through the lens of gender labor allows a third model for understanding them, one in which the characters’ sex and gender depends less on their bodies than on their relational ability to co-construct their own genders and their gender dynamic as a couple. For Lady Happy and the Princess, the gender labor to which they commit in *The Convent of Pleasure* allows for their heterosexual marriage to be seen as constructed and performed, even as it restores heterosexual paradigms to the world of the play. Meanwhile, in giving their consent to Venus and agreeing to a heterosexual loophole that allows for their romance in *Gallathea*, Phyllida and Gallathea seem to be volunteering to continue their labor indefinitely, choosing that one of them can “play the boy” as long as the other is willing to join him/her/them in the work of forgetting, in alliance, and in “playing the girl” to be his/her/their match. Also, in “The Male and Female Husband,” an intersex condition is shown to be socially

acceptable if and when it is accompanied by willing alliance from the inter-sex individual's partner and, importantly, through the alliance of the community. These readings do not resolve the question of whether the texts and their audiences believe in the malleability of anatomical sex, nor whether they are convinced by the three unconventional routes to marital heterosexuality. Yet such readings do offer an option that decenters seemingly pat heterosexual resolutions and replaces them with the promise that, whatever happens and however things turn out, the couple at the center of each text will work their relationship out through mutual labor and alliance, acts that will continue to queer their unions.

At the conclusion of her essay, Ward argues the following:

Focusing on gender labor draws attention to the collective work that produces and sustains gender. Though we already know that genders exist inside an interdependent gender system, little attention has been given to the laborious quality of reproducing other people's genders in daily life, and we remain without a clear mapping of the training, skills, duties, and specific efforts that various genders require. (251)

The conclusion of *Gallathea* gives perhaps the most direct evidence of this kind of collective work surrounding the production of genders, especially queer or complicated ones. From the Gods to the secondary comedic characters, every member of the play's community weighs in on, evaluates, or consents to some aspect of Gallathea and Phyllida's original transformation, their sustained gender passing, their romance, or their marriage plans. The audience, too, is implicated in the production of the main characters' gender, participating in our own experience of willfully unknowing, suspending disbelief, and grappling with the work's unstable conclusion and its meanings. Yet, most of all, the two lovers do some of the mapping for which Ward asks in her essay, demonstrating in their specific choices and actions the way(s) in which gender labor can enable queer romance and love. In the play's epilogue, which she presents still wearing boys' clothes, Gallathea addresses ladies and encourages them to yield to love and to Venus. Among her praises, she says that Venus is capable of "working things impossible in your sex and tempering hardest hearts like softest wool" (Lyly, "Epilogue," 4–5). Here, Gallathea literally means that Venus can create impossible transformations in women, including transformations of the heart (and, possibly but not certainly, transformations in sex). However, through the lens of gender labor, these lines draw attention to the literal idea of "*working*" "impossible" "things" and "*tempering*" the "heart"; though the idea behind this concluding line is that Venus has tremendous power, the images that Lyly uses to make that point are grounded in meticulous, often difficult and repetitive acts of labor. Spoken by a boy playing a girl dressed as a boy who is in love with a girl dressed as a boy, this line balances the play's unbelievable conclusion with the sustaining work leading up to it. Miracles in love—for

Gallathea and Phyllida in their FTM presentations, but also for Lady Happy and her MTF crossdressed Princess, and for the ballad's maid and her fe/male husband—may be possible, but they remain grounded in the collective labor of relationships.

## Notes

1. See my discussion of doublecrossdressing in Chapter 1.
2. I would not be the first to make this argument; for one recent iteration of this approach, see Christian Billings, *Masculinity, Corporality, and the English Stage* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).
3. Here I make deliberate use of the anachronistic term “intersex” instead of the period-specific “hermaphrodite”; for a discussion of the history of intersex identity and politics, see the following: Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Sharon E. Preves, *Intersex and the Body: The Contested Self* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Reis, *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
4. Jane Ward, “Gender Labor: Transmen, Femmes, and Collective Work of Transgression,” *Sexualities* 13.2 (2010): 236–54.
5. Here, Ward is referring to relationships between cisgender females with feminine gender presentation and FTM trans\* partners. Ward notes, “while this article has focused on the gender labors femmes do to produce trans masculinity, a similar article could have explored the opposite relationship, as femininity requires very particular Labors of masculinity to sustain it” (252). Though *Gallathea* does not (and, due to historical specificity, cannot) represent a femme/FTM relationship, Ward's theory of gender labor nevertheless applies.
6. While Ward's articulation of gender labor is tremendously helpful to my thinking about queer relationality in early modern texts, it does create a dynamic where trans\* genders is supported through cis genders, excluding cis-femme gender presentation from that trans\* umbrella. Where Ward focuses on making visible the femme labor that often goes unacknowledged in FTM/femme relationships, she focuses less on the pleasures and benefits that some femmes might find in that cocreation (see Chapter 3, for example); finally, as she acknowledges, her study does not consider the dynamics of gender labor for FTMs who are single, have male or non-femme partners, etc.
7. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
8. Of course, there are many trans\* people not in relationships with femmes, many femmes not interested in “being ‘the girl,’” and many queer relationships that do not approximate heterosexual roles and patters. Still, this is one of the forms of labor that Ward observes in her study, and one that I have anecdotally seen at work frequently in my own queer community.
9. See J. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
10. For instance, I know a woman who Photoshops school pictures for trans\* friends. She removes pigtails and bows from the childhood pictures of these trans\* individuals so that they, as adults who are male-identified, can have

pictures of themselves as boys. In doing this, she does not forget the images that she is adapting; instead, she helps these images to become more in alignment with the adults the children depicted grow up to be.

11. The boy actors (male) perform female characters (female) who crossdress as boys (male); hence, male-to-female-to-male, or MTFTM, crossdressing is at the center of the play. Because the play's conclusion offers the possibility that one of the crossdressers will be transformed from anatomically female to anatomically male, while the other will stay female, an argument might be made that this is actually an MTFTMTF/M plot.
12. See Carla A. Pfeffer, "Normative Resistance and Inventive Pragmatism: Negotiating Structure and Agency in Transgender Families," *Gender & Society* 26.4 (2012): 574–602.
13. Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook, "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: 'Gender Normals,' Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality" *Gender & Society* v.23 n.4 (August 2009), pp. 440–64.
14. See Theodora A. Jankowski, "Pure Resistance: Queer(y)ing Virginit(y) in William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*," *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 218–55.
15. Putting the play in its political context, Julie Crawford argues in "Convents and Pleasures: Margaret Cavendish and the Drama of Property" that the convent is "a royalist retreat that celebrates the values of and exiled court culture, but is also a fantastically restored and safe royalist property, replete with the material registers of noble privilege" (179).
16. This and all *The Convent of Pleasure* quotations are from Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
17. See Katherine R. Kellett, "Performance, Performativity, and Identity in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Convent of Pleasure'" *SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 48.2 (Spring 2008): 419–42. In particular, see pp. 419–20.
18. Valerie Traub argues convincingly for this model of same-sex desire, with a release valve, in *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). About *The Convent of Pleasure* in particular, Traub shows the play's use of reframing early modern legal and religious discussions of homosexuality away from male-male homosexuality and toward the threat of lesbian desire. See her chapter "The (In)significance of Lesbian Desire," pp. 158–87, particularly p. 181.
19. Another interesting way of reading the play's queerness has been proposed by Jankowski in "Pure Resistance," wherein she reads *The Convent of Pleasure* in terms of the queer virgin space being offered as an alternative to sexuality within heterosexual marriage. Greenstadt has read the play as a "beard" that disguises female pleasure, both innocent and sexual. See "Margaret's Beard" in *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (Fall 2010): 171–82.
20. Crawford reads the series of performances within the convent as "an invocation not only of a more generalized royalist friendship but also of specifically female coteries: the playwrighting community of Margaret Cavendish's stepdaughters and, most resonantly, Queen Henrieta Maria's famously female-centered court culture" (184).
21. Cavendish herself described her plays as "like dull statues," not meant to be embodied on stage: see Cavendish, "The Epistle Dedicatory," in *The Convent of*

- Pleasure and Other Plays*, 25. For a further discussion of the play's genre, especially in a royalist context, see Marta Straznicky, "Reading the Stage: Margaret Cavendish and Commonwealth Closet Drama," *Criticism* 37.3 (Summer 1995): 355–90; Chalmers, "The Politics of Feminine Retreat in Margaret Cavendish's *The Female Academy* and *The Convent of Pleasure*," *Women's Writing* 61 (1999): 81–94; and Crawford, "Convents and Pleasures: Margaret Cavendish and the Drama of Property," *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 177–223.
22. For a discussion of this insertion, see: Amy Greenstadt, "Margaret's Beard," *Early Modern Women: And Interdisciplinary Journal*, v. 5 (2010), 171–82, p. 173 and fn10; Jeffrey Masten, "Material Cavendish: Paper, Performance, 'Sociable Virginity,'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no.1 (March 2004): 49–68; James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish on Her Own Writing: Evidence from Revision and Handmade Correction," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 85 (1991): 297–307.
  23. See Anne Begor Lancashire, introduction to *Gallathea and Midas*, ed. Anne Begor Lancashire (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1969): i–xi. All subsequent quotations from Lyly's *Gallathea* refer to this edition.
  24. See W. Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
  25. As Lancashire points out in her introduction, the setting of the play is "simultaneously England, past and present, and a timeless, legendary land filled with gods, nymphs, and monsters" (xviii). See also Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102, no.1 (1987): 31. Rackin compares Lyly's pastoral setting to Jonson's realistic London settings in *Epicoene*, suggesting, "For the girls and the gods in *Gallathea*, gender is arbitrary, unreal, and reversible because the vantage point transcends the social to include the realm of fantastic imagination and spirit where androgyny is an image of human self-completion rather than an aberrant social category" (31).
  26. Significantly, Neptune is never fooled by these disguises, so there turns out to be no actual benefit to the crossdressing device besides the love affair that it enables. See also Kent Cartwright, "The Confusions of Gallathea: John Lyly as Popular Dramatist," *Comparative Drama* 32.2 (1998): 207–39. Cartwright argues that, while Neptune is not fooled by the crossdressing plot, the predestined sacrifice is nevertheless prevented by that plot device, which deprives Neptune of a virgin worthy of sacrifice (211).
  27. The story of Iphis and Ianthe can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 9.666–797. In the legend, Iphis is a female child raised as a boy by his mother because his father had sworn to kill any girl child. As a young man, Iphis loves and becomes betrothed to Ianthe, but their love is impossible because of Iphis's sex. To resolve the issue, the god Isis changes Iphis into a cisgender male in time for his wedding. When Iphis grew up, she was to be betrothed to the maiden Ianthe. Lyly complicates this plot by adding the element of the virgin sacrifice and by doubling the number of crossdressed characters, thus evading the easy heterosexual conclusion of the original tale.
  28. See Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 97. See also Christian Billings, *Masculinity, Corporality, and the English Stage* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009). On Lyly's adaptation of his sources, Billings writes, "Far from

attempting to represent the female body in any significant way, Lyly modifies his source so that both “girls” can be disguised as boys. He uses a double FTM disguise plot that is entirely his own invention in order to allow boy-actors more clearly to present the voice, costume, and gender-specific motions of the biological entities that they really were” (62). This analysis, grounded in Billings’ argument that the play should be read as about male-male homoerotics and the specific erotics of the boy actor, is limiting in its insistence that there is any one essential and authentic male voice or motion.

29. See Denise A. Wallen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Theodora Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); and Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On female homonormativity, see Laurie Shannon, “Renaissance Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness,” *Modern Philology* 98.2: 183–210.
30. See Billings, who writes that, “given what is actually presented to theatrical spectators, Lyly merely alludes to mixed-sex ‘normality’ and spectators are left with an interpretive choice between two distinctly homoerotic phenomena: the male-oriented homoerotics of watching boy-actors dressed as boys, wooing each other (and perhaps their audiences) or the female-oriented homoerotics of watching girl characters do the same” (60).
31. Though in my discussion here I focus on FTM crossdressing in the play’s primary Gallathea and Phyllida plot, *Gallathea* does feature an episode of MTF crossdressing: in 2.2, Cupid dresses as a nymph and invades the chaste female space of Diana’s tribe of followers.
32. Cartwright outlines the way that small aspects of the play have been used to guess at which lover is potentially transformed at the play’s conclusion. He writes:
 

This line, along with the fact that Phillida [sic] appears at first in women’s clothes while Gallathea never does, has been taken to suggest that Gallathea is the one whose sex would, hypothetically be changed by Venus after the play’s conclusion. According to some, the play *does* hint tantalizingly at its choice, in that Gallathea’s concern for honor (1.1) and Phillida’s for clothing (1.3) predict which virgin will become a man and which will remain a woman. It is in her male disguise, furthermore, that Gallathea first greets the audience; Phillida enters in her maiden’s weeds—stage images that may function proleptically. (Cartwright 222)
33. On mimesis, homonormativity, and the lack of differentiation between the lovers, see Rackin and Shannon.
34. On the impossibility (and possibility) of female same-sex desire in early modern texts, see Traub.
35. See Chapter 5 of this volume for my discussion of queer heterosexuality and the kinky sexual play that comes when the cisgender partner knows about a crossdressed lover’s queer gender, understands the distinction between his biological sex and his gender presentation, and is specifically attracted to that queer alignment. I contend that something different is at work, though, in these moments of gender labor, which are less about the erotic enjoyment of gender complexity and more about the day-to-day work of producing and maintaining gender.

36. Christopher Wixson playfully summarizes the questions commonly asked at the play's conclusion: "are these girls-as-boys in love? In lust? Who gets changed into a boy? Is this lesbian sexuality?" (243). See Christopher Wixson, "Cross-dressing and John Lyly's *Gallathea*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 41.2(2001): 241–56.
37. For discussions of the hermaphrodite in early modern literature and culture, see the following: Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Jenny C. Mann, "How to Look at Hermaphrodites in Early Modern England," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 46.1 (Winter 2006): 67–91; Kathleen P. Aldershoot, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Ashgate, 2006); Kathleen Perry Long, "Sexual Dissonance: Early Modern Scientific Accounts of Hermaphrodites" in *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Peter G. Platt (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), pp. 145–63.
38. David Cressy discusses this concern, finding an example of a real-life MTF crossdresser, Thomas Salmon, the servant of midwife Francis Fletcher who apparently used female attire to attend a birth, in Oxfordshire in 1633. See David Cressy, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *The Journal of British Studies*, 35.4 (October 1996): 438–65.
39. Remember, for example, a similar scenario in the ballad "Sport Upon Sport," discussed in Chapter 5.
40. The final line of the ballad return to a more lewd tone and content, implying that Jewit might have gone on to become a sex worker who "could perform the feats of either sex," and warning that readers should be concerned about an influx of such intersex whores. But these lines, I think, are out of context after the ballad's narrative conclusion and do not undermine the work of gender labor within that narrative.
41. Consider, for example, increasing awareness and understanding of intersex conditions, both hormonal and chromosomal, as evidenced in recent media discussions about Olympic athletes; in the realm of sexuality, note the rise of broad and flexible identity categories like pansexuality, meant to include attraction toward genders of all kinds.

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# Epilogue

## Male-to-Female Crossdressing, Transfeminism, and Relational Gender

Our collective neglect of MTF crossdressers, both in early modern studies and in contemporary queer studies, is a reflection of a broader neglect of feminine-of-center queer and trans\* genders; the absence of discourse around MTF crossdressing and other queer femininity as a reflection of the strong influences of transmisogyny, in both early modern culture and our own.<sup>1</sup> MTF crossdressers, because of their queer feminine presentations, are uniquely disruptive to the sex/gender system, which privileges and prioritizes masculinity, even within queer conversations. Also, representations that show MTF crossdressers in relational dynamics, performing their genders in public, with partners, and within communities challenge both the norm of erasure of queer femininity and the stigmas of queer feminine isolation, mockery, and dismissal. Centering MTF crossdressing narratives—showing how they reveal queer and relational early modern gender—is an investment in recognizing and validating historical male femininities and an insistence upon queer femme visibility.

In her essay “Reclaiming Femininity,” Julia Serano articulates the particular challenges facing femme trans women. She writes, “those of us on the trans-female/feminine spectrum are culturally marked, not for failing to conform to gender norms, per se, but because of the specific direction of our gender transgression—that is, because of our feminine gender expression and/or our female gender identities.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason, she continues, “I recoil from the idea of femme gender expression as ‘ironic and campy,’ as a form of drag or performance, because it plays into the popular assumption that femininity is artificial. I am particularly sensitive about this subject because, as I mention earlier, others often view me as doubly artificial because I am trans *and* because I am feminine.”<sup>3</sup> In *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern Literature*, I have argued for the recovery of queer feminine presentations, and, beyond recovery, have advocated for readings of MTF crossdressers that shows their female presentations to be authentic, relationally impactful, and beneficial. In offering this benefit of the doubt to queer feminine representations in literary history, the project therefore participates in the transfeminist project of rejecting the transmisogynistic understanding that “qualities that are associated with “femaleness” and devaluing them, viewing them as less than those qualities associated with

“maleness” and therefore as deserving of hatred, mockery, and violence.”<sup>4</sup> To this list, I’d add the smaller but most pervasive kind of hatred and violence, that of oversight, leaving out, overlooking, or minimizing feminine gender presentations by reducing them to not-serious or less-real. In centering trans\* and genderqueer feminine presentations, our work can not only queer gender but also insist that feminine genders are just as valid and potentially transgressive and empowering as masculine ones. It is my hope that, by applying transfeminist principles to early modern instances of MTF crossdressing, this volume in a small way answers Serano’s call to “share the idea of self-determined and self-empowered feminine expression, and the idea that feminine expression is just as legitimate and powerful as masculine expression.”<sup>5</sup>

In doing this transfeminist literary analysis of MTF characters in early modern texts, it has been important to me to avoid reducing their representations to pure metaphor, and to think about the impact of their queer femininities not only on their own genders but also in relation to the other genders in the world of the text and in its audience. As Alexis Shotwell and Trevor Sangrey have argued, in queer and trans\* studies:

trans and genderqueer people come to bear a disproportionate weight of the theoretical, political, and personal issues involved in the gendered lives we all live. That is, although we are all subject to micro- and macro- practices of gender norming, often it is trans and genderqueer people who serve as theoretical objects with which to think about gender: trans people stand in for gender relations as a whole. Through this operation real people’s lives and struggles are abstracted and instrumentalized in ways that continue to bolster individualized rather than relational models of selfhood.<sup>6</sup>

While it’s true that the MTF crossdressers discussed in this volume offer fascinating portrayals of queer feminine gender in and of themselves, I hope that, through my transfeminist lens, I’ve demonstrated the ways in which those genders are always in relation to other, cisgender, characters. These cis characters, the lovers, families, and general witnesses to the crossdressers, are impacted by their desire, disgust, fascination, and regulation of the queer characters, and those relational encounters are as central to the narratives as any other aspect of the crossdresser’s presentation. As Shotwell and Sangrey describe it, “Turning our gaze away from ostensibly non-normative sexes and genders allows us to see new things about normativity. The existence of trans people shifts the meaning of gender in overt and subtle ways, and not only when non-trans people interact with people they can identify as trans [...] The experience of gender formation is mutually, and multiply, informed.”<sup>7</sup> This volume’s emphasis on the FTM partners to MTF crossdressers, the possible husbands and wives to MTF brides, and the trans-attracted cisgender romantic partners who practice “queer heterosexuality” with crossdressers

has attempted to emphasize this co-creation of gender, as it is deployed by putting queer femininity in relation to other genders in the textual worlds. In doing so, it is never my intention to minimize the specificity of trans or genderqueer experience at an individual level, or to overlook the very real physical, psychological, and social threats that genderqueer and trans\* individuals face that their partners, lovers, and friends can and do not. Still, this project recognizes that representations of MTF crossdressing can and should *include* representations of the relationships that crossdressers build, nurture, participate in and sometimes depend upon.

### Coda 1: *Love's Cure*

The chapters of this volume have explored doublecrossdressing, crossdressers in a marriage economy, queer heterosexuality, and the labor of partners and other community members toward co-creating queer and cis genders within the text. I have argued that the encounters between doublecross-dressed characters generates meaningful perspectival shifts, that MTF cross-dresser show key loopholes in the systems of marriage, that early modern crossdressers are appealing not despite but because of their queer gender, and that all of these dynamics are relational, dependent on the gender labor of partners, allies, and communities. As one coda to the book, then, I offer a brief demonstration of how these several approaches to the overlooked phenomenon of MTF crossdressing often come together in a single work, as demonstrated in the play *Love's Cure, or the Martial Maid*.<sup>8</sup> With elements that demonstrate the themes of each chapter of this volume, *Love's Cure* is a fitting capstone that is also just another example of the pervasiveness and residual impact of MTF crossdressing, and of our persistent critical oversight when it comes to this type of queer gender presentation.<sup>9</sup>

*Love's Cure* begins with doublecrossdressing: sibling pair Lucio and Clara have been gender swapped and raised apart, and the play opens with their family's reunification and, with it, the expectation that they will now reverse the exchange and take up the genders they were assigned at birth, before their extended crossdressing and cross-gender lives. Speaking to her husband about their doublecrossed children, Eugenia describes their situation:

You, in a man, / Have given to me a daughter; in a woman,  
I give to you a son: this was the pledge  
You left here with me, whom I have brought up  
Different from what he was, as you did Clara,  
And with the like success; as she appears,  
Alter'd by custom, more than woman, he,  
Transform'd by his soft life, is less than man.<sup>10</sup>

The way that Lucio and Clara have been raised is presented here as an extended gender swap experiment, and the play is now the virtual testing

ground to see its outcomes. The strange placement of the line breaks in Eugenia's speech place emphasis on the action of the swap, with "different," "alter'd," and "transform'd" each positioned at the start of a line. Similarly, the breaks in the description of the siblings, "she appears, / altered by custom, more than woman, he," imbue the line with double meanings; she, Clara, is more than woman, but also the awkwardness of the line break anticipates the problem with Lucio's gender by creating the accidental reading of "more than woman, he." Indeed, Eugenia frames the restoration of gender norms for her son in terms of casting off a "womanish disguise." She tells him to "cast off" his feminine habits and "change those qualities thou didst learn from me, / For masculine virtues; for which seek no tutor, / But let thy fathers actions be thy precepts".<sup>11</sup> Here, Clara and Lucio's restored genders depend not only on reversing their life-long swap, but also on modeling their corrected performances on the normative genders of their parents. However, the siblings find it near-impossible to cast off the habits of their adopted genders. This is especially true for the MTF crossdresser, Lucio, who announces:

What would you have me do? This scurvy sword  
 So galls my thigh: I would 't were burnt! Pish, look,  
 This cloak will ne'er keep on: these Boots too, hide-bound,  
 Make me walk stiff, as if my legs were froze;  
 And my spurs jingle like a morris-dancer:  
 Lord, how my head akes with this roguish hat!  
 This masculine attire is most uneasy;  
 I am bound up in it: I had rather walk  
 In folio, again, loose, like a woman.<sup>12</sup>

If the casting off of clothes is meant to mark the casting off of gender, Lucio fails at his transformation. The sword—and, by obvious association, the penis—upsets and galls him; his legs, head, and body ache from the discomfort of masculine attire and performance. Lucio feels bound, like a book, and longs to be back in loose folio. The metaphors of print here are nice turns-of-phrase from Beaumont and Fletcher, but also a reminder of the apparatus through which this kind of gender experiment is made possible—the genres of fiction and theater. It's in the folio, the text, that Lucio can be a woman with ease, just as it's within the restrictions of the plot that he is bound by containment and the restoration of masculinity.

If the play begins with a doublecrossed gender swap experiment, it is mobilized by a double marriage plot, and ends with strong themes of queer heterosexuality and gender labor. Though, as their father's servant Bobadilla observes, "I know not what to say t' ye both: / Custom hath turn'd nature topsie-turvie in you," and though a long list of pseudomedical and folk cures do not work to restore their genders, Clara and Lucio both find their resolutions through love and romantic partnership.<sup>13</sup> Clara first clashes with her

would-be-suitor Vitelli, and competes with him in masculine endeavors like sword fighting. However, when he falls in love with her, he praises her gender and shows his willingness to adjust his own presentation to be a better match for her. He admits, “You are of so great a spirit, that I must learn/ To wear your petticoat, for you will have/ My breeches from me.”<sup>14</sup> Only then, when Vitelli shows his admiration for her masculine qualities and his willingness to support her full gender presentation, does Clara return to a more normative gender role, swearing that she well “shew strength in nothing, but my duty/ and glad desire to please you.”<sup>15</sup> Even after these assurances, though, Vitelli continues to queer their heterosexual marriage plans, observing with admiration that, while Clara has a “soldier’s arm, [her] lips appear as if/ They were a lady’s.”<sup>16</sup> And so, the play restores Clara as Alvarez’s daughter and Vitelli’s betrothed, even as it saves space for a valorization and admiration of her female masculinity.

The same is true when Lucio experiences love’s cure. After meeting and kissing Vitelli’s sister Genevora, he exclaims:

My womanish soul, which hitherto hath govern’d  
This coward flesh, I feel departing from me;  
And in me, by her beauty, is inspir’d  
A new, and masculine one, instructing me  
What’s fit to do or suffer. Powerful love,  
That hast with loud, and yet a pleasing thunder  
Rous’d sleeping manhood in me, thy new creature,  
Perfect thy work; so that I may make known,  
Nature, though long kept back, will have her own.<sup>17</sup>

Here, the play inverts the Petrarchan idea of effeminizing love by showing love (and kissing) to be masculinizing forces, a rousing thunder that, finally, gets Lucio to give up his feminine behavior and identity. However, just as with Clara and Vitelli, Lucio’s lover shows less interest in a seamlessly restored normative gender and more in a genderqueer hybrid closer to the crossdresser she first admired. At the closing climax of the play, when the newly-masculine (and now hyper-aggressive) Lucio steps in to fight Vitelli in his father’s stead, Genevora pleads with him to be more of his feminine self. She begs, “[thou] Art lately wean’d from soft effeminacy; / A maiden’s manners, and a maiden’s heart/ Are neighbors still to thee: be, then, more mild.”<sup>18</sup> While Lucio endeavors to prove his new masculinity, his female lover begs him to remember his effeminacy, and suggests that his maiden heart and manners are now and may always be near to the surface of his identity. When she asks him to be mild, she suggests that it should come from his own feminine self, from internal, rather than external sources. Also, she makes this argument relationally, going further to suggest that what masculinity he has comes from her, a woman: “Thy valour’s not thine own; I gave it thee; / These eyes begot it, this tongue bred it up, / This breast would

lodge it: do not use my gifts/ To mine own ruin.”<sup>19</sup> Genevora not only shows her willingness to marry a man who has been, and to a certain degree, will always be, a woman, but also her awareness that her own gender labor has not only normalized, eroticized and accepted his femininity but also now propped up his masculine presentation, begetting his valor with her eyes, tongue, and breast. Further, by insisting that Lucio’s valor is not his own, Genevora shows that Lucio’s femininity, his maiden’s manners, are as authentic a gender presentation as his masculinity; both are performed, and of the two, she seems to prefer the former.

Of the resolution of *Love’s Cure*, Peter Burk suggests, “Lucio’s conversion reassures the male members of the audience that effete cowards can become brave and that sexual desire can restore social position, so long as one is properly equipped beneath one’s costume.”<sup>20</sup> This may be one message of the play, but the inverse reading also holds true: the play shows that bravery and sexual desire can restore gender norms, but that MTF crossdressing is more lasting, and more beneficial, than it might seem. Lucio may be “properly equipped” beneath his feminine costumes, but his sword chafes; he may seem restored to his “natural” masculinity, but his betrothed reminds him of his very near neighbors of maiden manners and mind. Genevora redirects his “masculine” rage toward a peaceful, “feminine” resolution that allows for the romantic conclusion of the play. Gender swapped and married to symmetrical siblings—siblings who demonstrate that they like and admire the queer genders of their partners well before they agree to marry—Clara and Lucio stay queer, even as the play wraps up with their heterosexual marriages. *Love’s Cure* is one of many, many texts that demonstrate the interconnectivity of doublecrossdressing, the marriage economy, queer heterosexuality, and gender labor. By taking Lucio and his MTF crossdressing as seriously as we take Clara and her FTM crossdressing, we open the play for a richer, queerer conversation about the relationships they have with each other, their partners, their textual community, and, perhaps, their readers and audiences.

### *Queering the Renaissance and the Possibility of Trans\** Literary History

It’s been more than a decade since Jonathan Goldberg established the long-standing standard for historicists working with early modern gender and sexuality his introduction to *Queering the Renaissance* in 1994. He explains: “Indeed, to follow Foucault a la lettre, the Renaissance comes before the regimes of sexuality, and to speak of sexuality in the period is a misnomer. This is indeed the case if sexuality is taken as a marker of identity, definitional of the core of a person, and these essays, as I have already suggested, take care not to suggest that gay and lesbian identity can be found in the texts at hand.”<sup>21</sup> However, even in 1994, Goldberg provokes us to take risks with ahistoricism. He continues, “Yet this does not mean that the anachronism

of speaking sexuality in the Renaissance is not to be risked, especially if the failure to invoke sexuality means acting as if texts of the period can always be explained in other terms, and in ways in which anything like sex disappears—into the ‘convention’ of friendship, for example.”<sup>22</sup> Here, Goldberg anticipates the crux of the current debate about queer work in the early modern period. How do we weigh the risks of breaking historicist rules against the risks of disappearing representations of the fullest range of queerness? More specifically, in the context of this project, is there a place for trans\* studies in early modern literary historicism?

In 2005’s “Queering History,” Goldberg and Menon propose “a reconsideration of relations between past and present that would trace differential boundaries instead of being bound by or to any one age.”<sup>23</sup> This approach, which they call “unhistoricism” or “homohistory,” comes out of a need to “to question the premise of a historicism that privileges difference over similarity, recognizing that it is the peculiarity of our current historical moment that such a privileging takes place at all.”<sup>24</sup> Demanding that “history” need not be the same as “alterity,” Goldberg and Menon imagine a presentist unhistoricism which “would acknowledge that history as it is hegemonically understood today is inadequate for housing the project of queering,” and would therefore “be invested in suspending determinate sexual and chronological differences while expanding the possibilities of the nonhetero, with all its connotations of sameness, similarity, proximity, and anachronism”<sup>25</sup> In 2007’s “The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography,” Valarie Traub articulates this approach in the context of the larger tension between historicism presentist methods in queer early modern scholarship:

To the extent that historical method has been a topic of debate, it largely has taken the form of the by now notorious distinction between acts versus identity, and its corollary, alterity versus continuism. Scholars whose historical accounts take a continuist form have tended to emphasize a similarity between past and present concepts of sexual understanding; those who instead highlight historical difference or alterity (as it is termed by literary scholars) have tended to emphasize problems of anachronism, changing terminologies and typologies, and resistance to teleology.<sup>26</sup>

In that essay, Traub submits that such a binary approach to presentism and historicism has “outlived its utility.”<sup>27</sup> However, her argument there is nevertheless in conflict with Menon’s 2009 essay “Period Cramps,” which argues that Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* and the divide it makes between modern and premodern sexualities has been “utterly disabling in relation to having work on the Renaissance count as queer work.”<sup>28</sup> Menon further elaborates, “By attempting to insert ourselves into the race for the date, as the ‘early’ node from which current sexualities developed, queer Renaissance scholars both allow themselves to be governed by dates and accede to their

status as not-quite-queer since by queerness we seem to understand homo- and hetero- sexuality.”<sup>29</sup>

The debate about historiographic methodologies has most recently climaxed with a 2013 PMLA essay by Valerie Traub, and its accompanying responses (by Freccero and Menon). To briefly summarize the debate, in “The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies,” Traub claims that “Since around 2005 a specter has haunted the field in which I work: the specter of teleology. In attempting to promote a queerer historiographer, some queer studies scholars of French and English early modern literature have charged other scholars with promoting a normalizing view of sexuality, history, and time.”<sup>30</sup> In the essay, Traub suggests that antiteleologist scholars who reject historicism and “Foucault-inspired-genealogy” by resisting historical periodizations of sexuality (like Halperin’s) are engaged in a “zero-sum game of identity versus nonidentity.”<sup>31</sup> Traub argues that moves by scholars like Freccero, Goldberg and Menon away from historicist work and toward an ahistorical queer theory are disqualifying historical scholarship and creating a hierarchy of theoretical approaches focused on continuism and presentism over all else.

Responding to Traub, Freccero defends her previous critiques of David Halperin’s work (articulating her primary concern as being a resistance to narratives of supersession in sexuality), and accuses Traub of writing an essay that is “a work of mourning enjoining readers to honor the past,” which is itself a “kind of queer temporality.”<sup>32</sup> In another response, Menon argues that, “By pushing against the entrenched boundaries that have been erected around scholarly work, unhistoricism points also to the larger stakes involved in what we do. If queerness is to be not just a sexual identity but also a critical praxis, queering dominant paradigms of methodology must be at the core of its work.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, in her response to those responses, Traub insists that “Unhistoricism does not possess the duration or institutional power of prior regimes of critical practice in the profession at large [like New Historicism], but its rapid uptake as the new queer common sense has engendered its own ideological enforcements.”<sup>34</sup>

I don’t fully know yet what it means that *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English* developed against the backdrop of these debates about historiography and queering the Renaissance: I know that it would have been a different book if I was starting it now, after the climax of the debate and in light of some of the middle-ground approaches that have come from it. However, what’s so wrong with seeking a new queer common sense? Queer presentism and queer historicism aren’t and can’t be mutually exclusive, but *restrictive* historicism isn’t enough to fully explore the ways that current queer feeling, affect, and experience can be in conversation with early modern sources. Early modern literary and cultural studies has only barely begun to take into account the fullest range of modern gender and sexual diversity, including trans\*, intersex, genderqueer, and asexual identities in addition to trans\* identities. To see those identities as in relationship

to the past, however ahistorically, still feels important, meaningful, and generative to me. Discussing the affect of relational presentism in *Feeling Backwards*, Heather Love describes one impact of ahistorical reading:

As queer readers we tend to see ourselves reaching back toward isolated figures in the queer past to rescue or save them. It's hard to know what to do with texts that resist our advances. Texts or figures that refuse to be redeemed disrupt not only the progress narrative of queer history but also our sense of queer identity in the present.<sup>35</sup>

It's true that, when we read literary figures from the past as analogous to our own lived queer experiences, we set ourselves up for failure and disruption. As Traub and others have argued, we risk dislocating those figures from their historical context and meaning. However, what if we reach back not in the spirit of rescue and recovery, but in the spirit of acknowledgment, recognition, and respect? What if we let those figures reach forward to us, even as we feel backward toward them? This mode is similar to what Elizabeth Freeman calls "erotohistory," which she says "does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself like a hybrid," recognizing that "contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding."<sup>36</sup>

We have critical and theoretical tools now that weren't available to us in the 1980s and 1990s at the start of the project of queering the Renaissance; for my purposes, most especially the tools that come from the articulation of trans\* identity and theory. Whether or not homohistories, erotohistories or ahistoricism have duration or institutional power, they use these tools to open doors to new and important conversations, allow for the personal and political to be rich informants in our work, and broaden the meanings and applications of the queer evidence available in our texts. Queer reading, and queer feelings about reading, are important, and the pleasure of cross-historical recognition—not rescue and not full identification, but relational acknowledgment—can generate new insights about literary and cultural history and new antecedents that frame contemporary identity. By opening the possibility that early modern MTF crossdressers might be in conversation with contemporary feminine-of-center trans and gender variant individuals, I've been able to understand the vacuum of interest in fictional MTF cross-dressing as deeply related to historical and modern transgender experience and identity in a way that wouldn't be possible according to strict historicism; it is something closer to what David Halperin calls "a heterogeneity of queer identities, past and present."<sup>37</sup>

The possibility of a trans\* literary history is therefore deeply imbricated in the debates about how to balance historicism and presentism in literary and cultural analysis. For example, in the introduction to her analysis of

crossdressing culture and legislation in nineteenth-century San Francisco, Clare Sears describes this history of critical approaches to crossdressing: “Many of these studies represented the purposeful efforts of queer scholars to reclaim a shared and recognizable past and they frequently affirmed cross-dressing females as prototypical lesbians, and later as transgender men. Indeed significant debate occurs within this literature concerning the (homo) sexual versus (trans) gender identities of historical cross-dressers.”<sup>38</sup> Citing Butler and Garber, she continues, “In sharp contrast to the cross-dresser as prototype trope found in early lesbian and gay studies, 1990s queer theory presented the cross-dressing figure as a metaphor for the instability and fluidity of gender and sexual identities.”<sup>39</sup> Articulating a new trans\* literary history might be one way to push past the impasses that Sears outlines here, intervening in these approaches in several ways. First, we would include MTF crossdressers alongside FTM crossdressers as figures of interest and importance for our analysis. In doing so, we could, as I have shown throughout this volume, reorient the conversation away from the limiting debate over whether genderqueer figures should be read as homosexual *or* as transgender and instead emphasize how queer gender presentations reveal the relationships between gender and sexualities rather than just one or the other. Rather than reading queerly gendered figures in literary history as metaphorical, trans\* literary history might acknowledge the real ways in which gender has been used metaphorically while still taking serious the literal and embodied ways that gender is represented.

Outlining the major issues in transgender (American) history for a general audience in *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, Genny Beemyn asks, “Can there be said to be a ‘transgender history’ when ‘transgender’ is a contemporary term and when individuals in past centuries who would perhaps appear to be transgender from our vantage point might not have conceptualized their lives in such a way? [...] Should they be left out of ‘transgender history’ because they do not specifically identify as transgender?”<sup>40</sup> As Beemyn further elaborates, “Another difficulty in writing transgender history is that people in the past may have presented as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth for reasons other than a sense of gender difference. For example, female-assigned individuals may have presented as men in order to escape restrictive gender roles, and both women and men may have lived cross-gender lives in order to pursue same-sex sexual relationships.”<sup>41</sup> To resolve the problem of identifying historical figures (or, for literary purposes, historical representations of figures), Beemyn turns to anthropologist Jason Cromwell’s 1999 *Transmen & FTMS: Identities, Bodies, Genders & Sexualities*, where he outlines three diagnostic questions for determining whether female-assigned individuals who dressed or presented as male might “count” as trans.

Cromwell asks: “Did the individual state that (contrary to their physiology) they are men or always thought themselves to be men?” “Were attempts made at body modification, such as wearing padded clothing, binding breasts, and

using devices in place of male genitalia?” and “Was there an attempt to live a better part of their lives as men [...]?”<sup>42</sup> To this list, Beemyn adds an additional question meant to differentiate between those who might best be described today as transsexuals and those who might best be described today as crossdressers: “if the individuals continued to cross-dress when it was publically known that they cross-dressed or if they cross-dressed consistently but only in private so that no one else knew, except perhaps their families.”<sup>43</sup> Beemyn concludes, “In either case, the important factor is that the people who cross-dressed did not receive any advantage or benefit for doing it other than their own comfort and satisfaction.”<sup>44</sup> These questions are appealing in the sense that they imagine a quantitative scientific method whereby we might sort through queer historical figures and categorize them according to modern identity. Inasmuch as they can be applied to fictional characters, guidelines like these may help to clarify the extent to which we might read crossdressing characters as genderqueer or trans\*. However, rather than focusing on backward gender diagnoses, I am interested in how thinking about historical and historical-fictional crossdressers are informed by the *act* of queer inquiry into their genders; in other words, it matters less whether any of the early modern MTF crossdressers of this study meet Cromwell’s criteria (some do, others don’t) and more whether asking the questions changes how we think of them.

Beemyn concludes that, while lesbian and gay historians (and here I’d include literary historians) “assumed that anyone who cross-dressed or lived as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth did so in order to pursue same-sex relationships. Many transgender people have begun to call attention to our own history, pointing to evidence that many of these individuals were not motivated primarily by same-sex attraction.”<sup>45</sup> Trans studies, then, provokes us to think about the history and historical dynamics of queer genders with as much attention, care, and investment as we have paid to queer sexualities. The personal and political teasing out of gender, sex, and sexuality makes visible our field’s irresponsible conflation of these categories in our encounters with early modern queer representation. To do this is not to turn away from historicism, but to broaden the categories of behaviors, practices, orientations and desires that we look for in historical texts. As Marilyn Morris puts it, the “dialogues generated by the shifting alliances between queer theory and transgender studies over the past fifteen years or so, particularly issuing from writings on intersexuality and transsexuality, provide a fresh perspective in the question of how affective relations shaped individual identities before the notion of sexual orientation existed.”<sup>46</sup> Recognizing queer gender in early modern sources participates in broadening these “affective relations” to include relational gender alongside relational sexuality.

My attention in this epilogue to the affective pull of queer and trans reading of the early modern, and my call for new modes of trans\* literary history run parallel—with key distinctions—to Alexander Eastwood’s recent essay

“How, Then, Might the Transsexual Read?: Notes toward a Trans Literary History,” where he asks, “How might literature help trans individuals and scholars think through the phenomenon of both reading and of being read?” He explains:

I am not suggesting that texts from the past are waiting around to be saved from an abyss of unintelligibility—to be ‘read’ quite literally, as trans. Rather, I am dwelling on the affective reality that marginalized readers crave historical representations of themselves. There is a recklessness to this desire; texts may reject one’s advances, texts that are organized in terms of identity may founder, while texts lacking identifiable trans content may resonate strangely and profoundly. Nonetheless, there remain important emotional, political, pedagogical, and scholarly reasons for pursuing trans literary history. [...] When we read literature from the past, we are curious not just about how people lived ‘then’ but about how history can enrich the ways in which we live now. Unlike the historian’s archive, literary texts assume an audience. Even the most didactic and/or resistant texts pull the reader into relation.<sup>47</sup>

Eastman concludes that the value of trans\* literary history cannot be mimetic connection with characters we imagine as trans, nor the pull of finding models in the past for contemporary problems for trans\* communities. In place of these identifications, he suggests that trans\* literary history might best work as one that imagines how “trans epistemologies might animate texts without specifically trans content.”<sup>48</sup> This may, indeed, be the right way to do trans\* literary history, thinking about how and who we are reading, and focusing on the ways in which we as readers are in relation to our texts. Personally, though, I’m not ready to give up on those first, affectively pulling goals, at least as meaningful parts of trans\* literary history. MTF crossdressers are not and cannot be transgender or transsexual. However, they also are, and can be, part of the spark of recognition, across time. Their existence, alone, demonstrates that the “transgender tipping point” was a long time coming, and that it is nothing new. Their historically distinct differences from us are meaningful too, maybe not as models or solutions for transmisogyny but nevertheless as reminders that male femininity has existed, and has been represented as relational, beneficial, and desirable.

These, then, are some of the stakes of doing historically informed trans studies—to make visible queer genders that have always been evident in our cultural and literary history, and to offer them as evidence that there is no time “before” queer gender, no feminism that doesn’t include queer femininity, and no time that queer genders didn’t impact cis genders in relational ways that informed masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. This isn’t inherently a presentist argument—it is a given, I think, that early moderns didn’t and couldn’t think of themselves as transgender or transsexual. However, it

is an argument in favor of actively seeking the fullest range of queer activity, presentation and desire in our historical sources, both to deepen our knowledge of the period *and* to challenge modern assumptions that the queer cultural zeitgeist we're experiencing today is somehow a contemporary gender identity crisis, disconnected from its context and ancestry.

## Coda 2: The “Transgender Tipping Point”

As I completed revisions to *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern England* in 2015, my work coincided with a cultural swelling of attention toward queer feminine trans and genderqueer identity in 2015. Trans\* issues were suddenly at the foreground of mainstream media and culture in way that they hadn't been before; suddenly strangers were telling me that this project on early modern MTF crossdressing was somehow newly “timely.” Not far from Detroit, where I work at Wayne State, the controversial Michigan Womyn's Festival, which had long held on to a controversial “womyn-born-womyn” policy that excluded trans women since the 1990s, held its final gathering in August 2015, noting, in part, that the damage done to the festival and its reputation by trans activists and trans-ally boycotts were unsurmountable. When the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in June 2015, the celebration of that civil rights victory was tempered by reminders that transgender rights were still unprotected. The White House appointed the first openly transgender staff member, Raffi Freedman-Gurspan, in August 2015. The first academic journal devoted to trans\* studies, *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (TSQ), published its first issue in May 2014. In June 2014, *Time Magazine* featured actress Laverne Cox on its cover, with the headline “The Transgender Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier.”

In popular culture and entertainment news, Cox was the first trans\* woman to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy award for acting in 2014, and then nominated again in 2015, both for her role as a trans character in Netflix's *Orange is the New Black*. Amazon's television series *Transparent* debuted in February 2015 and won Golden Globe awards in 2014 and 2015. The independent film *Tangerine*, starring trans\* actresses playing trans\* characters, debuted at Sundance in 2015, to rave reviews. Meanwhile, cisgender actors Jared Leto and Eddie Redmayne earned both acting recognition and political pushback for playing trans\* women, in *The Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) and *The Danish Girl* (2015). In August 2015, the television show revealed that its villain was, in fact, a trans\* woman, also sparking debate from trans-allies at this representations of trans women as deceptive or sociopathic. When the movie *Stonewall*, which featured white cisgender protagonists instead of a realistic depiction of the role of trans\* women of color at the Stonewall riot, was released in September 2015, the film was meant by harsh criticism and was a critical flop. Also, perhaps causing the most mainstream awareness of trans\* identities and politics, in July 2015 athlete and reality television celebrity Caitlyn Jenner came out on the cover of *Vanity Fair*.

I list this constellation of trans news and media events—really, only a small cross-section of those that happened in late 2014 and 2015—to demonstrate the shift in the cultural zeitgeist that brought trans issues, and especially trans women’s issues, to the foreground of popular culture, creating the sense that we are at a tipping point for trans awareness, trans rights, and potentially trans acceptance. However, these events also clarify the high stakes of doing historically-grounded feminist and relational work in trans studies—trans history, but also trans literary studies—and for developing approaches to trans literary studies in the early modern period. While media and popular culture has generally ignored trans\* men and focused intense attention on feminine-of-center trans\* people, scholarship, and especially scholarship about premodern gender and sexuality, has inversely focused on masculine-of-center representations. In early modern studies, FTM crossdressers are a key example of this focus, but the same is true of our attention to female masculinity more broadly, including prioritizing attention for gender nonconforming femininity in general; there has been far less significant parallel interest in nonconforming masculinities, for example. The dissonance between a contemporary moment fascinated with queer feminine gender presentation and the scholarly vacuum surrounding that very topic means that we are missing an opportunity to apply contemporary tools of investigation to historical gender and sexuality studies.

With trans\* people, and mostly trans\* women, so much the center of cultural attention, questions about trans “origins” and authenticity are increasingly prevalent. One stake, then, in investing in historically-grounded trans literary and cultural studies, is the potential to disarm transmisogynistic claims that trans people—and especially trans women—are a new cultural concern, and, simultaneously, to offer transfeminists evidence that, well before the “transgender tipping point” there was a wide range of queer, genderqueer, and feminine-of-center representations, many of them positive, beneficial, and well-received. I’ve shown that queer gender in the early modern period is relational, impacting not only the individual who crossdresses but also those around that individual. I want to suggest now that trans\* studies is similarly relational—that what we know and are learning about trans history is in relationship with what we can know and learn about trans futurity.

The sentiment that the “transgender tipping point” is a problem in part because trans women are a new subject group without historical authenticity is on display in Elinor Burkett’s June 2015 opinion piece about Caitlyn Jenner in the *New York Times*.<sup>49</sup> In an essay that was both popular and popularly cited as an example of liberal transmisogyny, Burkett presents herself as a representative of self-identified-feminists struggling to accept trans\* women as women. She argues that:

People who haven’t lived their whole lives as women, whether Ms. Jenner or Mr. Summers, shouldn’t get to define us. That’s something

men have been doing for too long. And as much as I recognize and endorse the right of men to throw off their mantle of maleness, they cannot stake their claim to dignity as transgender people by trampling on mine as a woman.

Here, Burkett's concerns about trans\* women's ways of articulating their experiences is fundamentally a relational one: the way that trans women are defining female experience feels to her like a threat to her own identity as a woman. Recognizing the right of "men" to "throw off the mantle of maleness" is radically different from the idea that trans\* women are not men at all. Burkett's critique of trans\* women's rights to speak as women comes down to the relationship between women and the world: for her, authentic femininity is defined as "having accrued certain experiences, endured certain indignities and relished certain courtesies in a culture that reacted to you as one." Burkett describes cis and trans\* women as being in an adversarial relationship, in which cis female experience is defined in relation to trans female narratives as they are presented in the media. Even as she critiques Jenner and other trans women in the media spotlight, Burkett recognizes that these relational encounters have the power and potential to disrupt and redefine gender norms: "But as the movement becomes mainstream, it's growing harder to avoid asking pointed questions about the frequent attacks by some trans leaders on women's right to define ourselves, our discourse and our bodies [...] It's demanding that women reconceptualize ourselves." Burkett defends her opinions about Jenner's gender in historical terms: her point that "men" have been defining women for "too long" depends on an implicit movement that, until now, there were never trans\* women or other feminine-of-center people assigned male at birth.

In a scathing blog responses to Burkett's article, Cary Gabriel Costello hones in on these relational concerns from some feminists toward trans\* women's inclusion in the movement.<sup>50</sup> Costello first close-reads Burkett:

Notice what Burkett is doing here. Trans women are called first 'people who haven't lived their whole lives as women,' and then flat out 'men.' Trans women are 'men' who are trampling on the rights of 'women,' and of course 'women' here means cis women. 'Transgender people' are in this paragraph all trans women. And by asserting their dignity as trans people, trans women are proving themselves to be really men in that they are seeking to control (cis) women.

Having clarified these terms, Costello then explains, "what gets Burkett all riled up is that there are people who were assigned female at birth—gender-queer, agender, and transmasculine—who are trying to raise consciousness about more trans-inclusive ways to talk about anatomy and gender in pro-choice organizations [...] To Burkett, an effort to raise consciousness about these individuals' experience and shift the language employed constitutes

some kind of war on women and attack on feminist leaders that will endanger reproductive freedom.” Costello’s analysis of Burkett articulates the anxiety that some feminists—sometimes called Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminists, or TERFs, by their detractors—feel about the relationship between cis and trans\* femininities, and the risks that they see from what they perceive as a new infiltration of trans and genderqueer stakeholders in feminism. However, I see another important theme in Burkett’s critique of Jenner—her use of feminist history as a strategy of exclusion.

When Burkett complains that Caitlyn Jenner and other trans\* women are undoing the work of feminism, she is articulating a history without trans\* women, and without queer male femininity. In a 2014 *New Yorker* article, Michelle Goldberg similarly frames the experiences of TERFs confronted by the trans\* rights movement as based in history. She writes, “radical feminists now find themselves in a position that few would have imagined when the conflict began: shunned as reactionaries on the wrong side of a sexual-rights issue. It is, to them, a baffling political inversion.” Burkett and Goldberg share an investment in one narrative about feminist women’s history, a narrative that includes only cisgender women.<sup>51</sup> Their narrative depends on a long arc of trans-exclusive history, on the absence of trans\* women in or out of feminism until this recent unruly disruption in media and culture. Without trans\* literary history, however we ultimately define and deploy it in our literary and historical work, their opinion is subtly validated by many historical and literary sources. Trans\* studies is changing how we think and talk about gender history, and it is time to invent or develop models for trans\* literary historicism. Informed by transfeminism, trans\* literary historicism would emphasize the value and richness of MTF representations and relationships in early modern texts alongside MTF, intersex, asexual, and other queer representations, all through the lens of contemporary queer and trans discourses. It would name and dismantle transmisogynistic exclusions in our work and make room for more types of presentation, attraction, and performance than we’ve previously allowed for in the project of queering the Renaissance. Done right, trans\* literary history might deepen and complicate of contemporary trans\* theory and praxis—at a moment where context and historically specific grounding are most needed.

In my research about recent articulations of transmisogyny, I came across an essay written by Karla Mantilla, a radical feminist opposed to trans\* inclusion at the Michigan Womyn’s Festival. She writes:

To me, the worst thing about the fact that MTFs have violated the women-only space at the festival is that now you never know whether there might be a man, in one form or another, there.<sup>52</sup>

Mantilla’s concerns are grounded in the historically specific debate about MWF, but they could also have been written about any of the MTF cross-dressing narratives that I’ve discussed in this volume. As a group, early

modern episodes of MTF crossdressing imagine a queer and relational sex/gender system that normalizes for its readers and audiences the possibility that they might never know when there might be a man passing as a woman. Mantilla's paranoid fantasy about cisgender men pretending to be gender-queer or trans\* women in order to access sacred female spaces is predicted by early modern authors, and, perhaps surprisingly, the general early modern consensus is that "never know[ing] whether there might be a man, in one form or another, there" isn't necessarily a negative thing. Instead of granting historical validation for modern transmisogyny like Mantilla's, representations of MTF crossdressers in early modern texts show the many pleasures, benefits, and potential positive outcomes of genderqueer inclusivity that have always been possible, no matter how unexpected or improbable.

## Notes

1. As I'll discuss below, "transmisogyny" is defined as the combined and interrelated forces of transphobia (discrimination against and hatred toward trans, gender nonbinary, and gender variant individuals) and misogyny (discrimination against and hatred toward women, trans women, and anyone expressing feminine-of-center gender). Transmisogyny thus targets, in particular, trans\* expressions of femininity (including, as I hope I've shown, instances of MTF crossdressing). The term was first made popular by Julia Serano's *Whipping Girl: A transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Emerville: Seal Press, 2007). Serano argues, in *Whipping Girl* and elsewhere, that transmisogyny demonstrates the assumption that femininity is inferior to masculinity and punishes trans\* women for daring to give up masculinity *and* for doing femininity "wrong."
2. Julia Serano, "Reclaiming Femininity," in *Transfeminist Perspectives in and Beyond transgender and Gender Studies*, ed. Anne Enke\* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press), 170–83; p. 170.
3. *Ibid.*, 180.
4. Laura Kacere, "Transmisogyny 101: What It Is and What We Can Do About It" *Everyday Feminism Magazine*, January 27, 2014. <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/transmisogyny/>. Accessed Oct. 5, 2015. "Transfeminism" is a term coined by Emi Koyama in "The Transfeminist Manifesto," first circulated online and now printed in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 2003). Koyama defines transfeminism as "a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond. It is also open to other queers, intersex people, trans men, non-trans women, non-trans men and others who are sympathetic toward needs of trans women and consider their alliance with trans women to be essential for their own liberation."
5. Serano, 183.
6. Alexis Shotwell and Trevor Sangrey, "Resisting definition: Gendering through Interaction and Relational Selfhood" *Hypatia*, vol. 24, No. 3, *Transgender*

- Studies and Feminism: Theory, Politics and Gendered realities* (Summer, 2009), 56–76. p. 57.
7. *Ibid*, 59–60.
  8. First published in the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio, *Love's Cure's* authorship and dating are disputed. It was likely written by Beaumont and Fletcher in 1602–03, probably from a Spanish source, and revised by Philip Massinger for performance by the King's Men after 1625. On authorship and dating, see Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927); Terence P. Logan, and Denzell S. Smith, eds. *The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Martin E. Erickson, "A Review of Scholarship Dealing with the Problem of a Spanish Source for *Love's Cure*," in *Studies in Comparative Literature* ed. Waldo F. McNeir (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962) pp. 102–19.
  9. Most, if not all, critical work about the play focuses exclusively on Clara's FTM episode, with Lucio's MTF crossdressing reduced to an aside or minimized and written-off as comedic or parodic. See, for example, Paula Berggren, "'A Prodigious Thing': The Jacobean Heroine in Male Disguise," *Philological Quarterly* 62 (1983): 383–402; Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981); Jonathan Dollimore, "Subjectivity, Sexuality, Transgression: The Jacobean Connection," *Renaissance Drama* 17 (1986); Anne Duncan, "It Takes a Woman to Play a Real Man: Clara as Hero(ine) of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure*," *English Literary Renaissance*, 30.3 (2000); Peter Berek, "Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Absolutism in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 42.2 (Spring 2004); Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (New York: Harvester Wheatshead, 1994); Jennifer A. Low, "Early Modern Audiences and the Pleasures of Cross-dressed Characters" *Poetics Today* 35:4 (Winter 2014); and Carolyn D. Williams, "Women Behaving Well: Early Modern Images of Female Courage" in *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early-Modern Culture*, ed. Chris Mounsey (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001) pp. 49–75.
  10. Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Love's Cure; Or, the Martial Maid*. In *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher: The Text Formed from a New Collation of the Early Editions, Volume 2* (New York: D Appleton and Company, 1890). 1.3 (p. 524).
  11. *Ibid*, 1.2 (p. 522). Jennifer Low has suggested that part of the pleasure of Lucio's crossdressing here is that he is also performing a gendered class status, that of a noblewoman. pp. 578–79).
  12. *Ibid*, 2.2 (p. 524). Peter Berk claims that "the play's attitude toward female cross-dressing is very different from its attitude toward male cross-dressing. Lucio is a ridiculous spectacle in female disguise, but Clara's mannishness makes her more admirable" (362). In this description of Lucio chafing against masculinity, I don't see ridicule but, instead, an authentic longing for his more comfortable feminine self.
  13. *Ibid*, 3.2 (p. 528); the medical cures for Lucio's "womanish-heart" are discussed by Piorato and Bobadilla in 2.2, and include a week spent in a dark room, forced use of knives, a choleric diet of pork and bacon, Aqua-fortis poisons, seats, and weapons training. *Love's cure*, the kiss that Lucio shares with Genevora is

an outcome of Alvarez's harsh cure for his son, the insistence that he get in a sword fight and rape a woman. Instead of raping Genevora, feminine Lucio asks for this kiss, which is then transformative.

14. Ibid, 4.3 (p. 538). Of this scene, Anne Duncan remarks that Clara is "as desirable in women's clothes as she was in men's clothes, as attractive for her old strength as she is for her newly claimed submissiveness" (404); Duncan elsewhere argues that Clara is the only "real man" in the play (398).
15. Ibid, 4.3 (p. 538).
16. Ibid, 4.3 (p. 539).
17. Ibid, 4.4 (p. 541).
18. Ibid, 5.3 (p. 545).
19. Ibid, 5.3 (p. 545).
20. Berk, 365.
21. Jonathan Goldberg, "Introduction," *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993), p. 5.
22. Ibid, p 6. Along the same lines, a year later L.O.A. Fradenburg and Carla Freccero expand this ideas with intervention against this Foucauldian distinction between sexual acts and identities in *Premodern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
23. Goldberg and Menon, "Queering History" in *PMLA*, 120.5 (Oct 2005), p. 1616.
24. Ibid, p. 1609.
25. In her 2005 *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), Carla Freccero makes a similar argument, calling for a crosshistorical queer studies that she calls "queer time".
26. Valerie Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," in George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry, eds. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies* (New Jersey: Blackwell, 2007), p. 124.
27. Ibid, p. 124.
28. Madhavi Menon, "Period Cramps" in *Queer Renaissance Historiography*, eds. Vin Nardizzi, Stephen Guy-Bray, and Will Stockton (New York: Ashgate, 2009), 229–37. p. 230.
29. Ibid, p. 230.
30. Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128.1 (2013).
31. Ibid, p. 33.
32. Carla Freccero, "To the Editor," *PMLA* 128.3 (2013), p. 782.
33. Madhavi Menon, "To the Editor," *PMLA* 128.3 (2013), p. 783.
34. Valerie Traub, "Reply," *PMLA* 128.3 (2013), p. 785.
35. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). pp. 8–9.
36. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2010). pp. 95–96.
37. David Halperin, *How to Do The History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 16. Certainly not a presentist, Halperin, remains committed to historical specificity and an alterity between modern and early modern. Still he acknowledges the rich potential for an early modern connection between acts and identities, closer to ours today.
38. Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* Duke University Press, 2015. p. 7.
39. Ibid, 8.

40. Genny Beemyn, "US History," in *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*, ed. Laura Erickson-Schroth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 501–36), p. 501. Beemyn also published a special unabridged ebook version of the chapter, "Transgender History in the United States" (Oxford University Press, 2014).
41. *Ibid*, 501; note here that Beemyn does not mention historical MTF crossdressers except in-as-much as they might be coded references to male-male sexuality. Here again, FTM crossdressing is presented as a radical queer gender choice while MTF crossdressing is minimized.
42. Jason Cromwell, *Transmen and FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders and Sexualities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 81.
43. *Ibid*, 501.
44. *Ibid*, 501.
45. *Ibid*, 501.
46. Marilyn Morris, "Transgendered Perspectives on Premodern Sexualities." *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 46.3 (Summer 2006), pp. 585–600. Focusing primarily on the 18th century, Morris investigate three ways that trans studies inform premodern intimacy: "the role of transnational processes in identity formation, the interplay between gender identity and sexual object choice, and the force of normative models of sex, gender, and sexuality."
47. Alexander Eastwood, "How, then, might the Transsexual Read: Notes toward a Trans Literary History" *TSAQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1.4 (2014), p. 595.
48. *Ibid*, 595.
49. Elinor Burkett, "What Makes a Woman, " *The New York Times*, June 6, 2015, SR1.
50. Cary Gabriel Costello, "TERFs of the Times," *Trans-Fusion Blog*, June 7, 2015, <http://trans-fusion.blogspot.com/2015/06/terfs-of-times.html>. Accessed Oct. 5, 2015. In the title and throughout the article, Costello refers to Burkett as a Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminist—a "TERF."
51. Burkett and Goldberg, writing for broad mainstream audiences, are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to making trans-exclusionary feminist arguments. Their arguments harken back to more overtly transmisogynistic academic work, especially Janice Raymond's 1979 *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-He* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), and, more recently, works like Sheila Jeffrey's *Gender Hurts* (New York: Routledge, 2014) and *Unpacking Queer Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), which critique female-to-male transsexualism as capitulation to misogyny and sees medical forms of transitioning as forms of mutilation.
52. Karla Mantilla, "Men in Ewe's Clothing: The Stealth Politics of the Transgender Movement" *off our Backs*, vol. 30, No. 4 (April 2000) p. 5.

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# Index

Note: ‘N’ after a page number indicates a note; **bold** page numbers indicate a figure.

- actors 68n54. *See also* boy actors
- Ahmed, Sara 105
- Aizura, Aren Z. 32n50
- Amarillis Crowning Mirtillo* (van Nieuotlandt) 132n18
- Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath* (Breenbergh) 109–10, **109**, 132n19
- Anatomie of Abuses* (Stubbes) 41–2
- Anderson, Judith H. 51, 66n37
- anxiety. *See* cultural anxiety
- Arcadia* (Sidney): and *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (Wroth) 134n36; editions 132n22; MTF crossdressing in 4, 22, 112–18; plot overview of 112–13; queer desire in 113–18, 134n31; queer vs. lesbian erotics in 116–17; Rose on 133n25; “sexy dressing” in 133n25. *See also* *Isle of the Gulls* (Day)
- As You Like It* (Shakespeare) 4
- Auden, W.H. 23n2
- authenticity 180–1
- barbering 81–2, 98n24
- Barker, Roberta 17
- Bartholomew Fair* (Jonson) 68n58
- Beaumont, Francis, *Love’s Cure, or the Martial Maid* (with Fletcher) 169–72, 183–4n8, 184nn12–14
- Beecher, Donald 29n30, 63n10
- Beemyn, Genny 176, 177
- Berk, Peter 184n12
- Billing, Valerie 98n21
- Billings, Christian 162–3n28, 163n30
- bisexuality 63n9
- Blind Man’s Buff* (van der Lisse) **110**; queer desire in 110–11; title 132n21
- Boose, Lynda 28n20
- boy actors: boys generally vs. adult males 8, 135n46; crossdressing by, vs. adults 97–8n21; cultural anxieties surrounding 4–5; and FTM crossdressing 3–6; and *Gallathea* (Lyly) 139; and *May Day* (Chapman) 67n49; and sex trade 98n24
- boy bride motif: in *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (Jonson) 80–5, 98–9n25; in *A Mad World, My Masters* (Middleton) 74–80; overview of 72; in “Phylotus” ballad (anon.) 90–3; in “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 85–90; in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare) 97n20; trafficked position, as powerful in 72–4
- Breenbergh, Bartholomeus, *Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath* 109–10, **109**, 132n19
- Burk, Peter 172
- Burkett, Elinor 180–2, 186n51
- Butler, Judith: on gender and desire 103; on gender as constructed 144; on gender performativity 130n5, 139; on loss of gender norms 55; on violence 12
- Calandria* (Bibbiena) 40–1
- Callaghan, Dympna 131n13
- Carew, Thomas, “A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon ...” 127–9
- Cartwright, Kent 153, 162n26, 163n32
- Cavendish, Margaret, *The Convent of Pleasure* 4, 21, 138, 141, 143–7, 158, 161nn18–19

- Chapman, George, *May Day* 55–9, 67nn49–50  
 chastity 67n50  
 cisgender, terminology 27–8n19  
 class issues 45, 135n45, 184n11;  
 in *A Mad World, My Masters* (Middleton) 76  
 clothing: in *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 145, 146; critiques of early modern fashion 44; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 148–9; as gender marker 6, 28n23, 47, 49–50, 59–60; in *Love's Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 170; and male effeminacy 47–8; as prosthesis 7, 47, 49, 56, 57, 59, 65n27; and sex changes 135n44; “sexy dressing” 133n25; Stubbes on 41–2. *See also* *Haec Vir* (anon.); *Hic Mulier* (anon.)  
 “cod drag” 23–4n5  
*commedia erudite* 40  
 commodities, women as 75–9, 81–2, 86–8, 91, 94n1, 96–7n16  
 community: female, in *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (Jonson) 84; female, in “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 89; female, in *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 143, 161n19; and gender labor 138, 141, 156, 157; in “The Male and Female Husband” (anon.) 156. *See also* relationality  
 conservatism, of doublecrossdressing 41–2, 55, 72  
*The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 4;  
 cisgender femme/MTF crossdresser alliance in 141, 143–5; clothing as gendered in 145, 146; doublecrossdressing in 145; female community in 143, 161n19; gender labor in 21, 138, 141, 143–7, 158; gender performativity in 143–4; “the girl” in 144; memory in 145; MTF crossdressing in 143–7; plot overview of 143  
 convents 161n15  
 Correll, Shelley J. 10  
 Costello, Cary Gabriel 181–2  
*The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (Wroth): and *Arcadia* (Sidney) 134n36; class issues in 135n45; effeminacy in 119, 123–4; masochism in 134n35; mirroring in 119–20; MTF crossdressing in 118–24; plot overview of 118–19; queer desire in 120–4; sex change in 135n44  
 “The Country Cozen” (anon.) 11–12, 30n43  
 coverture 64n10  
 Cox, Laverne 179  
 Crawford, Julie 147, 161n15, 161n20  
 Cressy, David 96n15, 164n38  
 Cromwell, Jason 15, 176  
 “cross-biting” 97n19  
 crossdressing: Amazonian 133n24; and bodily change 46; for boys vs. adults 97–8n21; critiques of 41–2, 63nn6–7; erotics of 104; as queer performance 8; in queer studies scholarship 176; terminology 24n6. *See also* boy bride motif; doublecrossdressing; female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing; male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing  
 cultural anxiety: about ambiguous sexuality of crossdressers 104; about MTF crossdressing 7, 133n25, 156; surrounding marriage 73–4  
  
*The Dallas Buyers Club* (film) 179  
*The Danish Girl* (film) 179  
 Day, John, *Isle of the Gulls* 114–15  
 De Certeau, Michel 47  
 Dekker, Thomas, *The Roaring Girl* (with Middleton) 16, 18, 32n58  
 Deuteronomy 41–2, 63n7  
*The Devil is an Ass* (Jonson), MTF crossdressing in 17–18  
 Dolan, Frances E. 64n10  
 doublecrossdressing: in *Calandria* (Bibbiena) 40–1; as conservative 41–2, 55, 72; in *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 145; as empathetic 39–42, 51–2, 55, 61–2; in *Faerie Queene* (Spenser) 51–5; as gender swapping 42; in *Gl'Ingannati* (anon.) 41; in *Hic Mulier/Haec Vir* 46–50; Lelia motif 40–1, 67n47; in *Love's Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 169–70, 172; and MachineToBeAnother project 39–40, 62n1, 62n3; in *May Day* (Chapman) 55–9; as mirroring 39–40, 42; in “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 86, 87–8, 90, 99n32; popularity of, onstage 41; relationality of 56, 172; in “Robin Hood & the Bishop” (anon.)

- 59–61; and sexual confusion 66n31;  
as subversive 43, 61. *See also Haec Vir*  
(anon.); *Hic Mulier* (anon.)
- Downie, Jocelyn 9
- Duncan, Anne 185n14
- early modern studies, and transgender  
theory 14–15, 19; historicism vs.  
presentism debate 172–9; “Queering  
the Renaissance” 172–9
- Eastwood, Alexander 177–8
- effeminacy: in *Haec Vir* (anon.) 46–9;  
Levine on 130n3; love as cause of  
119, 133n25; in *Love’s Cure, or  
the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and  
Fletcher) 171–2. *See also* male-to-  
female (MTF) crossdressing
- empathy, doublecrossdressing as  
creating 39–42, 51–2, 55, 61–2
- Enke, A. Finn 25n10, 27–8n19
- Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*  
(Jonson): barbering in 81–2;  
boy vs. adult crossdressing in  
97–8n21; bride’s trafficked  
position, as powerful in 81,  
82–5; female community in 84;  
MTF crossdressing in 4, 80–5;  
patriarchal inheritance system 81;  
plot overview of 80–1; women as  
commodities in 81–2
- erotic triangle 74
- facial hair 1; 48
- Faerie Queene* (Spenser): conjoined  
lovers 66–7n39; destabilization of  
identity in 55; doublecrossdressing in  
51–5; empathetic gender swapping  
in 51–2, 55; mirroring in 51–2, 55;  
restored gender roles in 54–5
- female-to-male (FTM) crossdressing:  
and boy actors 3–6; feminist  
scholarship on 3–4; in *Gallathea*  
(Lyly) 147–56; in *May Day*  
(Chapman) 56; in “Phylotus and  
Emelia” (Riche) 87; in *The Roaring  
Girl* (Middleton and Dekker) 16, 18;  
as subversive to sex-gender order  
3–4; terminology 24n6; in *As You  
Like It* (Shakespeare) 4. *See also*  
crossdressing
- femininity: authentic 180–1; as  
beneficial 19; and blushing  
149; as symbiotic 49–50; and  
transmisogyny 183n1
- feminism: and MTF crossdressers 94;  
and trans\* women 181–2, 186n51;  
transfeminism 183n4
- “femme covert” 64n10
- Fenstermaker, Sarah 9
- Fisher, Will 6, 47, 76
- Fletcher, John, *Love’s Cure, or the  
Martial Maid* (with Beaumont)  
169–72, 184n8, 184nn11–13, 185n15
- forgetfulness. *See* memory
- Foucault, Michel 6
- Freccero, Carla 174, 185n25
- Freeburg, Victor Oscar 23n2, 56
- Freedman-Gurspan, Raffi 179
- Freeman, Elizabeth 175
- Frith, Mary (Moll) 16, 32n58
- FTM crossdressing. *See* female-to-male  
(FTM) crossdressing
- Fumerton, Patricia 135n40
- Gallathea* (Lyly): alliance in 151–5;  
and boy actors 139; clothing in  
148–9; feminine blushes in 149; FTM  
crossdressing in 147–56; gender labor  
as community effort in 141; gender  
labor in 22, 138–9, 147–56, 158–9;  
“the girl” in 143; intersex characters  
in 139; memory in 141, 142–3,  
150–1, 153; MTF crossdressing in  
163n31; MTFTM crossdressing  
in 141, 161n11; plot overview of  
147–8; queer desire in 106; setting of  
162n25; sex and sexuality in 142–3;  
sex changes in 148, 149, 155; sources  
for 162–3nn27–28
- Garber, Marjorie 23–4n5
- gender: as binary system 42–3, 49,  
55, 61; clothing as marker of 6,  
28n24; as constructed 40; instability  
of, in *May Day* (Chapman) 57–8;  
instability of, in “Robin Hood & the  
Bishop” (anon.) 59–60; in *A Mad  
World, My Masters* (Middleton)  
96n15; as performance 130–1n5;  
as performance, in *Love’s Cure*  
(Beaumont and Fletcher) 172; as  
performance, in *The Convent of  
Pleasure* 143–4; relationality of 158;  
vs. sexuality 16, 31–2n50
- gender labor: and cisgender femme/  
MTF crossdresser alliance 138–42;  
as community effort 141, 156,  
157–8; in *The Convent of Pleasure*  
(Cavendish) 21, 138, 141, 143–7,

- 158; defined 21, 138, 139; of “forgetting” 140, 141; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 22, 138–9, 147–56, 158–9; of “the girl” 140–4, 157; in *Love’s Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 171; in “The Male and Female Husband” (anon.) 141, 156–9; and passing 142; performed by cisgender partners 139–40, 141; vs. queer desire 163n35; and sex changes 158–60
- genderqueer/transgender persons: authenticity of 180–1; contemporary awareness of 179–83; feminine presentations of, as devalued 167–8; and feminism 181–2, 186n51; and gender labor performed by cisgender partners 139–40, 141; and heterosexuality 142; identity 160–1n10; and identity of historical figures 176–7; and relationality 181; terminology 25–6n11; violence toward 12, 13, 30–1n44. *See also* trans\*
- genderqueer/transgender representations: in early modern texts 15, 16–18; in film 106; intersex characters 139; in “Microcynicon” (Middleton) 28n20
- gender swapping. *See* doublecrossdressing
- Gilbert, Miqqi Alicia 19, 94
- Gl’Ingannati* (anon.) 41
- Goldberg, Jonathan: on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare) 23n4; “Queering History” 173; *Queering the Renaissance* 172–3; on “unhistoricisim/homohistory” 173
- Goldberg, Michelle 182, 186n51
- Goldner, Virginia 29n34
- Greenstadt, Amy 146, 161n19
- Guarini, Giovanni Battista, *Il Pastor Fido* 105, 111–12, 131nn8–9
- Haec Vir* (anon.): authorship of 65n22; doublecrossdressing in 43–50; and male effeminacy 46–9; men’s role in female masculinity 46–8; title of 65n13
- Halberstam, J. 55, 106, 140
- Halperin, David 174, 175, 185n37
- hermaphrodites. *See* intersex persons
- heterosexuality 142
- Hic Mulier* (anon.): authorship of 65n22; as critique of female masculinity 44–5; doublecrossdressing in 43–50; and female hypersexuality 45; and men’s role in female masculinity 45–9; title of 65n13
- historicism 173–9
- homophobia 115
- Horwich, Richard 96n13
- Howard, Jean E. 3–4, 45
- Hudson, Lorna 73
- identity, dual: in “A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon ...” (Carew) 128. *See also* queer identity
- intersex persons: contemporary awareness of 164n41; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 139; in “The Male and Female Husband” (anon.) 156, 158–9; terminology 160n3
- Irigaray, Luce 99n28
- Isle of the Gulls* (Day): queer desire in 114–15; vulnerability of crossdressers in 115. *See also* *Arcadia* (Sidney)
- Jankowski, Theodora 16, 142–3, 161n19
- Jenner, Caitlyn 179, 180–2
- Jonson, Ben: *Bartholomew Fair* 68n58; *The Devil is an Ass* 17–18; *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* 4, 80–5, 97–8n21, 98–9n25
- Juang, Richard 30–1n44
- Kegl, Rosemary 12, 30n40
- Kellett, Katherine 143–4
- King, Helen 63–4n10
- kinkiness, terminology 130n2
- “kissing wars”: *Amarillis Crowning Mirtillo* (van Nieulantdt) 132n18; *Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath* (Breenbergh) 109–10; *Blind Man’s Buff* (van der Lisse) 110–11, 132n21; *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* (Van Dyck) 105–6; *Il Pastor Fido* (Guarini) 105, 111–12; trope of 105
- Koyama, Emi 183n4
- lactation 65n18
- Lancashire, Anne Begor 162n25
- Landreth, David 23n4
- Laqueur, Thomas 6, 43, 158
- Lelia motifs 40–1, 67n47

- Leto, Jared 179
- Levine, Laura 5, 130n3
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude 94n1
- Lieblein, Leanore 79
- Llewellyn, Jennifer J. 9
- “A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon ...” (Carew): dual identity in 128; queer desire in 127–8, 129
- Love, Heather 175
- Love’s Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and Fletcher):  
 authorship of 184n8; clothing in 170; doublecrossdressing in 169–70, 172; effeminacy as positive in 171–2; female masculinity in 171–2, 183–4n13; FTM vs. MTF crossdressing in 184–5nn13–14; gender labor in 172; plot overview of 169–70
- Low, Jennifer 97–8n21, 184n10
- Lyly, John, *Gallathea* (Lyly) 21, 106, 138–9, 141–3, 147–56, 158–9, 161n11, 162n25, 162–3nn25–28, 163nn30–32
- Machine To Be Another project 39–40, 62n1, 62n3
- macrells 91
- A Mad World, My Masters* (Middleton):  
 benefits of crossdressing in 4; boy vs. adult crossdressing in 98n21; bride’s trafficked position, as powerful in 75, 77–8, 80; class issues in 76; gender in 96n15; MTF crossdressing in 76, 78–80; patriarchal inheritance system 76–8, 80, 96n10; plot overview of 74–5; popularity of 95n6; status quo restored in 80; women as commodities in 75–9, 96–7n16
- makeup 48
- “The Male and Female Husband” (anon.): cisgender femme/MTF crossdresser alliance in 157, 159; community in 156, 157–8; gender labor in 141, 156–9; “the girl” in 157; intersex characters in 156, 158–9; memory in 157; plot overview of 156
- male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing:  
 adult vs. boy actors 8; in *Arcadia* (Sidney) 4, 22, 112–18; as beneficial 4, 12–14, 172; in contemporary culture 33n67; in *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 143–7; in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (Wroth) 118–24; in “The Countrey Cozen” (anon.) 11–12; cultural anxieties surrounding 7, 133n25, 156; as degrading to men 73, 80–1; in *The Devil is an Ass* (Jonson) 17–18; as disruptive 167; in *Epicœne, or the Silent Woman* (Jonson) 4, 80–5; and feminism 94; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 163n31; in *Love’s Cure, or the Martial Maid* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 184–5nn13–14; in *A Mad World, My Masters* (Middleton) 75–6, 78–80; in *May Day* (Chapman) 56; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare) 1, 23n2, 23n5; in “Microcynicon” (Middleton) 5–6; midwives 164n38; in “Philotus” (anon.) 92; in “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 7, 88–9; and queer desire 103–4; as relational 2, 3, 4, 9–10, 12–14, 168–9; scholarly neglect of 19, 33n65, 33n67, 167; in “Sport upon Sport ...” (anon.) 124, 126–7; terminology 24n6; violence incited by 10–12, 30n40. *See also* boy bride motif; crossdressing
- Mantilla, Karla 182–3
- marriage: anxiety surrounding 73–4; and “femme covert” 64n10; as marketplace 96n13; MTF crossdressers as queering 73–4; as sanctioned sex work 75; as traffic in women 72–4, 75–9, 81–2, 86–8, 91–3, 98–9n25. *See also* boy bride motif
- masculinity: as default ideal 7; female, in *Hic Mulier* (anon.) 44–9; female, in *Love’s Cure* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 170–1, 184n15; feminine, as empowering 72, 74; as symbiotic 49–50
- Massinger, Philip 183–4n8
- May Day* (Chapman): and boy actors 67n49; chastity in 67n50; doublecrossdressing in 55–9; FTM crossdressing in 56; instability of gender in 57–8; mirroring in 58; MTF crossdressing in 56; queered romance in 57–8; relationality effects in 56
- McMillan, Scott 97n21
- memory: in *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 145; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 141, 142–3, 150–1, 153; and

- gender labor 140; in “The Male and Female Husband” (anon.) 157; and Photoshop use 160–1n10
- men: crossdressing by, vs. boys 97–8n21, 135n46; effeminacy of 46–8, 119; MTF crossdressing as degrading to 73, 80–1; role of, in female masculinity 45–9. *See also* male to female crossdressing
- Menon, Madhavi 173–4
- Mentz, Stephen 133n25
- The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare): Falstaff as “cod drag” 24n5; Falstaff’s beard 23n4; MTF crossdressing in 1, 23n2, 24n5; violence incited by crossdressing in 10–11
- Metamorphoses* (Ovid) 162n27
- Michigan Womyn’s Festival 179, 182
- “Microcynicon” (Middleton) 5–6, 28n20
- Middleton, Thomas: *A Mad World, My Masters* 4, 74–80, 95n6, 96–7n16, 96n10, 96n15, 97–8n21; “Microcynicon” 5–6, 28n20; *The Roaring Girl* (with Dekker) 16, 18, 32n58
- mirroring: in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (Wroth) 119–20; doublecrossdressing as 39–40, 42; in *Faerie Queene* (Spenser) 51–2, 55; in *May Day* (Chapman) 58
- Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* (Van Dyck) 107; queer desire in 106, 108; setting of 132n18; Traub on 105–6, 107
- Mock, Janet 13–14, 31n48
- Morris, Marilyn 177, 186n46
- Moss, Roger 23n2
- Mounsey, Chris 42
- MTF crossdressing. *See* male-to-female (MTF) crossdressing
- Munro, Lucy 67n49
- Namaste, Viviane 31n44
- New Arcadia* *see* *Arcadia*
- Oculus Rift technology 39
- Old Arcadia* *see* *Arcadia*
- O’Neill, Kel 61
- Orgel, Stephen 5, 7
- Ovid 134n30, 148, 162n27
- pansexuality 63n9
- passing 135n49, 142; terminology 24n6
- Paster, Gail Kern 64n10
- Il Pastor Fido* (Guarini): plot overview of 105; queer desire in 111–12; Traub on 131n8
- performativity, of gender 130–1n5, 143–4, 172
- Pfeffer, Carla A. 141–2
- “Phylotus” ballad (anon.): bride’s trafficked position, as powerful in 93; MTF crossdressing in 92; and “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 91; plot overview of 90–1; women as commodities in 91
- Photoshop 160–1n10
- “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche): boy vs. adult crossdressing in 98n21; bride’s trafficked position, as powerful in 86, 88–90; doublecrossdressing in 86, 87–8, 90, 99n32; female community in 89; FTM crossdressing in 87; MTF crossdressing in 88–9; and “Phylotus” ballad (anon.) 91; plot overview of 85–6; sex change in 7; women as commodities in 86–8
- primogeniture 76–8, 80, 96n10
- prostheses 7, 47, 49, 56, 57, 59, 65n27
- pronouns: “singular they” and he/she/their 24n6; in *Haec Vir* and *Hic Mulier* 65n13; in *Arcadia* (Sidney) 114, 117; in *Urania* (Wroth) 119, 121, 123; in “Sport upon Sport” (anon) 126; in gender labor 140; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 151; in “A Strange and Wonderful Relation” (anon) 156
- queer desire: in *Amarillis crowning Mirtillo with a Floral Wreath* (Breenbergh) 109–10; in *Arcadia* (Sidney) 113–14, 115–18, 134n31; in *Blind Man’s Buff* (van der Lisse) 110–11; in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (Wroth) 120–4; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 106; vs. gender labor 163n35; in *Isle of the Gulls* (Day) 114–15; in “A Lover, in the Disguise of an Amazon . . .” (Carew) 127–8, 129; in *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* (Van Dyck) 106, 108; and MTF crossdressers 18, 103–4; in *Il Pastor Fido* (Guarini) 111–12; as positive 8; and romance genre 112; in “Sport upon Sport . . .” (anon.) 126
- queer heterosexuality 129, 131n6, 163n35; defined 103–4

- queer identity: of historical figures 176–7; of MTF crossdresser in “Sport upon Sport ...” (anon.) 126; and skoliosexuality 131n6
- queerness: defined 129; terminology 254–n7
- queer studies. *See* transgender and queer studies
- “Queering the Renaissance.” *See* early modern studies
- Rackin, Phyllis 162n25
- Redmayne, Eddie 179
- relational gender theory 9, 43; vs. relational-cultural theory 29n34
- relationality: of doublecrossdressing, in *Love’s Cure* (Beaumont and Fletcher) 172; of doublecrossdressing, in *May Day* (Chapman) 56; of gender 158; of MTF crossdressing 2, 3, 4, 9–10, 12–14, 168–9; of trans\* studies as 180–1; and trans\* women 181. *See also* community
- “renarration” 15–16
- “the reveal” 29n32
- Riche, Barnabe, “Phylotus and Emelia” 7, 28n29, 85–91, 98n21, 99n32
- Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 10
- The Roaring Girl* (Middleton and Dekker) 32n57; FTM crossdressing in 16, 18; queer approaches to 16, 18
- Robin Hood 68n55
- “Robin Hood & the Bishop” (anon.): and *Bartholomew Fair* (Jonson) 68n58; doublecrossdressing in 59–61; instability of gender in 59–60; woodcuts 60, 61, 68n57
- Robinson, Richard (Dick) 17–18
- romance genre 112
- Rose, Mark 133n25
- Rose, Mary Beth 99n29
- Rubin, Gayle 72–3, 74, 93, 95n1
- Salmon, Thomas 164n38
- Sanchez, Melissa 134n35
- Sangrey, Trevor 168
- Schilt, Kristen 142
- Schleiner, Winfried 130n3
- Schwarz, Katherine 52, 118, 127, 128–9, 133n24
- Sears, Clare 176
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky 74, 95n2, 129
- Sedinger, Tracey 46, 66n33, 104, 130n4
- Seid, Danielle M. 29n32
- Serano, Julia 167, 168, 183n1
- sex and sexuality: anxiety about 104; bisexuality 63n9; as changeable 6; Galenic one-sex model 6, 63–4n10, 158; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 142–3; vs. gender 16, 31–2n50; humoral model 64n10; pansexuality 63n9; and queer courtship encounters 8; skoliosexuality 131n6
- sex changes: caused by clothing 135n44; from female to male 6–7; in *Gallathea* (Lyly) 148, 149, 155; and gender labor 158–60; in *Hic Mulier! Haec Vir* 46; *Metamorphoses* (Ovid) 162n27; in “Phylotus and Emelia” (Riche) 28n29
- Shakespeare, William: *As You Like It* 4; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1, 10–11, 23n2, 23nn4–5; *The Taming of the Shrew* 97n20
- Shannon, Laurie 155
- Shapiro, Michael 32n62, 40, 44; on actors’ difficulties 68n54; *Gallathea* (Lyly) 148; on *Hic Mulier* (anon.) 45, 50; on masculine women 66n33; on *May Day* (Chapman) 56
- Shepherd, Alexandra 12, 30n40
- Shotwell, Alexis 168
- Sidney, Philip, *Arcadia* 4, 22, 112–18, 132n22, 133n25, 134n31, 134n36
- Silberman, Laura 51–2
- Sinfield, Alan 56
- skimmington rituals 12, 30n40, 31n44
- social change, relational gender as impetus for 10
- Spenser, Edmund, *Faerie Queene* (Spenser) 51–5, 66–7n39
- “Sport upon Sport ...” (anon.) 125; MTF crossdressing as seduction tool in 124, 126–7; plot overview of 124–5; queer desire in 126; queer identity of MTF crossdresser in 126
- Springer, Kristen W. 10
- Stonewall* (film) 179
- Stryker, Susan 14, 15, 31–2n50, 31n49
- Stubbes, Phillip 63n6; *Anatomie of Abuses* 41–2
- Suzuki, Mihoko 52
- Swann, Marjorie 81
- The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare) 97n20
- Tangerine* (film) 179
- Taormino, Tristan 129

- Taylor, Michael 95n7  
 Tiffany, Grace 23n2  
 trans\*: contemporary awareness of 179–83; and feminism 181–2, 186n51; and passing 142; representation of, in film 106; terminology 24n5, 31n44; women, and relationality 181. *See also* genderqueer/transgender persons; transgender and queer studies; transfeminism; transmisogyny  
 transfeminism 183n4  
 transgender and queer studies: crossdressing in 176; defined 14; and early modern studies 14–15, 19; emergence of 31n49; historicism vs. presentism debate 172–9; as relational 180–1; and trans\* literary history 182  
 Transgender Day of Remembrance 13, 31n46  
 “transgender effects” 15  
*Transgender Studies Quarterly (TSQ)* 179  
 transmisogyny: defined 183n1; and feminism 186n51; and scholarly neglect of MTF crossdressers 167  
*Transparent* (TV series) 179  
 transvestites: in Renaissance romances 130n3; terminology 24n6. *See also* genderqueer/transgender persons  
 Traub, Valerie: on *The Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 161n18; on FTM crossdressing 130n3; on historicism and queer scholarship 173, 174; on lesbian desire in *Arcadia* (Sidney) 116; on *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* (Van Dyck) 105–6, 107  
 Trubowitz, Rachel 45, 65n18  
 “unhistoricism” 173–4  
 van der Lisse, Dirck, *Blind Man’s Buff* 110–11, 110, 132n21  
 Van Dyck, Anthony, *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis* 105–8, 107, 132n17  
 van Nieuotlandt, Adriaen, *Amarillis Crowning Mirtillo* 132n18  
 violence: against genderqueer/transgender persons 12, 13, 30–1n44; incited by MTF crossdressing 10–12, 30n40; skimmington rituals 12, 30n40, 30–1n44  
 virtual reality 39, 40  
 Wagner, Geraldine 16, 51  
 Wall, Wendy 5  
 Ward, Jane: on cisgender femme labor 160n8; on cisgender femme/MTF alliance 144, 153, 160nn5–6; on collective work of gender labor 159; on gender labor 139–40, 142  
 Weismantel, Mary 18  
 West, Candace 9  
 Westbrook, Laurel 142  
 Whittle, Stephen 33n67  
 Wixson, Christopher 164n36  
 women: as commodities 75–9, 81–2, 86–8, 91, 94n1, 96–7n16, 99n28; community of 84, 89, 138, 156; gender labor of, as “the girl” 140–4, 157; marriage as traffic in 72–4, 75–9, 81–2, 86–8, 91–3, 98–9n25; married, as “femme covert” 64n10; masculine, as hypersexual 45; trafficked position of, as powerful 75, 77–8, 80, 81, 82–5, 93; trans\*, and relationality 181. *See also* marriage  
 Wroth, Mary, *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* 118–24, 134nn35–38, 135nn44–45