

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Laila Abdalla
Department of English
McGill University, Montreal
August 1996

**Man, Woman or Monster: Some Themes of
Female Masculinity and Transvestism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance**
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Ph.D.
© Laila Abdalla 1996



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-29865-5

Canada

Abstract

This dissertation discusses mediaeval and Renaissance clerical and cultural constructions of femininity and female masculinity, and it analyses the complex relationship between such conceptions and the literary representation of the transvestite woman. Mediaeval theology legitimated female masculinity as transcendence of temporal sexuality. A woman who contained her affective femininity and replaced it with rational and ascetic behaviour was frequently lauded for having become male in all but body. In the middle of the first millennium, hagiographic legends abounded in which women appear to have embodied the patristic equation between spiritual rationality and masculinity. This dissertation proposes a radically different interpretation: the saint exchanges a sexualised form of femininity -- ironically imposed upon her by a male society -- for a non sexual but nevertheless feminine self valuation.

Early modern culture perceived transvestism in a multiform manner. It signifies monstrosity in the polemical pamphlet, serves to indicate an estimable apex of humanity in Shakespearean comedy, and represents women in roles that range from monstrous disrupter to adept uniter in the works of such other playwrights as Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton. While the pamphlet's social commentary argues that masculinity rendered a woman monstrously unfeminine, the literature finds ways of interrogating definitions of the sex-gender system in a world which was constantly and fundamentally mutating. The drama employs elements such as inversion, monstrosity and transgressions of class to negotiate a society in flux.

Résumé

L'auteur de cette dissertation analyse les constructions de la féminité et de la masculinité féminine au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance pour analyser les relations complexes entre les deux et la représentation littéraire de la femme travestie. La théologie médiévale a légitimé la masculinité féminine comme transcendance de la sexualité temporelle. Une femme qui retenait sa féminité affective et la remplaçait par un comportement rationnel et ascétique était fréquemment félicitée d'être devenue un homme sauf dans son corps. Vers le milieu du premier millénaire, on trouve une abondance de légendes hagiographiques où les femmes semblent incarner l'équation patristique entre la rationalité spirituelle et la masculinité. L'auteur de cette thèse propose une interprétation radicalement différente : les saints échanges d'une forme sexualisée de la féminité (ironiquement imposée par une société d'hommes) pour une valorisation non sexuelle mais néanmoins féminine.

La culture de la Renaissance percevait le travestisme sous plusieurs formes. On le qualifiait de monstruosité dans les pamphlets polémiques, il servait à indiquer le sommet estimable de l'humanité dans les pièces de Shakespeare et représentait les femmes dans des rôles allant de perturbateur monstrueux à celui d'unificateur adepte dans les oeuvres d'autres dramaturges comme Ben Jonson et Thomas Middleton. Même si le commentaire social du pamphlet soutient que la masculinité rend une femme monstrueusement peu féminine, la littérature a trouvé des moyens de remettre en question les définitions du système des deux sexes dans un monde qui était en constante mutation axiomatique. L'art dramatique associe le travesti à des éléments comme le monde à l'envers, la monstruosité et la transgression de classe pour négocier et exprimer une société en mouvance.

Contents

Acknowledgements	.....	i
1. Introduction	.....	1
2. The Church Fathers and Female Masculinity	.....	10
3. Transvestism in Mediaeval Hagiography	.....	72
4. The Renaissance Polemic and Female Monstrosity	.....	133
5. Transvestism in Renaissance Comedy	.....	203
6. Conclusion	.....	297
Bibliography	.....	305

Acknowledgments

Above all, I would like to thank my mother, father and brother for their unstinting love and generosity. Without them, this dissertation would have been impossible in many ways.

I am also eternally grateful to GBMB, PB, CJ, CMJ, ML and SL for their support over the years. Their advice, camaraderie and encouragement made pursuing this degree and writing this dissertation a humane, enjoyable, and rewarding process.

My thanks go also to Dr. Kate Shaw and Dr. Ron Reichertz for sharing with me their knowledge and love of what eventually became the seeds of this dissertation. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Abbott Conway for supervising my M.A. thesis, nurturing my budding interest in mediaeval literature, writing endless letters of reference, and demonstrating support and concern for me over the years.

Last but certainly not least my profoundest appreciation goes to Dr. David Williams for making this degree signify more than academic achievement. Thank you David for your generous dissertation supervision, your pedagogical guidance throughout the years, and your moral support during times of intellectual, administrative or moral crisis. Thanks most of all for your friendship and belief in me. Among the many things you have taught me, you have demonstrated that "above all else to thine own self be true" is not always throw-away advice.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the seventh century AD¹ a woman by the name of Athanasia donned male attire as a means of protecting herself on a pilgrimage. Ultimately the disguise served as a ruse that enabled her to join her husband in an all-male monastery in Egypt. Although she deceived her spouse and the other monks about her gender, Athanasia was lauded for her asceticism and canonised as a saint. (The Golden Legend) In 1569 Johan Godman “with the consent, procurement, and agrements of her ... husband [was] disguised and appareled in all things like a souldier and in a souldiers garments with wepons accordinglie, and so went abroade and shewed her self in divers parts of this City [i.e. London] as lackey” (“Repertories of the Alderman’s Court” 16:522; reprinted in Shapiro 227). For her deceit she and her husband John were “lawfullie convicted and attainted” by their own confessions as well as by accounts of hostile witnesses and ordered to “be sett upon the pillorye in Chepeside having papers affixed to the same pillory declaring there saide offence and so there to remayne till 11 of the clock and then to be conveyed to Bridewell and there to be whipped naked to the girdlestead [waist] and then there to be safelie kepte till my Lord Mayors further pleasure shalbe knowne.” (227) In The Merchant of Venice (1596-97) Portia and Nerissa disguise themselves as clerks in order to travel to Venice to rescue their husbands’ friend Antonio from certain death. In spite of gulling almost everybody, Duke, court officials, and husbands, Portia and Nerissa are fully vindicated by the playwright.

These three incidents encapsulate the divergent mediaeval and Renaissance attitudes toward female transvestism. Mediaeval culture legitimated female masculinity as transcendence of temporal sexuality. Early modern culture perceived transvestism in a more multiform manner. It signified monstrosity for Renaissance authority, served to indicate an estimable apex of humanity in Shakespearean comedy, and represented women in roles that range from monstrous disrupter to adept uniter in the works of such other playwrights as Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton. Renaissance drama as a whole tended to be more varying in its approach to the cross dressed woman, and it was generally more sympathetically disposed towards her than contemporary polemics were of her social counterpart. This dissertation discusses mediaeval and Renaissance clerical and cultural constructions of femininity and female masculinity to assess and analyse the profound relationship between them and the literary representation of the cross dressed woman.

In its most abstract sense, the dissertation examines the connection between fact and fiction. It scrutinises the relationship between that which is or represents itself as pragmatic, real-life, fact-based authority² and the reception of such authority by literature. To what extents did mediaeval and Renaissance fiction and the cultures that consumed it participate in or re-write the authoritative position? As will be demonstrated, while the literature is invariably at some level cognisant of the authoritative stance, it rarely absorbs it without radically or subtly re-inventing it. The thesis propounds that while mediaeval authority postulated masculinity as vanquishing perfidious femininity, literary culture, which included women, subversively credited femininity as itself essentially valid. And

while Renaissance social commentary argued that masculinity rendered a woman monstrously unfeminine, the literature found ways of interrogating definitions of the sex-gender system in a world that was constantly and axiomatically mutating. In its broadest sense, the dissertation proves that mediaeval and Renaissance literature undermined and destabilised the uniform conservative position undertaken by the “factual” writings.

The major focus of the dissertation is the literary character of the transvestite and how she reflects or contributes to the unfolding genre of masculine womanhood. In addition to assessing the negotiation between fact and fiction, the thesis focuses primarily on gender definitions. How does the transvestite fit into the scheme of positive / negative womanhood, when is a woman valued as a woman, what is a woman, and what is the value of individuality -- these questions are the foundations of the dissertation's character analysis.

In its infancy the thesis intended to broach the subject of female masculinity in its various literary manifestations -- women who assume male behaviour, women who fail or surmount feminine conduct, and women who dress like men -- and in both the mediaeval and Renaissance periods. It gradually became apparent, however, that such intentions, albeit pertinent in their heroic virility, were monstrously ambitious in both subject and scope. Subject therefore had to be sacrificed to scope. As such, while this dissertation is conscious of the myriad definitions of female masculinity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, it focuses specifically on three issues: first, the fictional female transvestite; second, the contemporary theological, philosophical and cultural theories that constituted

the environment in which she was received and the criteria by which she was adjudicated; and third, twentieth century critical readings of her.³

Over the past three decades or so, female transvestism has become a favoured subject for a variety of scholarly approaches. In the discipline of mediaeval studies, feminist historians like Caroline Walker Bynum, cultural critics like Vern L. Bullough, and psychoanalytical anthropologists like Marie Delcourt, have pondered the pressures that led to female cross dressing and the implications thereof. In Renaissance scholarship, feminist writers such as Juliet Dusinberre, materialist feminists like Jean Howard, and cultural materialists like Jonathan Dollimore, have shown that female transvestism is a complex and fertile field that reveals as much about a woman's societal position as it does about such early modern anxieties as the emergent merchant class.

While Renaissance scholars only occasionally refer to mediaeval transvestism, and then only fleetingly, mediaeval scholarship is almost entirely removed from any notion of the issue's development in the Renaissance. It is this gulf that the dissertation seeks to bridge, for the attitudes of both eras are brought into sharper focus when perceived in reference to each other. More significantly, while the implications of cross dressing differ between the two periods in question, at times even diametrically oppose each other, there remains a telling consistency in the disjunction between fictional and authoritative representations of transvestism. The dissertation locates a dynamic relationship between mediaeval and Renaissance literary representations of female transvestism, and it proves that in spite of authoritative attempts to limit the female, fiction enhanced and validated it.

*

The dissertation is divided into six chapters: this introduction, two chapters on the Middle Ages, two on the Renaissance, and a conclusion. The chapter following the introduction establishes the mediaeval authoritative position on female masculinity. By assessing the conceptualisation of gender in the Bible, the writings of the Church Fathers, and such social commentary as satire and proverb, the chapter delineates two streams of female masculinity in the Middle Ages. A woman who contained her affective femininity and replaced it with rational and ascetic behaviour was frequently lauded for having become male in all but body. Simultaneously, the woman who indulged her fallen femininity to become unruly and domineering was abhorred as wickedly masculine. Contradictorily, then, female masculinity indicated a valuable and revered asceticism as well as a dangerous and despised autonomy.

Chapter three analyses the motif of female transvestism in hagiography. In the middle of the first millennium hagiographic legends abounded in which women exchanged their female clothing for male and proceeded to lead virtuous and venerated lives. The transvestite saints have been assessed by modern criticism as embodying the patristic equation between spiritual rationality and masculinity. This chapter proposes a radically different interpretation by revealing a subtext in which the saint exchanges a sexualised form of femininity -- ironically imposed upon her by a male society -- for a non sexual but nevertheless feminine self valuation. Transvestism paradoxically enables the saint to achieve the conflicting demands imposed by mediaeval society and theology on its women.

The fourth chapter discusses sixteenth and early seventeenth century polemical pamphlets on female transvestism. Though they sometimes contain elements of fiction, the polemics nevertheless consciously and deliberately depict themselves as directly commenting on contemporary mores and conduct.⁴ Historical tracts like William Harrison's The Description of England, sermons like John Williams' "A Sermon of Apparel.", and social criticism like Philip Stubbs' Anatomy of Abuses purport to address the historically true subject of female transvestism. Despite the multiplicity of polemical genres, there is overwhelming accord between authors that female cross dressing signalled a monstrous conflation of genders that were divinely and biologically created as opposite. The hermaphrodite typifies a world that has had all its power structures turned upside down, not solely those of gender. As twentieth century commentary elucidates, the abomination of the transvestite conceals a host of other anxieties. The cross dressed woman came to symbolise a world in which such previously adamant concepts as divine, social, and economic laws were rapidly mutating.

Chapter five analyses the dramatic representation of the transvestite woman. Focusing on Shakespearean comedy and other representative plays about cross dressing such as Jonson's Epicoene and Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl, the chapter proposes that the drama negotiates the polemics' self-same anxieties. While Shakespearean comedy celebrates a physical distinction between the sexes, it simultaneously elevates a common humanity in such notions as ethics, love, compassion, and loyalty. The transvestite serves to throw into focus the true social pariah, the upwardly mobile servant or the merchant who confuses ducats with daughters. The other

plays pursue even more closely, if with varying results, the conventions of the polemical debate. The drama associates the transvestite with such elements as the world turned upside down, monstrosity and class transgression in order to negotiate and express a society in flux. The plays thus all participate in a language that is influenced by the polemical convention. They deviate from each other in the extent to which they repudiate or re-inscribe the polemical definition of good and bad femininity.

This dissertation thus concludes that mediaeval and Renaissance literature in general validates feminine capability in the transvestite, while mediaeval and Renaissance authority in general devaluates the feminine in the masculine woman. While literary transvestism exchanges female attire for male, it does not exchange female ability for male. What has emerged from this study is that in both mediaeval and Renaissance fiction women in men's clothing do not represent or become men. Rather, they are for better or worse women enacting femininity. Excepting the occasional dissident in the Renaissance, the male disguise in fiction is but a superficial shell underneath which the woman remains the same female person she was before cross dressing. While authority perceives transvestism as a way by which a woman negates the feminine, the literature employs it as a way by which she continues the feminine: the saints defend temporal femininity, Shakespeare's heroines validate a common humanity, and other dramatic transvestites, for example Middleton and Dekker's roaring girl, expose a decadent society that is composed of both male and female.

Endnotes

¹ See Evelyne Patlagean 597-600 for dating information

² "Authority" is a complex word that implies many elements and which thus needs to be clearly defined. I use it here and in the final chapter to summarise the various forms of writings that represent themselves as truth. Specifically it refers to the Bible, patristic theology, and social commentary in its various forms, most especially the Renaissance polemical pamphlet. While the "social commentary" category includes works that employ some aspects of fiction, for example the mythical country of Ailgna satirically substitutes for England in Philip Stubbs' The Anatomy of Abuses, these works are nevertheless intended as critiques of contemporary reality. Any work that employs character and plot in a manner other than a framing device does not count as "authoritative". The Utopia, for example, constitutes an "authoritative" account of England's political and religious troubles in the sixteenth century. "Authority" thus indicates official in some cases, historical truth in others, and non-fictional in yet others.

³ While female transvestism is a complex and profound topic, a brief apology (in the Renaissance sense of the word) for omitting certain aspects of it is here necessary. By the wayside have fallen the tradition of Romance, the figure of the Amazon, and Elizabeth I's self-proclaimed androgyny. The non cross dressed masculine woman has also become somewhat sidelined. Romance and its most renowned representative Britomart are abandoned partly because they belong to a tradition that (albeit related to mediaeval hagiography and Renaissance drama) is generically, conventionally, and historically separate, and partly because the development of romance from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance is a vast subject that is deserving of its own extensive focus. (For a discussion of Britomart see Bean and Leslie.) Moreover, because romance has been set aside, Shakespeare's Imogen from the romance drama Cymbeline is also missing from the discussion. (For a discussion of Imogen see Shapiro 173-198.) The only other Shakespearean transvestite not under consideration in this dissertation is La Pucelle from 1 Henry VI. La Pucelle is incongruous here because she issues from a history and not a comedy. Moreover, the historical exigencies in her portrayal make her a complex character indeed. La Pucelle stems also from traditions that are not under consideration here, most notably the Amazon. (For a discussion of La Pucelle and transvestism

see Gabriele Bernhard Jackson.) The Amazon has been slighted because she is normally inconsistently cross dressed (Hippolyta in A Midsummer Night's Dream wears a gown, for example). Moreover, she frequently represents a martial form of femininity that is at odds with the dissertation's primary focus on gender definitions and their reflections in the polemical debate. The Amazon's pedigree of classical, mediaeval and Renaissance cataloguing, makes her also more of a leitmotif than a character (see McLeod). She is usually one name in a list of women who are exceptional because of a warriorship that is either chaste or sexually voracious (see for example St. Jerome's Against Jovinian and references to La Pucelle in 1 Henry VI). (For a survey of Amazon figures in Renaissance literature see Shepherd.)

Elizabeth I's consciously constructed androgyny is also absent from the discussion. Its political and historical exigencies render it fascinating though marginal. (For a discussion of Elizabeth's political uses of androgynous language see Katherine Kelly and Marcus.) Finally, masculine and domineering straight dressed women, The Wife of Bath, Goneril, and Regan for example, have perforce become secondary in this dissertation. The section on Epicoene in the fifth chapter takes note of and treats Mistress Otter, a straight dressed woman who rules and financially controls her husband, and the Collegiate ladies, unruly women who wear some masculine clothing but are not completely cross dressed. These women are critiqued within the tradition of female transvestism, however, rather than within the accompanying tradition of the non-cross dressed masculine woman. This latter tradition is itself given attention in chapter two, but a full exploration of its every facet is not the intention of this dissertation.

⁴ See Chapter 4 note 2 for a more extensive definition of the meaning of "polemical pamphlet" and the notion of reality it puts forth.

Chapter 2

The Church Fathers and Female Masculinity

In 388-89 St. Ambrose compared Mary Magdalene's reaction when she encounters the risen Christ and that of Stephen when he sees and recognises Jesus standing at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7:55). The Magdalene's initial doubt and Stephen's immediate assimilation of the Truth represent for Ambrose the essential difference between woman and man. Making reference to St. Paul from Ephesians 4, Ambrose aligns the distinction between woman and man with that between affective weakness and spiritual virility. Jesus addresses Mary as "woman", notes Ambrose, because "celle qui ne croit pas est femme, et désingée encore par la qualité de son sexe selon le corps; car celle qui croit arrive 'à l'homme parfait, à la mesure de l'âge achevé du Christ' (Ephesians 4:13); elle n'a plus son nom du siècle, le sexe de son corps, la mobilité de la jeunesse, le bavardage de la vieillesse. Donc Jésus dit: 'Femme, pourquoi pleures-tu?' comme pour dire: ce ne sont pas simplement des larmes que Dieu réclame, mais la foi; les vraies larmes, c'est reconnaître le Christ." (Traité sur L'Évangile de S. Luc X. 161) Temporal femininity is for Ambrose marked by youthful flightiness and garrulity in old age, unlike temporal masculinity which is capable of perfection. Ambrose's citation from Ephesians, however, reveals that his opposition is somewhat contrived. Rather than separating womanhood from manhood, St. Paul is articulating a contrast between childishly immature belief and mature adult-like faith. Only when everybody partakes in Christ "shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God - to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ. We

are no longer to be tossed by the waves and whirled about by every fresh gust of teaching, dupes of crafty rogues, and their deceitful schemes. No, let us speak the truth in love; so shall we fully grow up into Christ.” Why, then, did St. Ambrose cite only part of the verse, and why did he choose to change the terms of the dichotomy? The answer has to do partly with the topos of the masculine woman, a topos that runs throughout mediaeval theological and literary works. For Ambrose and other mediaeval writers and thinkers like him, a woman ascended to perfect faith and God’s favour when she transcended her femininity and became more masculine.¹

Masculine women in the Middle Ages took on two principal forms. On the negative side women inverted natural and social order by gaining autonomy over their persons and dominance over their husbands. Ironically, these women usually attained spousal ascendancy by deploying such ‘typically feminine wiles’ as lust and gossip. Alisoun of Bath is perhaps the most famous literary example. These women enacted not the masculinity that was normally hoped for from their gender, but rather one that was contrary to their gender: their emulation of the male transgressed conduct rules rather than transcended temporal restrictions. The negative masculine woman thus obtained control over money but ceded mastery over her lustful inclinations. Not all masculine women were censurable, however. On the positive side women overcame their fleshliness and donned a masculine spirituality. These positive masculine women scorned materiality and vanquished feminine frailty by gaining rational control over their appetitive natures. They were often virile upholders of virginity, and the strength of their conviction and asceticism translated sometimes into strength for such practical matters as leading armies against

pagan invaders. Positive masculine women were thus frequently presented as *miles christi*, while negative masculine women were often portrayed as sexual dominatrices.

Although examples of negative masculine women are found in Greek and Roman writings², the image of the chaste woman in the ancient pagan world remained one of ideal femininity - Penelopes waiting and weaving patiently, or Sabine women sacrificing their chastity and homeland to avoid a war against their menfolk. The metaphor that describes intellect and faith in terms of masculinity regardless of gender thus seems to be a distinct product of Christianity. Parameters of ancient positive femininity such as chastity, submission, and moderation in all, were certainly absorbed into Christianity. But Christianity further expected a rigorousness from its constituents that it often praised in masculine terms.

What quickly becomes apparent when studying early Christian conceptions of masculine and feminine womanhood is the relationship between these notions and the soul / body dualism. The oppositions between soul and body, spiritual and material, and male and female implied a continual struggle in the Christian individual. Male came to represent reason, spirit, and the control of matter, self-indulgence and appetite, which in turn represented female. As the soul ruled the body, the spiritual ruled the material, and hence the male ruled the female. Human nature was an oppositional mixture of the angelic and the bestial, and mind and spirit endlessly battled to manage the human body and its base appetites. Ranging through the entire seven deadly sins, from lust and envy to greed, the inclinations of the body were in constant need of taming by reason and faith.

The early Christian analogy between spirit and body and male and female³ designated womankind as inherently requiring masculine direction, either externally or from within. The labels of 'male' and 'female' functioned metaphorically for more than simple biological difference. All human beings were conceived of as psycho-spiritually both male and female, both reason and body. The virtues of both sexes were hence praised as virile and the weaknesses criticised as effeminate. But although men and women were credited with equal minds and souls, women were perceived to be unable to access the higher qualities of rationality and faith in the same manner and with the same facility as men. Physicality in both genders was best avoided, but female corporeality, with its manifest weakness, the temptations it posed, and the mysteries of its biology became more of an obstacle on the route to piety than that of the male body. What is war for mankind is civil war for womankind. It therefore became a woman's duty either to submit to the superior direction of a male relative, or personally to overcome what is feminine and enact what is masculine about herself. Unsurprisingly, such a philosophy led to the description of spiritual or rational women in masculine terms, and weak, self-indulgent men in feminine terms.⁴

In order to understand fully the implications of theological constructions of masculine womanhood it becomes essential to study notions of "feminine womanhood" too. Without a clear sense of what constitutes the female norm it is unfeasible to assess the gender failure or transcendence engendered by masculinity. The remainder of this chapter will describe the early mediaeval perception of femininity before focusing on the negative and positive masculine woman. As is often the case in the Middle Ages, one

cannot appreciate the negative without comprehending the positive, and vice versa. The masculine woman is contained in the feminine woman, whether as her negative inversion or her positive ideal form. Such is the paradox of mediaeval womanhood. As Rosemary Ruether observes, the “ambivalence between misogyny and the praise of the virginal woman is not accidental. One view is not more ‘characteristic’ than the other. Both stand together as two sides of a dualistic psychology that was the basis of the patristic doctrine of man.” (150) By discussing the theological conceptualisation of woman during the patristic age this chapter will establish a structure that will enable the appreciation of the literary character of the transvestite saint.

The Frailty of Woman

Christian theologians highlight the lack of reason as the root of all female evil. Rational deficiency is often traced to the First Woman, and Eve’s crime is held to render all women by virtue of their gender more guilty in this world than men. The defects of reason result in criminal behaviour and inordinate sexuality. While traditions of female encomium also existed, there was a strong strain within mediaeval, scriptural and classical works that constantly assigned to woman some or all of the faults of fallen nature.⁵ Ecclesiastes, for example, decreed that “the wiles of a woman I find mightier than death; her heart is a trap to catch you and her arms are fetters. The man who is pleasing to God may escape her, but she will catch a sinner ... I have found one man in a thousand worth the name, but I have not found one woman among them all.” (7:26-29) And Ecclesiasticus⁶ condemned the whole gender rather than certain types of women: “From garments cometh a moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man. For better is the

iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn, and a woman bringing shame and reproach.” (42:11-14) In spite of the positive statements found on the subject of women,⁷ the Old Testament contains some reference to women who cause men to fail.

The New Testament portrays women occasionally as weaker than men but never as evil, an important distinction. The New Testament’s perception of women was fundamentally twofold: in creation women were equal to men; in pragmatic and temporal matters women required guidance from the male. Christianity thus elevated women from their previous classical and hebraic submission to a position of what might be termed divinely ordained inferiority. Perhaps the best summary of the new status is in Corinthians:

A man has no need to cover his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man. For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman was made out of man; and man was not created for woman’s sake, but woman for the sake of man; and therefore it is woman’s duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels. And yet, in Christ’s fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman. If woman was made out of man, it is through woman that man now comes to be; and God is the source of all. (1 Cor. 11: 7-12)

With the benefit of twenty centuries of hindsight Jo Ann McNamara sheds a new light on the citation, revealing it to be not limitation but emancipation: “[Paul’s] instruction that women must be veiled when praying and prophesying implied that the segregation to which they had formerly been subjected would be replaced by a simple difference of clothing.” (145) Paul’s revaluation of women is an important step forward in the study of the history of the image of woman. The attitudes found in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, for example, are not to be found in the New Testament.⁸

Some New Testament statements evidently elevate male ability over female. For example, Paul decrees that “a woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher ... she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived, it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin.” (1 Tim. 2: 11-14) However, more commonly statements about women are twinned with those about men in what seemed to be regarded as a reciprocal relationship between two equally deserving genders:

Wives, be subject to your husbands; that is your Christian

duty. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

(Colossians 3: 18-19)

Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man

is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the

church ... just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women

be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives,

as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it ...

men are also bound to love their wives, as they love their own

bodies. In loving his wife a man loves himself. (Ephesians 5: 22-29)

Even practical instruction on fitting conduct is frequently addressed to both sexes. In church women were required to “dress in becoming manner, modestly and soberly, not with elaborate hair styles, not decked out with gold or pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good deeds”. Likewise, a man in church, and more especially of the Church, “must be above reproach, faithful to his one wife, sober, temperate, courteous, hospitable, and a good teacher; he must not be given to drink, or a brawler, but of forbearing disposition, avoiding quarrels, and no lover of money.” (I Tim. 2:9 - 3:4) The New Testament therefore portrays men as rationally superior to women yet rarely describes women as moral failures or the way by which good men deviate from the narrow path.

Contrarily, the writings of the Church Fathers often do represent women as evil and its gateway.⁹ The alignment of woman with body and man with spirit has as consequence the depiction of womankind as perilous unto herself and male others. Building on the New Testament’s foundations which advance Eve’s sin as justification for the subjection of womankind,¹⁰ the Church Fathers focus on the first mother as the personification of all that is corrupt in woman. Significantly, Eve’s flaw is fundamentally responsible for Adam’s mistake. If they may be summed up, the Church Fathers thus

tended to postulate that unless a woman mastered her pervasive frailties she sentenced herself and her potential [male] victims to the wages of sin.

Tertullian (160-225), one of the Middle Ages' foremost declaimers of women's aptitudes, authored the period's perhaps most extreme condemnation of womankind. The statement demonstrates the gender's tainted inheritance from Eve:

Elle vit encore en ce monde, la sentence de Dieu contre ton sexe.

Vis donc, il le faut, en accusée. C'est toi la porte du diable; c'est

toi qui a brisé le sceau de l'Arbre; c'est toi qui la première as

déserté la loi divine; c'est toi qui as circonvenu celui auquel le diable

n'a pas pu s'attaquer; c'est toi qui es venue à bout si aisément de

l'homme, l'image de Dieu. C'est ton salaire, la mort, qui a valu la

mort même au Fils de Dieu. Et tu as la pensée de couvrir d'ornements

tes tuniques de peau? (La Toilette des Femmes 1.1.2-3)

Tertullian's disdain for women is made more manifest when his reasoning on appropriate female clothing is compared with that of Paul in 1 Tim. 2: 9 (see above). Tertullian reassigns the signification of clothing from Paul's indicator of positive and proper status to a public sign of continuing repentance. The objective of Tertullian's imposed penance is punishment rather than forgiveness. Women should remain unadorned as an external signal of their everlasting culpability. Tertullian is not censuring the vain woman. Rather, in his scheme all women are by their inherited nature guilty. Indeed, all women

should do penance for succeeding where the devil failed.¹¹ The causal relationship between shame and womankind is more manifest in an earlier statement:

Si la foi sur terre était encore à la mesure de bénéfice qu'on en attend au ciel, il n'est pas une seule d'entre vous, soeurs bien-aimées, qui, du jour où elle aurait connu le Dieu vivant et pris conscience de sa condition - c'est-à-dire de la condition de la femme -, loin de convoiter dans sa mise plus d'élégance, pour ne pas dire plus de vanité, ne préférât vivre en haillons, n'ambitionnât plutôt la tenue du deuil, se présentant partout comme une Ève pleurante et repentante pour mieux expier et racheter par toute sa mise ce qu'elle tient d'Ève: la honte de la première faute et le reproche d'avoir perdu le genre humain ... Et tu ignores qu'Ève, c'est toi? (I.1.1)

It would be tedious to cite all of Tertullian's invective against female appearance. His tirade stretches from wigs to blasphemy, from hair-dyes to lechery. What emerges from his censure is an implicit association between feminine nature and evil. Not only is Eve's mistake transferred to the whole gender, but any woman who pays attention to her appearance exceeds the sin of vanity and enacts rather a diabolical blasphemy. "C'est critiquer, en effet, que de corriger, d'ajouter, surtout quand les ajouts sont pris à l'artisan

adverse, c'est-à-dire au diable ... Surajouter à l'oeuvre divine les inventions de Satan, quel crime!" (II.5.2-4) True, Tertullian aims his lecture at those women who adorn themselves, and yet he finds himself caught in a dilemma. Because womankind is inherently irrational and flawed, beauty must perforce lead first to vanity and thence to evil. However, beauty itself cannot be evil for it is divinely created. Tertullian does not solve the paradox. Instead he comes down on the side of the evil of beauty and cheerfully carries on denigrating it. "Il ne convient pas de mettre en accusation des attraits qui sont une grâce du corps, un complément au modelé divin, un agréable vêtement de l'âme, [mais] si j'ose dire, encore faut-il les craindre, ne fût-ce qu'à cause des outrages et des violences de qui est à leur poursuite." (II.2.6)¹² Beauty is good because of its divine origin. Yet, it is also ethically dangerous because it engenders "outrages et violences" to those who pursue it and those who are tempted by it.¹³ For Tertullian, then, women are weak, irrational, and due to their genealogy from Eve, guilty. Womanhood signals to him vanity and devilish idolatry, and only by categorically denying her earthly attributes can a woman redeem herself.

St. Ambrose (339-397) agreed with Tertullian on the existential danger of womankind. Alcuin Blamires states that Ambrose'

devaluation of women is palpable [even] in ... his scriptural commentary, where he shows an almost perverse willingness to discover criticism of women just where others were to find them vindicated ... [For example] he manages to dampen [the

women's devotion during the events of the Resurrection] by detecting in their coming and going from Christ's sepulchre a sign that their sex typically 'wavers' (hardly fair, given that the men have fled altogether). (60)

When Christ tells Mary Magdalene not to touch him, Ambrose is not surprised because "ce n'est point en effet par un contact du corps, mais par la foi, que nous touchons le Christ" (L'Évangile de S. Luc X.155)

Ambrose attributes the Magdalene's feeble faith to her gender:

Aussi est-elle envoyée à de plus forts, dont l'exemple lui apprendra à croire, pour qu'ils lui prêchent la résurrection. De même en effet qu'au début la femme fut l'instigatrice du péché pour l'homme, l'homme consommant l'erreur, de même à présent celle qui avait goûté la première à la mort a vu la première la résurrection ... Et pour n'avoir pas à subir sans fin devant les hommes l'opprobre de la culpabilité, ayant transmis la faute à l'homme, elle lui a transmis également la grâce; elle compense le désastre de l'antique déchéance par l'annonce de la résurrection. (X.155-56)

Like Tertullian, Ambrose locates the origin of female frailty in Eve's defect. Even the resurrection, an event that underscores valuable female contribution, is perceived as an opportunity for women to redeem their gender from Eve's mistake. Ambrose thus assumes a negative view point of the situation rather than focussing on the positive reading. What should have been to Mary and all women's credit becomes under Ambrose's pen the settling of debt, and what should have been a moment of happiness becomes the undoing of unhappiness. The difference may be subtle, but it is significant that Ambrose views the most positive event of this woman's life as a reminder of the negativity of all women's lives.

Mary's insubstantial faith is true of all womankind, and thus by its very nature femininity is unspiritual and weak. A little later in the text Ambrose confirms what he has only hinted at before: women are imperfect. Mary is dispatched to the men because "la Résurrection ne peut être aisément saisie que par les parfaits. La prérogative de cette foi est réservée aux mieux affermis; 'quant aux femme, je ne leur permets pas d'enseigner dans l'église: qu'elle interrogent leurs maris à la maison' (1 Tim. 2:12)." (X.165) Moreover, because "son sexe est trop faible pour exécuter", the role of teaching is assigned to men. (X.157) Ambrose thus delineates the whole female gender as weak, irrational, "less perfect", and in dire need of masculine guidance. The extent of his belief does not allow him to separate womankind from Eve at her worst moment.

St. Jerome (342-420) agrees with Ambrose's position only with reference to married women. In Against Jovinian Jerome argues that a woman who has consecrated her virginity to God is laudable, but she who marries is not. "The difference, then,

between marriage and virginity is as great as that between not sinning and doing well; nay rather, to speak less harshly, as great as between doing good and better ... On account of the danger of fornication [Paul] allows virgins to marry, and makes that excusable which in itself is not desirable.” (I.13) When provoked by Jovinian’s insolent belief that a virgin is no better than a wife in the sight of God however, Jerome gives vent to a tirade against women that belies such moderate opinions. His critique of married women in fact became a staple of mediaeval misogyny.¹⁴ Jerome assesses a woman as an individual capable of excellence as long as she remains consecrated in virginity.¹⁵ Once married, however, she joins the universal type of wicked wife. Quoting Theophrastus’ On Marriage, a book “worth its weight in gold” and with which he is clearly in agreement, Jerome illustrates that regardless of individual virtue a wife hinders her and her husband’s spiritual welfare:

A wise man therefore must not take a wife. For in the first place

his study of philosophy will be hindered, and it is impossible for

anyone to attend to his books and his wife. Matrons want many

things, costly dresses, gold, jewels, great outlay, maid-servants ...

Then come curtain-lectures the livelong night: she complains that

one lady goes out better dressed than she ... “Why did you ogle

that creature next door?” “Why were you talking to the maid?”

... She suspects that her husband’s love goes the same way as her

hate. ... To support a poor wife is hard: to put up with a rich one, is

torture ... If she has a bad temper, or is a fool or has a blemish, or is proud, or has bad breath, whatever her fault may be - all this we learn after marriage ... We must always praise her beauty; if you look at another woman, she thinks that she is out of favour. She must be called my lady, her birthday must be kept, we must swear by her health and wish that she may survive us, respect must be paid ... to the handsome hanger on, to the curled darling who manages her affairs, and to the eunuch who ministers to the safe indulgence of her lust. If you reserve something for yourself, she will not think you are loyal to her; but she will turn to strife and hatred, and unless you quickly take care, she will have the poison ready. (I.47)

Jerome's list of wifely abuses proceeds with hardly a mention of a good wife. When the subject does come up, the husband's fate is not better. "If she be a good and agreeable wife (how rare a bird she is!), we have to share her groans in childbirth, and suffer torture when she is in danger." Thus even a good woman hinders what should be the primary male pursuit of communing with God. And to those who claim that they marry for companionship, he proffers rather masculine and divine friendship: "A wise man can never be alone. He has with him the good men of all time, and turns his mind freely wherever he chooses. What is inaccessible to him in person he can embrace in thought. And, if men are scarce, he converses with God." (I. 47) By virtue of being wives interfere

in the relationship between a man and God: "There may be in some neighbouring city the wisest of teachers; but if we have a wife we can neither leave her behind, nor take the burden with us." Jerome locates no benefit in marriage and exposes practically all wives as lecherous, greedy, and intellectually deficient beings.¹⁶

St. Augustine (354-430) agrees with Jerome that virginity is "the greater good" (Of Holy Virginity 21) but does not concede that all wives are corrupt detractors of spirituality.¹⁷ In spite of his respect for the married woman, Augustine nevertheless holds the gender to be essentially less rational than the male:

Now if the woman was not made for the man to be his helper in begetting children, in what was she to help him? She was not to till the earth with him, for there was not yet any toil to make help necessary. If there were any such need, a male helper would be better, and the same could be said of the comfort of another's presence if Adam were perhaps weary of solitude. How much more agreeably could two male friends, rather than a man and woman, enjoy companionship and conversation in a life shared together ... Consequently, I do not see in what sense the woman was made as a helper for the man if not for the sake of bearing children. (The Literal Meaning of Genesis IX. 5)¹⁸

In spite of his accordance with Jerome that women make poor conversation partners, Augustine saves his severest censure for sexuality rather than for the specific crime of female interference in male spirituality. Augustine perceived sexuality as a

compelling snare. Blamires observes that Augustine was “appalled by the uncontrollability, or ‘insubordination’, of sexual arousal, something visited upon humanity with a kind of poetic justice immediately after the Fall” (77), and Peter Brown argues that Augustine’s concern with “the compulsive force of sexual habit” led him to perceive sexuality as a “cruel chain which only God could unloose” (406).¹⁹

Augustine did not assign gender to that sexuality; the chain entangled men and women alike. Nevertheless, he also held that in addition to being accountable for their own lustful inclinations, women shared the responsibility for male sexual desire. What is more, the equation does not work in reverse. Woman has therefore an active responsibility to assist man in the struggle to control sexuality, while man need but concentrate on his own failings. Women draw men’s minds away from heavenly contemplation simply by being, and in a way that men do not impose on women: “I know nothing which brings the manly mind down from the heights more than a woman’s caresses and that joining of bodies without which one cannot have a wife.” (Concerning the Nature of Good XVIII) Moreover, it is not only through marriage that women cloud man’s spiritual mind. Prudence Allen’s paraphrase of The Free Choice of Will demonstrates that Augustine believes that women “lead men away from the orientation of the mind [but not] through an evil intention or through guile; rather, they inadvertently achieved this reorientation through the beauty of their bodies”. (Concept of Woman 234)

Unlike Jerome, Augustine did not perceive the sexual woman as actively or deliberately perfidious. Nevertheless, like Jerome he held her to threaten male spirituality. Furthermore he demonstrated that a woman has little control over such sexuality, especially in the second case, and that only after death will her body lose that which

renders it so menacing. Then “the female organs will not subserve their former use; they will be part of a new beauty, which will not excite the lust of the beholder - there will be no lust in that life.” (City of God XXII. 17) Until she is dead, therefore, and without malice or deliberation, a woman is existentially dangerous to male spirituality.

Although Augustine perceives female attraction as spiritually hazardous, he does not offer a solution that focuses solely on female liability. Instead, his injunction is that both sexes should battle what he calls concupiscence, that is, the pull of the sexual instinct.²⁰ On the Good of Marriage advances that the sexual act should be the least important factor in a married couple’s life, in fact, “the better [a husband and wife] are, the earlier they have begun by mutual consent” to abstain from sexual intercourse. Certainly matrimonial intercourse has its own “good” in that “the lust of the flesh is repressed, and rages in a way more modestly tempered by parental affection”, but even unmarried women who cohabit with men with the single aim of childbearing are more worthy of the name of wife than they who “are not adulteresses yet force their husbands, for the most part also wishing to exercise continence, to pay the due of the flesh, not through desire of children, but through the glow of lust making an intemperate use of their very right.” (III-IV) Thus while Augustine maintains that women were perilously attractive to men, and even though in this instance his culprit is female, his defence against that danger does not completely single out women.

Implicating the female in the male struggle against overwhelming sexuality is found in other theological works. Other writers were less charitable to women than Augustine, however, and argued that woman must take active steps in order to deliver man’s spirit. It is appropriate at this juncture to investigate briefly the tradition of female

liability in masculine spirituality, for it again demonstrates the ethical danger of being female.

Tertullian's woman is as accountable for a man's sinful desire as she is for her own "fault" of beauty or ornamentation. As demonstrated above, Toilette des Femmes' primary motivation is the rescue of the female soul from the predominantly female sin of vanity. In the process Tertullian also intends to delete the temptations that befall men. Unlike Augustine he thus charges women with deliberately inciting male desire and with causing them to falter. The burden of responsibility therefore lies principally with the female:

C'est que d'abord une conscience pure ne pousse pas à
compter pour plaire sur des attraits qui, nous le savons, sont
une incitation naturelle au plaisir. Pourquoi donc éveiller en
toi l'aiguillon de ce mal? Pourquoi inciter à ce que tu fais
profession d'ignorer ... Pourquoi être un danger pour l'autre?
Pourquoi éveiller chez l'autre de mauvais désirs? ... Je ne crois
pas qu'on puisse espérer l'impunité en étant pour l'autre une
cause de perdition. Car sa perte est consommée dès qu'il a
convoité ta beauté: il a déjà cédé dans l'âme à la convoitise et
tu es devenue pour lui un glaive en sorte que, même si tu n'as
pas péché, tu ne seras pas exempte de reproche. (II.2.1-4)

Like yet unlike Islam which veils the woman to protect her from the man's unclean thoughts, Tertullian urges concealment and neglect of beauty in order to protect the man from his own propensity for lust. "Puisque donc l'empressement pour des attraits pleins de dangers met en cause à la fois notre sort et celui des autres, sachez que vous êtes désormais tenues non seulement de repousser loin les artifices calculés qui rehaussent la beauté, mais encore de faire oublier en le dissimulant et en le négligeant votre charme naturel, comme également préjudiciable aux yeux qui le rencontrent." (II.2.5) In Tertullian's world womankind is existentially a trap to herself and to man, and thus her foremost duty is to destroy that which makes her perilous.

St. John Chrysostom (347-407) agrees with Tertullian that women provide obstacles to male spirituality. He perceives the problem as an ongoing, chain event:

How often do we, from beholding a woman, suffer a thousand evils; returning home, and entertaining an inordinate desire, and experiencing anguish for many days; yet nevertheless, we are not made discreet, but when we have scarcely cured one wound, we again fall into the same mischief, and are caught by the same means; and for the sake of the brief pleasure of a glance, we sustain a kind of lengthened and continual torment ... the beauty of a woman is the greatest snare. Or rather, not the beauty of woman, but unchastened gazing! ("Homily XV"; qtd. in Bloch 15)²¹

In this passage Chrysostom lays the blame on the gazer more so than on the object of the gaze. The ensnaring quality of a woman's beauty remains a problem, however. Female

liability is more manifest in On Virginity when Chrysostom designates a woman's sexuality as dangerous independently of her actions and intentions. If a wife chooses a non-sexual relationship against her husband's wishes, and if he then turns to extra-marital intercourse for what Chrysostom calls "consolation", it is the wife who is more culpable: "The wife practising continence against her husband's wishes is deprived of the rewards for continence. She also has to give account for his adultery and is more responsible than he. Why? Because she pushed him to the abyss of debauchery by depriving him of legitimate intercourse." (XLVIII) Chrysostom does not complete the equation by holding a continent husband more guilty of his wife's adultery than she herself.²² The idea that a continent wife is more guilty than the adulterous husband underlines the participatory role a woman plays in a man's sexuality.

Augustine, Tertullian and Chrysostom all agree that the activator of the lust is the woman, even though it is the man who experiences it. Woman inflicts concupiscence on man, and thus man is less responsible for his failing than might otherwise be the case. The result of such philosophy is the exculpation of the lustful male; the man is almost exonerated as an unwilling victim rather than held accountable as a willing initiator.²³

The first five hundred years or so of Christianity thus developed a concept of woman as generally defective, harmful to herself and to mankind. A woman was irrational, lustful, vain, and prone to pursuits that distanced her and all those who come into contact with her from God. In spite of the New Testament's redefinition of woman as inherently good though weak, early Christian theologians agreed that woman was perfect in creation and yet faulty in her temporal nature. The paradox was accepted by society at large, if not approved by certain elements of it,²⁴ and engendered a literary tradition that

perceived woman as jealous, gossipy, indiscreet, greedy, avaricious, lecherous, seductive, destructive, and intellectually stunted. These views were to remain the parameters by which women were defined in the later years of the Middle Ages, reappearing with little change in Aquinas' theological and biological works, as well as such literary writings as Le Roman de la Rose and Andreas Capellanus' The Art of Courtly Love.

The 'Negative' Masculine Woman

The negative masculine woman is bossy, unruly, and conducts herself without reference to male authority. Because her corporeality and social comportment lack restraint, she subverts divine, natural, and social hierarchies by dominating her spouse. Subversion both is and leads to autonomous action. The faculties of self-guidance and influence turn on notions of power, and power was predominantly a masculine prerogative in the Middle Ages. The woman who elected self-government granted free reign to feminine debilities and was hence discerned as encroaching upon the male domain of independence and domination. Thus though her actions stem from female weaknesses, she was ironically held to be negatively masculine.

The difference between the frail woman delineated above and the negative masculine woman is small but significant: the negative masculine woman adds domination over her husband to the faults of the frail woman. All women were perceived as intellectually inadequate by nature. All women thus consequently required an external form of rational guidance. Some women submitted to male guidance, some inverted matters by attempting to direct the male, and some personally imposed a rigorous and ascetic self-control. These categories respectively represent the frail woman and the

negative and positive masculine woman. The negative masculine woman rejects male domination and instead seeks to control her and her husband's lives. A frail woman gossips, a negative masculine woman's gossip affects her husband's business or personal situation to the point where she is the one who influences and directs their communal life. Domestic dominion occasionally enabled the woman to distort other facets of society. While sometimes this distorted superiority is deliberate and aggressively pursued, as in the case of Juvenal's woman described below, it was also frequently the unsought result of the failure of female duty, as in the case of Augustine's Eve also described below. The woman who deliberately or unwittingly disrupted society was abhorred and denounced by theologians and secular writers alike.

The tradition of the woman who behaved incorrectly by being unwomanly has its roots in Roman literature. In Satire 6 Juvenal (c.60 - 136 AD) criticises the typically irrational woman and portrays her subsequent development into a negative masculine woman. As argued above, negative masculine women inverted marital hierarchy and other aspects of social order. Juvenal thus distinguished no fundamental difference between the woman who ruled her husband and one who committed murder: the two acts are related and equally criminal. Juvenal's woman, for example, insists on a whim on crucifying a slave. When somebody recommends that she first give the man a hearing, the woman shrilly responds, " 'You fool! Is a slave human? What if he hasn't done wrong? / That is my wish, my order; my will is reason enough.' / Thus she rules her man; but soon she resigns her dominion / and passes through a succession of homes, with her veil in

tatters, / and then flies back, refilling the dinge in the bed she deserted.” (221-26, original emphasis)

This woman is patently irrational. She demonstrates her lack of reason ironically by insisting that her “will is reason enough”. Moreover, though she leaves her husband for many lovers, she later returns to him. There thus is no constancy even in her inconstancy. Most significantly, however, her lack of reason and flightiness are the typical female behaviours that grant her “dominion” over her spouse.

Juvenal also postulates that uncontrolled femininity makes monsters of both genders: although the woman is the primary disrupter, the man is the origin of the disruption. The man who is subservient to his wife must therefore be held accountable for his infirmity, and in turn it is his responsibility to seek to conquer his disability. Ironically, the antidote to the problem woman lies with the male. The main cause of male collusion in the inverted marital hierarchy is love, and so lack of love is Juvenal’s satirically preventative solution. Natural irrationality leads a woman to disrespect those who love her: “If your love for your wife is pure and simple, and your heart is devoted / to her alone, then bow your head and prepare your neck / for the yoke. No woman has any regard for the man who loves her.” A woman’s faulty intellect leads her to devalue love and interpret it as an opportunity for purchasing control over the lover. The man who loves his wife thus inevitably cedes control over her and, by extension, over his finances and friendships. (206-18) The woman who inverts natural order by becoming superior creates an upside down world in which it is not surprising to find a man who hates his friends and loves his enemies.

Juvenal's attack progresses from the domineering wife to the woman who infects other aspects of society: "No less vicious a habit, however, is found in the woman / who, with a curse, seizes her poor, unassuming neighbour / and punishes him with a whip." (413-15) This woman likes to attend the baths in the evening, and to "sweat amid all the uproar" in the gymnasium. (420) Masculine behaviour such as violence and physical exercise is associated causally with the feminine tendency toward overwhelming lust. After she is exhausted by the "heavy dumbbells" the woman delivers herself to a "clever masseur [who] presses his fingers into her fringe / and brings from the top of the lady's leg an explosive reaction". (421-23) A woman who aspires to the masculine attributes of strength and the physical superiority it entails is one whose body no longer functions within the expected constraints of femininity. The lack of limitation is borne out by uncurbed sexuality, ironically an inherent fault of femininity.

But the most "offensive" woman for Juvenal is the one who pretends to the masculine domain of intellectuality:

More offensive is the one who on taking her place at dinner

gushes in praise of Virgil, forgiving the doomed Elissa;

compares and evaluates poets; ...

Professional critics withdraw; rhetoricians are bested; the party

falls silent, and neither lawyer nor crier ventures to speak,

nor another woman ...

Make sure the woman reclining beside you doesn't affect
 a rhetorical style, or brandish phrases before unleashing
 a clinching argument; let her not know the whole of history,
 or understand every word that she reads. For myself, I abhor
 the woman who is always consulting and thumbing Palaemon's
 "Grammar" so precise in observing the laws and rules of speech,
 and, like a scholar, quoting lines that I've never heard of. Are
 these things matters for men? Let her correct the speech of an
 ignorant friend; but a husband's slips should pass without
 comment. (434-56)

Intellectuality is not befitting a woman. An intelligent woman is not one who reads books
 but one who retains her place. More extremely, it is more pleasing and proper for a
 woman to appear ignorant than to know more than a man. The pinnacle of female
 excellence thus has little to do with her intellectual capabilities.

The origin of this gender-transgressive woman is again her spouse. Juvenal
 requests men to "make sure" that their wives remain ignorant, or at the very least silent.
 The poem is a satire and as such prone to exaggeration. In spite of genre considerations,
 however, one must note that women who know, especially those who know more than
 men, are unnatural and cause for satire. Moreover, in spite of the comedy, Juvenal's
 poem contains the major conventions of the portrayals of negative masculine women.

From Juvenal and until the end of the Renaissance, if not beyond, negative masculine women are frequently portrayed within a four part structure. This set of conventions is discerned equally in works that are comic or serious, literary or factual. First, a woman's negative masculine actions always stem from ungovernable feminine traits. In chief, irrationality and unbridled lust are given their fullest reign. Second, the woman's comportment necessarily disrupts society. Third, as a consequence her husband suffers. Her conduct either emasculates him by granting her domestic superiority or befuddles him to the point where his world functions in an inverted manner. Fourth, the origin of the woman's misconduct and consequently the solution to it are within the husband's power. It is due to him that the wife becomes negatively masculine, and it is his duty to restore her to her ordered position. She herself cannot and furthermore does not want to. This four part structure is encountered in Christian portrayals of negative masculine women, sometimes in its entirety, but always at least partially.

Scriptural examples of the unnatural masculine woman include the now apocryphal Ecclesiasticus. Ecclesiasticus illustrates how anger and impudence transform proper feminine compliancy to transgressive masculine aggression. Although ire and malice are elements typical of womankind's feeble intellectuality, the author of Ecclesiasticus associates them with the woman who is superior to her husband in marriage. By so doing he implicitly furnishes an relationship between natural feminine debility and negative masculinity:

There is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more

agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with

a wicked woman. The wickedness of a woman changeth her face: and she darkeneth her countenance as a bear: and showeth it like sack-cloth. In the midst of her neighbours her husband groaned, and hearing he sighed a little. All malice is short to the malice of a woman, let the lot of sinner fall upon her. As the climbing of a sandy way is to the feet of the aged, so is a wife full of tongue to a quiet man. Look not upon a woman's beauty, and desire not a woman for beauty. A woman's anger, and impudence, and confusion is great. A woman, if she have superiority, is contrary to her husband. A wicked woman abateth the courage, and maketh a heavy countenance, and a wounded heart. (25: 22-31)

A masculine woman inverts custom. She makes herself an aberration and enforces the same fate upon her spouse. All four elements of the negative woman structure are present here. First, by ceding to the prototypical feminine and irrational quality of anger, the woman has amassed the normally male ability of altering and influencing society. Her sexuality is also further to blame, for her beauty and the desire it arouses contribute to her dominion over men. Second, she has disturbed natural order to where it is more agreeable to "abide with a lion or a dragon". The sentiment that a dominating wife is "contrary to her husband" (emphasis mine) advances the image of a world turned upside down. As further evidence of her disruption of society we are told that her unnatural ways scandalise

her neighbours. As a consequence, her husband is mortified. The third element is here evident: the dominating woman has emasculated her husband; she has effeminised him by “abat[ing] his courage”. Fourth, the solution to the masculine woman is the masculine man: if men had the strength not to “look upon and desire” the woman, she would not now present a threat to society. In spite of different literary genres, Ecclesiasticus’ woman is strikingly similar to Juvenal’s.

The notion that anger is particularly inappropriate to woman is a constant theme in chapters 21 to 31 of Proverbs. There is reference to the “nagging” and ill tempered wife four times between chapters 21 and 27. Twice we are told that “better to live in a corner of the house-top than have a nagging wife and a brawling household” (21: 9 & 25: 24), and once we are told that “better to live alone in the desert than with a nagging and ill-tempered wife” (21: 19). The link between the perfidious woman and the masculine non-submissive wife is made manifest in the fourth mention: “Endless dripping on a rainy day - / that is what a nagging wife is like. / As well try to control the wind as to control her! / As well try to pick up oil in one’s fingers.” (27: 15-6) This woman is not under spousal control. That she governs her mate is not patently stated, yet she is evidently not enacting a submissive role within the relationship. Through brawling, nagging, and bad temper, she slips the yoke of feminine subservience and, untameable as the wind and slippery as spilled oil, becomes a non-subjected woman.

The excerpts from Proverbs fulfil the first three elements of the negative woman structure: 1. nagging and moodiness are characteristic female shortcomings, and uncurbed they make the woman a force with which to be reckoned, 2. as a result society is disrupted

and the household “brawls”, and 3. the husband is forced to flee his house and human company to seek peace. Later in Proverbs we find an example of the fourth element. Ecclesiasticus’ image of the man who is made effeminate by yielding to a woman is repeated in the warning to Lemuel by his mother: “Do not give the vigour of your manhood to women” (31: 3). Although how the “vigour of manhood” is given away is not further elucidated, it is safe to assume that it is probably through inordinate love and sexuality. Significantly, we note that the vigour is in greater peril of being “given away” by men than “taken away” by women. A woman alone cannot emasculate a man. He must acquiesce. On some level or other, usually the sexual, a man must hand the woman the power with which she directs him. Moreover, although Lemuel is being warned against surrendering to his lust, it is ironically the woman who is cast as the sexual predator. If Lemuel wanders from the righteous path he will inevitably be at the mercy of the insatiable woman. A man’s relinquishment of the “vigour of manhood” to a woman thus makes him weak and her strong, two separate conditions, both of which are contrary to nature.²⁵ Female submission thus ensures male superiority as much as vice versa.

In the first letter to Timothy Paul defines the good woman: she dresses modestly, she learns, she is quiet and submissive. In addition to pointing to what a woman should be, Paul also articulates what she should not be: “I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must a woman domineer over a man.” (2:12) The woman who is hierarchically inferior to a man is natural and proper. The woman who has supremacy over a man in knowledge or other ways²⁶ is an aberration within the sight of God, nature, and social custom. Paul emphasises the legitimacy of the acquiescent wife by pointing to the

prosperity she bestows upon her husband. A few verses after pronouncing on the domineering woman Paul implies a causality between the docile wife and the husband who succeeds at God's work. A bishop or deacon must have supremacy within his household if he is to have it in God's house. Amongst other things a bishop must administer "his own household well" and a deacon must be "good at managing his children and his own household". (3: 4-13) Paul attributes the achievements of church leaders to the good behaviour of their wives and households as well as themselves in part because men were by nature expected to direct the actions of their wives, children and servants. The negative masculine woman thus appears in the New Testament only as an absent example of improper male and female behaviour.

Scriptural instructions for female submission are taken up by the Church Fathers and often developed into admonitions against women who rule their husbands. In Against Jovinian Jerome prefaces his diatribe against wives by glossing Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24, "better to live in a corner of the housetop than have a nagging wife and a brawling household" (see above), and deduces that "contentiousness" is a necessary by-product of marriage. Because all wives inevitably become hierarchically dominant, all husbands inevitably suffer:

If a house common to husband and wife makes a wife proud and breeds contempt for the husband: how much more if the wife be the richer of the two, and the husband but a lodger in her house! She begins to be not a wife, but mistress of the house; and if she offend her husband, they must part. "A continual dropping on a

wintry day" (Prov. 27:15) turns a man out of doors, and so will a contentious woman drive a man from his own house. She floods his house with her constant nagging and daily chatter, and ousts him from his own home, that is the Church. (I. 28)

Cohabitation necessarily leads a woman to deem herself first morally superior, so that she holds her husband in contempt, and second hierarchically superior, so that she acts as mistress of the house. Natural female irrationality inevitably eventuates in a wife's domination over her unsuspecting spouse. The feminine traits of nagging and gossip and the resulting inversion of societal norms further entail the disruption of the husband's spiritual life. Proverbs declared that a pestering wife drove a husband out of his domestic space into the desert. Jerome develops the opposition into a metaphor for the house of God and its barren antithesis.

After the biting satire on the inherent foibles of womankind (discussed in more detail above), Jerome's exposé returns to the woman who attains dominion. Building perhaps on 1 Peter 2 & 3 which decree that a wife's relationship to her husband should be that of a servant to a master, Jerome demonstrates how women have shirked that ancient responsibility and rendered slaves more efficient than wives. If men marry for housekeeping, then a "faithful slave is a far better manager, more submissive to the master, more observant of his ways, than a wife who thinks she proves herself mistress if she acts in opposition to her husband, that is, if she does what pleases her, not what she is commanded". (I. 47)²⁷ Negative masculine women invert the social contract between slave and master to control rather than heed their spouses.

The anti-matrimonial treatise subtly exhibits the four part structure. Through unrestrained feminine wiles a woman disrupts her husband's world and drives him away from his domestic and spiritual space. In line with convention Jerome locates the antidote to this woman within the husband's capabilities. If a man must marry he must also strive to maintain his authority, for "if [he] give[s] [his wife] the management of the whole house, [he] must [himself] be her slave" (I. 47). Better however to remain a bachelor, for then a man insures his spiritual life and guarantees his safety from effeminate subordination to a negatively masculine wife. Thus although in Against Jovinian I. 47 Jerome's subject is predominantly the repulsion of the manly and unruly wife, his counsel for her avoidance is the renunciation of all women.

St. Augustine also treats the subject of the negative masculine woman, if more subtly than Jerome. Augustine's manly woman is most frequently an example of what could potentially happen if woman did not heed the role that her sin and place in creation dictated: "Even before her sin woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him." (Genesis XI. 37) When Eve is told that she shall be subject to Adam, and likewise woman to man (Genesis 3:16), she was being condemned to servitude as punishment for her transgression. According to Augustine this servitude is not a metaphor for a relationship between strong and weak, but rather a brutal contract between injured and perpetrator: "We can with reason understand that the servitude meant in these words is that in which there is a condition similar to that of slavery rather than a bond of love (so that the servitude by which men later began to be slaves to other men obviously had its origin in punishment for sin)." If the contract between these unequal partners is not upheld, chaos ensues. Thus a man by divine law must maintain his

supremacy, and a woman her inferiority, for if “order is not maintained, nature will be corrupted still more, and sin will be increased”.

The issue of negative masculine femininity emerges in a somewhat ironic fashion in the context of the origin of sin and the role of woman in the Fall. Augustine refuses the idea that the fall of humankind had its incision in Eve’s “opposition” of natural spousal order. He so abhors the notion of the first man being submissive to a woman that he takes pains to portray Adam not as an unwitting dupe but as a wholly culpable and cognisant perpetrator. In elucidating the fall Augustine was faced with two untenable choices. First, Adam was as rationally weak as Eve and so believed the serpent. This alternative is dismissed because “if Adam was a spiritual man, in mind though not in body, how could he have believed what was said through the serpent ... As if the Creator would grudge so great a good to His creature. It is surely strange if a man endowed with a spiritual mind could have believed this.” (Genesis XI. 42) The second inappropriate interpretation was either that Adam submissively obeyed his wife against his better judgement, or that his sexual addiction for her compelled him to choose lust over Eden. Unable to reconcile himself to either of these positions, Augustine is forced into a third in which Adam is primarily culpable of the mistake. Thus whereas Eve is genuinely able to blame the serpent for her mistake, the rational Adam cannot so justify his actions. She acted because she did not know any better, he acted even though he knew better: “In fact, Adam, under interrogation did not say, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be my companion seduced me and I ate’; but, ‘She gave me fruit of the tree and I ate.’ On the other hand, the woman said, ‘The Serpent seduced me.’”

Adam consciously and deliberately, indeed even rationally, deviates from righteousness not because he desired God-like knowledge, but because he did not wish “to make [Eve] unhappy, fearing that she would waste away without his support, alienated from his affection, and that this dissension would be her death. He was not overcome by the concupiscence of the flesh ... but by the sort of attachment and affection by which it often happens that we offend God while we try to keep the friendship of men.” (Genesis XI. 42) Adam’s need to protect Eve, a need that ironically stems from his position as superior within his relationship with her, leads him to subvert that very same position. To protect her, a male endeavour, he cedes to her, an effeminate act.

The account of the fall hints at negative female masculinity but only inasmuch as to exculpate Adam from any charges of unnatural effeminate submission. The account nevertheless serves to elucidate an incident during Augustine’s lifetime in which a woman claimed autonomy for herself and thus subjected her husband to the self same impotent position that Augustine rejected on behalf of Adam. As long as Adam is in charge of Eve and their future, Augustine comprehends without condoning his choice. When the situation is reversed, however, Augustine expresses little understanding and even less endorsement for the woman. During his lifetime Augustine became aware of Ecdicia, a woman of high social status, who “considered that her marriage with her husband was at an end when she no longer slept with him”. (Brown 403) Deciding that “she had denied her husband’s authority over her body, Ecdicia plainly felt she could deny his authority over her in all other matters”. Choosing to act in a “manly” way by deciding her own affairs, Ecdicia dressed as a widow, regained control over her own property, and subsequently donated it to two passing monks. Ruether emphasises Ecdicia’s

appropriation of masculinity when she notes that the lady “had begun to act with that liberty to dispose of her person and property autonomously befitting one whom the converted life had restored to equivalency with the male”. (159-60) Augustine’s epistle evinces that Ecdicia’s masculinity was perceived as negative rather than positive, however.

Augustine’s letter to Ecdicia attests that she undertook the celibate life before she had her husband’s full consent. The husband nevertheless participated in the resolution, only to change his mind when she bequeathed her belongings to the two monks. In a rage at the autonomous behaviour which now exceeded control of her body, the husband relinquished his celibacy and turned elsewhere for sexual “consolation”. When Ecdicia appraised Augustine of the situation, he responded by criticising her premature vow of celibacy. More vehemently, he admonished her independent behaviour in donating her possessions and choosing her own style of clothing. Because of these unfeminine acts, and in agreement with Chrysostom’s On Virginity XLVIII (see above), Augustine holds her more responsible than her husband for the latter’s adultery:

I felt a very deep regret that you had chosen to act so to your husband that the edifice of continence which he had begun to rear should have collapsed into the melancholy downfall of adultery by his failure to persevere. If, after making a vow of chastity to God and carrying it out in act and in disposition, he had returned to carnal intercourse with his wife, he would

have been a great source of grief, but how much more is he to be grieved over now that he has plunged headlong into a deeper destruction by breaking every bond and committing adultery in his rage at you, ruinous to himself, as if his perdition were a more savage blow at you! This great evil arose from your not treating him in his state of mind with the moderation you should have shown, because, although you were refraining by mutual consent from carnal intercourse, as his wife you should have been subject to your husband in other things according to the marriage bond ... he should not have been defrauded of the debt you owed him of your body before his will joined yours. ("Letter 262")

Although Augustine's letter addresses a real-life incident, it includes some of the four elements of the negative masculine woman. First, although Ecdicia's masculinity does not stem from such female faults as lust and gossip, Augustine cannot but inculcate her of "extravagance" in charity, irrational action, and selfishness in privileging herself and her desires over those of her husband: "Even if he was perhaps slower in being moved to almsgiving on a more liberal scale, he could have learned that also from you, and if he had not been affronted by your unexpected extravagance but had been won over by the dutifulness he expected from you, you could have done together even this which you

rashly did yourself, and more prudently, in more orderly and honourable fashion, with union of hearts.” Second, Ecdicia’s conduct disrupts society. She comports herself unbefittingly by taking dominion over her possessions and dressing as a widow when “there is a certain matronly costume, appropriate to one’s position in life, distinct from the widow’s garb, which may be fitting for married women of the faith and which does not offend religious decorum”. Augustine moreover regards her charitable act as socially questionable, and he sheds doubt on her ability to distinguish between authentic and feigned need. Had Ecdicia proceeded with her husband’s blessing, “then there would have been no insult for the servants of God -- if, however, they were that -- who received such a quantity of goods from a woman they did not know, another man’s wife, in the absence and without the knowledge of her husband.” Third, Ecdicia’s husband is emasculated financially and in terms of marital-supremacy. Her independent action also causes him to renege on his promise to God and commit adultery, two separate failures:

He did not cease to be your husband because you were both
 refraining from carnal intercourse ... therefore, you had no
 right to dispose of your clothing or of gold or silver or any
 money, or of any of your earthly property without his consent,
 lest you scandalise a man who joined you in vowing higher
 things to God, and had continently abstained from what he could
 demand of your body in virtue of his lawful power. Finally, it

came about that, when scorned, he broke the bond of continence
 which he had taken upon himself when he was loved, and in his
 anger at you he did not spare of himself ... he was weak, and
 therefore, as you seemed the stronger in your common purpose,
 should have been supported by your love, not exasperated by your
 boldness. ("Letter 262")

Except for passing references to the husband's less than full endorsement of celibacy, the fourth element of the negative masculine woman structure is the only one absent from the letter. Augustine invariably holds Ecdicia culpable of both her and her husband's actions, and he emphasises that the solution to the predicament lies not with the husband but with her:

You must now think very seriously about reclaiming him if you
 truly want to belong to Christ. Clothe yourself with lowliness of
 mind, and that God may keep you in constancy, do not scorn your
 husband in his fall. Pour out devout and continuous prayers for
 him ... write him your apology, begging pardon for the sin you
 committed against him by disposing of your property according to
 what you thought should be done with it, without asking his advice
 and consent; not that you should repent of having given it to the

poor, but of having refused to let him share and direct your good deed. Promise for the future, with the Lord's help, that if he will repent of his shameful conduct and resume the continence which he has abandoned, you will be subject to him in all things as befits you to be.

Augustine was unwilling to depict the male at the mercy of the female in the 'historical' incident that determined the future of humankind. In the contemporary and more immediate situation, however, he was willing to portray the female as fundamentally influencing male spirituality. Theory and practice diverge: Augustine refused to grant Woman power over Man, yet he was not averse to incriminating an individual woman of causing an individual man's fall. By granting a woman the aptitude to influence a man he endows her with power. Such power is negative, however, and results from the confusion of order in all its forms.

Augustine's letter articulates the negative masculine woman's disruption of divine, natural and social order. Augustine reminds Ecdicia that her autonomous deportment distorts God's plan because it is incompatible with the nature of a woman: a wife does not belong to herself but "to her head, that is, her husband [Ephesians 5:23]" ("Letter 262"). He further defines such "subjugation of woman to man as natural law" and decrees that "woman has no right to dispose of her own body without male permission" (Brown 260). Finally he assesses her actions as transgressions of a social contract. Even though Ecdicia and her husband had jointly agreed to cease sexual relations, Augustine reminds her that

“concord and the solemn order of a household, and not the sexual bond, were the abiding essence of a Christian marriage” (Brown 404). Augustine’s perception of marriage as more than a legitimisation of the sexual act raises womankind from the limited role of sex partner to that of a cohort in a reciprocal multi-faceted domestic relationship. His perception of the hierarchical relationship within the household nevertheless positions womankind as inherently inferior to mankind. Sexually Ecclesia may no longer have a relationship with her husband; socially she continues to be subject to his rule.

Ecclesia’s conduct wins her disapprobation for masculinity rather than praise for intrinsic goodness. Although her ascetic renunciation of flesh and property and her dedication to the Church may be moral acts, Augustine discerns them as fundamentally depraved due to their point of origin. A negative masculine woman was thus wicked not because of her masculine acts -- although frequently these behaviours were indeed heinous -- but because her masculinity was itself a nefarious agitation of divine, natural and social order. Ecclesia’s conduct is ironically masculinely positive; she exhibits a rational repudiation of what is typically regarded as feminine affectivity, and for spiritual reasons deliberately chooses the ascetic control of body and the abhorrence of materiality. Augustine, however, notes and censures the negative masculinity of her inversion of hierarchical order rather than the positive masculinity of her rational piety.

The “Positive” Masculine Woman

Rational piety is in fact at the core of the early Christian conception of positive masculine womanhood. When a woman elevated spirit over flesh she was perceived as favouring what is male in her dually constructed nature. Because womankind represented

the “ ‘natural’ inferiorities of bodily weakness and pettiness, maliciousness and sensuality of mind”, the individual woman who conquered such mediocrity was seen as embodying “all the virtues that are associated with salvation -- chastity, patience, wisdom, temperance, fortitude and justice -- [virtues that] are distinctively masculine”. (Ruether 159) Consequently a trope that singled out the spiritual woman as male arose in the writings of the Church Fathers.

Female masculinity stemmed primarily from the vigorous and ascetic maintenance of virginity. Ironically, although virginity was perceived as at some level masculinising, it was nevertheless assessed as a chiefly feminine quality. Sexuality in the Middle Ages constituted a fault in both genders and mediaeval theologians agreed that both sexes increased in virtue upon transcending the pull of the body. However, battling fleshly vulnerability remained a particularly female issue, as corroborated by the many tracts addressed to women on the subject.²⁸ These treatises delineate virginal conduct as sexual inactivity compounded with a far reaching asceticism. By avoiding the worldly, usually epitomised by the tract in wedlock, the successful virgin delivered her mind and soul to God.

Virginity enabled the woman to supplant earthly anxieties with supernal joys. The Church Fathers concur that by definition marriage is attended by jealousy, pettiness and the confusion of the soul,

but the virgin suffers from none of this. Her house has been

delivered from confusion, and all crying has been banished from

her presence. As in a calm harbour, silence rules all within and

another form of detachment more perfect than silence possesses
 her soul because it pursues no human activity but continually
 communes with God and gazes more intently on him.

(Chrysostom, On Virginity LXVIII)

Jerome also accents virginity's deaf ear to temporal demands. He exhorts the Roman virgin Demetrias to "act against nature or rather above nature if [she is] to forswear [her] natural function, to cut off [her] own root, to cull no fruit but that of virginity, to abjure the marriage bed, to shun intercourse with men, and while in the body to live as though out of it". ("Letter 130") He urges her to lead a life of solitude and to reject the mundane: she should shirk male company, avoid unattended walks, limit speech, shun laughter, practise moderation in food and drink, and donate of her possessions to the Church.²⁹ Moreover he entreats her to be ever guarded, for even men who lead the contemplative life risk becoming "exposed to unclean and godless imaginations ... [and] if this is true of men, how much more does it apply to women whose fickle and vacillating minds, if left to their own devices, soon degenerate".

Though particularly befitting a woman, virginity thus ironically required a vigilance that was perceived as more masculinely virile than it was feminine. As Ruether notes,

if woman was essentially body and had sensual and depraved
 characteristics of mind, then it followed ... that either she was

irredeemable or else she was redeemed only by transcending the female nature and being transformed into a male. This is in sharp contrast to the male ascetics, where virginity is seen as restoring men to all those natural traits of nobility of mind and transcendence to the body that are masculine by nature.

(160, original emphasis)

Virginity was thus distinguished by the Church Fathers as a state that was both naturally suited to woman and yet rescued her from corrupt female nature. The Virgin Mary's conception of Christ, for example, was understood to be as much the avenue that returned womankind to a place where her nature was not inherently depraved as it was the mark of Jesus' divinity.³⁰ Mediaeval virginity thus constituted not only ascetic sinlessness but also redemptive action that re-determined female nature.

The virility of virginity was sometimes translated into a public show of physical strength. Martyr saints, for example, regularly withstood sexual advances and horrendous tortures from heathen rulers.³¹ But the virgin was tolerated in the public space only if she were there unwillingly through the machinations of pagan antagonists. More frequently positive masculinity was a private endeavour practised within as confined and silent a private space as possible. Eustochium and Demetrias followed Jerome's instructions and rarely ventured out, and although Ambrose urged a more moderate course of self denial than Jerome, he agreed with Chrysostom (On Virginity LXVIII, see above) that silence is a necessary component of virginity:

Use wine, therefore, sparingly, in order that the weakness of the body may not increase, not for pleasurable excitement ...

Be ignorant of the desire for unnecessary food. The gathering of banquets and salutations must be avoided ... Visits among the younger ... [must] be few. For modesty is worn away by intercourse and boldness breaks forth, laughter creeps in, and bashfulness is lessened, whilst politeness is studied. Not to answer one who asks a question is childishness, to answer is nonsense.

I should prefer, therefore, that conversation should rather be wanting to a virgin, than abound. For if women are bidden to keep silence in churches, even about divine things, and to ask their husbands at home, what do we think should be the caution of virgins, in whom modesty adorns their age, and silence commends their modesty. (Concerning Virgins III. ii-iii.)

The Church Fathers thus held that virile virginity grew from and prospered in private domesticity. Augustine's letter to Ecdicia and Jerome's to Eustochium emphasise that spirituality stems from curtailed physical or public activity .

As well as the domestication and 'privatisation' of virginity, the writings of the Church Fathers on the virile virgin also customarily stress two elements. First they invariably underscore emancipation from the strictures of female quotidian life: "What does the virgin suffer during her whole life that approaches what the married woman, who is torn apart by birth-pains and loud wailing, endures almost every year. The tyranny of this pain is so great that the holy Scripture whenever it wants to intimate captivity, famine, plague and intolerable evil calls them birthpains." (Chrysostom, On Virginity LXV) Marriage and wedlock are praiseworthy only "because they give me virgins. I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, [and] the pearl from the shell." (Jerome "Letter 22") Second, the works exalt the enrichment of the woman's faith and her favoured relationship with God: "Christ loves virgins more than others, because they willingly give what was not commanded them." (Jerome, AJ I. 12) "The virgin ... stands above th[e] travail and curse [of labour], since he who has rescinded the curse of the Law has rescinded this curse too." (Chrysostom, On Virginity LXV)

Less frequently the works also maintain that virginity grants a woman the normally masculine prerogative of autonomy because it frees her from sexual oppression and masculine domination: "[A virgin does not] become a slave to her body, which, by natural law, should have been subservient to a man." (Leander of Seville, *Regula sanctimonialium sive libellus de institutione virginium et contemptu mundi ad Florentinam sororem* preface; qtd. in Ruether 159) "You do not fear the sorrows of woman or their groans. You have no fear of the birth of children. Nor is your husband your master, but your Master and Head is Christ, in the likeness and in the place of man." (Cyprian, On the

Clothing of Virgins 22) Virginité thus often granted a woman independence, albeit limited to a confined private space.

As will be demonstrated, the works that specifically refer to female masculinity all infer, to one extent or another, the three elements put forth by the tracts on virginity. More importantly, each of those works also falls into one of two categories: pro or anti femininity. Virginité elevated a woman to male status because she had no “head” except for Christ and her own reason as it flowed from her faith. The writings of the Church Fathers on the positive masculine women consequently follow two avenues. The first is that women transcend female temporal frailty to become like men. The other is that women invert female temporal frailty to become men in all but body. The difference lies in the recognition granted to the female gender. The transcendent woman was respected as a woman. The inverting woman was disdained as a woman and respected as a man. The trope of the positive masculine woman can thus be as much pro- as anti-female. This distinction deserves commentary and will inform the following discussion on positive masculinity.

Although the Church Fathers describe the best Christian woman in terms of masculinity, the New Testament does not contain specific references to masculine women. Moreover, the Virgin Mary, the archetype of the virginity that rendered a woman virtuously masculine, is described only in feminine terms. It is only after the apostolic period that references to female masculinity begin to appear. The first such reference seems to be in The Gospel According to Thomas³². When Simon Peter requests that Mary should leave “for women are not worthy of life”, Christ responds “I myself shall lead her

in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

(114) The notion that the “living spirit” of faith rescued a woman from femininity is striking. In context, however, the statement is less divisive than might first appear. Earlier in the text Jesus instructs his disciples on the wholeness of spirit: “When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female ... then will you enter heaven.”

(22) The mysticism implied in the erasure of differences and the celestial inclusiveness of paradox and opposition renders the female gender essentially equal to the male, and it must at some level inform Jesus’ reply to Simon Peter. The enigmatic quality of the incident further reveals an essential respect for womanhood *per se*. Simon Peter’s credo aside, a woman who attained spirituality did not become a man as much as she reached a plain in which gender differences were transcended and both sexes shared in an albeit masculine faith. Thus women who believed did not become men. Rather they emulated men, and while by no means did such a formula sanction temporal femininity, it likewise did not entirely demean it. In the final analysis, however, even considering first the context and second Christ’s reluctance to endorse Simon Peter’s condemnation of the female sex, faith and spirituality remain masculine prerogatives.

The tradition of the masculine woman flourished in mainstream Christianity, becoming less metaphorical and ambiguous with time. Ambrose’s belief that Mary Magdalene was called woman by Christ because “celle qui ne croit pas est femme” and

“celle qui croit arrive ‘à l’homme parfait” (S. Luc X.161, see page 1 of this chapter) lacks the aura of enigma offered by the Gospel of St. Thomas. In addition, Ambrose imputes his doctrine on the masculinity of women to Jesus, so justifying his beliefs by a claim on an authority that does not exist. Most significantly, Ambrose’s exegesis is in direct contrast to the Gospel of St. Luke where it is the women who first believe that Christ is risen. Moreover, when they impart this knowledge to the male followers it is discounted as “nonsense”. (Luke 24:4-12) Ambrose nevertheless chooses this incident to demonstrate that lack of belief indicates female while faith indicates male. Faith, for Ambrose, is an intellectual and masculine quality that is more easily attained by the “perfect”, and Jesus sends Mary to the male disciples because “la Résurrection ne peut être aisément saisie que par les parfaits.” (X.165) Ironically, according to scripture the men are perhaps more confounded by the events of the Resurrection than the women: Peter is bewildered by the empty sepulchre, the disciples do not recognise Christ on the road to Emmaus, and Thomas’ doubt is only alleviated by physical evidence. Thus according to Luke the women believe more “aisément” than the men. Ambrose’s gloss, however, inverts the biblical understanding to conclude that women can access perfection and faith only by giving up that which makes them women. Unlike the Gospel According to Thomas Ambrose evinces here little sanctioning of the female gender. Ambrose’s masculine woman denies femininity for perfect masculinity, rather than adds masculine faith to her feminine self.

Jerome also postulated that surrendering all female attributes except those related to virginity rendered a woman more pleasing to God. Unlike Ambrose he discerns female

masculinity as advancing the essentially feminine ability of virginity. Like Ambrose he nevertheless defines the spiritual woman as not quite female. In Book III of the Commentary on Ephesians Jerome states that “as long as a woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man.” Jerome’s intention here was not to insult Eustochium and Paula, the two women to whom the work was addressed, but rather to reassure them that their virginity made them male in faith. Faith and virginity are here interchangeable for Jerome, and thus they redeem a woman from female debility. Jerome skirts Ambrose’s easy equation between the female gender and doubting debility, yet he nevertheless defines a woman’s spirituality as a way by which she may ascend to male perfection. The difference lies between refusal and exchange. While subtle, it nevertheless underlines Jerome’s respect for the potential of women, a respect that is missing in Ambrose’s censure of the gender.

In Against Helvedius Jerome is yet more metaphorical in his construction of masculine femininity. Unlike in The Commentary on the Ephesians he does not label the advancement of female faith in male terms. Rather than substituting female with male, he denies a feminine inferiority for a feminine superiority: “The vessel of election [i.e. St. Paul] ... tells us that there is a difference between the wife and the virgin. Observe what the happiness of that state must be in which even the distinction of sex is lost The virgin is no longer called a woman.” (22) The opposition here is between devotional freedom and worldly care, represented respectively in the virgin and the wife. Virile devotion thus raises a woman beyond temporality rather than beyond gender. As witnessed in The Commentary on the Ephesians and other writings, Jerome holds affective irrationality to

be more characteristic of woman than man. In Against Helvedius, however, he privileges spirituality over temporality rather than male over female, an important distinction.

Chrysostom also illustrates the virtue of the woman who overcomes her female nature in masculine terms. More in line with The Gospel of St. Thomas and Jerome's Against Helvedius than with Ambrose's Traité sur L'Évangile de S. Luc or Jerome's Commentary on the Ephesians, Chrysostom defines the opposition as between rationality and affectiveness rather than genders. How can a woman aid in a man's faith? By recouring to a virginity that grants her a male-like asceticism while admitting her female nature. Chrysostom "assert[s]" that a woman "successfully" assists a man's spirituality

not when she is involved with marital concerns but when she progresses to the virtue of the holy men while adhering to her feminine nature. For it is not by beautifying herself, or by living a life of luxury, or demanding from her husband money, or by being extravagant and lavish that she will be able to win him over. When she removes herself from all present concerns and imprints upon herself the apostolic way of life, when she displays great modesty decorum, disdain for money and forbearance, then will she be able to capture him ... When she practises this philosophy in her actions and, laughing at physical death, calls this life nothing, when she considers along with the prophet every

glory of this life to be as the flower of the field, then she will
capture him. (On Virginity XLVII)

Chrysostom terms virtue an attribute of “holy men” but nevertheless insists that the woman who achieves it still “adhere[s] to her feminine nature”. On Virginity demonstrates a validation of the apex of female conduct as feminine, rather than as negating the feminine for the masculine. Femininity is itself virile. The denial of the worldly in female virginity rescued man and woman and granted them spiritual freedom.

Leander of Seville agrees with Chrysostom that virginity endowed the woman with masculinity while simultaneously admitting her female nature. Leander wrote his treatise on virginity for his sister to praise her for living in “manly vigour” (*Regul sanct.* preface). For Leander the asceticism required for maintaining virginity is strength, and strength is masculine. The strong woman does not swap her female nature for male. Rather she “use[s] virtue to give strength to her weak sex”. Leander’s sister remains one of the “weak sex”, and yet she is “forgetful of her natural feminine weakness”. For Leander virginity granted a woman virile and masculine attributes, but it did not transform her into a man.

St. Augustine’s opinion on female masculinity is somewhat enigmatic. While he regards the transcendence of sexuality as the sign of rationality in both genders, he also holds that women who overcame their sexuality exchanged their gender for the male. Augustine grants Sts. Perpetua and Felicity³³ a “glorious” spirituality that “men may wonder at sooner than they may imitate”.

But this is chiefly the glory of Him in whom they that do believe
 and they that with holy zeal in his name do contend one with an-
 other are indeed, according to the inward man neither male nor
 female; so that even in them that are women in body the manliness
 of their souls hideth the sex of their flesh and we may scarce think
 of that in their bodily condition which they suffered not to appear
 in their deeds. (Sermon 280)

While control of concupiscence grants emancipation to men and women equally, and while faith erases gendered differences, these elements are more worthy of comment in women than in men. “Even in them that are women in body” the elevation of spiritual over temporal grants a “manliness of soul” which obscures sex. (emphasis mine) So while there is equality, and while there is respect for men and women alike, there is also the belief that those who are men in body are more rational and that rationality is a manly attribute. Perpetua deserves respect as a woman, as well as for overcoming womanhood.

*

The Church Fathers’ alignment of spirit and flesh with male and female thus resulted in a dichotomous perception of female masculinity. On the one hand, the negative masculine woman represented heinous manly action that originated from female faults. On the other hand, the positive masculine woman expressed a virile spirituality which served to elevate her beyond female faults. The impact of the concepts of frail femininity and negative masculinity together resulted in describing the successful woman

paradoxically as not typically female and yet as not masculine in quotidian conduct. The positive masculine woman is thus a conundrum: female yet male, submissive yet strong, domestic yet influential, virginal yet virile. Pious women were feminine by virtue of virginity yet masculine by virtue of spirituality. Complex and indeed paradoxical at many turns, the notion of positive masculine femininity in early Christianity simultaneously demeaned and elevated the female. The question of how extensively such formulations were assimilated by contemporary society is itself as complex and paradoxical. As the ensuing chapter will demonstrate, hagiography founds ways of negotiating and even challenging the masculinisation of the woman.

Endnotes

¹ Because there is little mediaeval commentary on transvestism *per se*, this chapter concentrates on female masculinity in order to provide a context for the following chapter's analysis of the theme of hagiographic cross dressing.

² One such example will be discussed in the section entitled The 'Negative' Masculine Woman.

³ St. Paul, for example, delineates the male / female - soul / body division in Ephesians: "Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ is also the head of the church. Christ is, indeed, the Saviour of the body; but just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women be to their husbands in everything." (5:22-24) The influence of the philosophy that equated woman with sense and man with spirit can be also seen in the writings of the Church Fathers. Augustine, for example, writes "we see man, made in your image and likeness, ruling over all the irrational animals for the very reason that he was made in your image and resembles you, that is, because he has the power of reason and understanding. And just as in man's soul there are two forces, one which is dominant because it deliberates and one which obeys because it is subject to such guidance, in the same way, in the physical sense, woman has been made for man. In her mind and in her rational intelligence she has a nature the equal of man's but in sex she is physically subject to him in the same way as our natural impulses need to be subjected to the reasoning power of the mind, in order that the action to which they lead may be inspired by the principles of good conduct." (The Confessions XIII. 32)

For an analysis of the development of the soul / body dualism from its classical and Judaic roots and into the Middle Ages see Peter Brown The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. For a description of the process of the assimilation of this duality into that between man and woman in patristic thought see Rosemary Ruether "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism".

⁴ Just as there are dual traditions in which women were described as negatively and positively masculine, in Jesus as Mother Caroline Walker Bynum discerns a tradition in which men were described in feminine terms, but for positive reasons. The Cistercians conceived of the relationships between Jesus and believer and abbot and congregation as analogous to the one between mother and child. This tradition will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

⁵ Blamires lists the great variety of genres that contributed to the aligning of woman with that which is weak in the body: classical writings, for example Ovid and the satires of Juvenal; biblical books, especially Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and Paul's epistles; the writings of the Church Fathers, with Jerome's Against Jovinian and Tertullian's La Toilette des Femmes being the most extensively anti-female; secular texts, for example, Walter Map's "Letter of Valerius" and Andreas Capellanus' On Love; and proverbs, in both Latin and the vernacular languages. Furthermore, she finds four models of antifeminist writings: the catalogue, the satire, the polemic against marriage, and the first person complaint. For more on the genres and models of misogynist writings see Blamires 1-13. Medical texts, poems and tales from the later centuries of the Middle Ages also contributed to the tradition

⁶ Ecclesiasticus is now considered apocryphal. It is found in the Latin vulgate and the Douai Rheims Holy Bible published between 1582 and 1609. The edition cited here is the Belfast 1852.

⁷ Proverbs 8, for example, personifies Wisdom as a woman. In full context, however, one must consider the fact that the preceding chapter is a warning against the kind of woman who is "full of wiles, flighty and inconstant, a woman never content to stay at home".

⁸ There are critics who believe the New Testament to be misogynist. Vern L. Bullough, for one, argues that Christianity is "a male centred, sex-negative religion with a strong misogynistic tendency" (119), and he cites Luke 14:26 as an example of how "quite clearly men would be better off if they could ignore women altogether. St. Luke said that a man must hate his own wife and children in order to be a disciple of Jesus." (102) The full citation, however, shows not an abhorrence of women but rather of the mundane life which may interfere with the spiritual one. Jesus' words to his followers are, "if anyone comes to me and does

not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine". In Mark "hate" is substituted by "give up" and in Matthew by "care less for". Mark also adds land to the list of things to be given up, and Matthew does not mention the wife, only parents and children. (Mark 29-30; Matthew 37-38) Jesus' division between the earthly and spiritual life therefore does not identify the earthly with woman, as Bullough claims it does. Bullough moreover ignores the complexities of translation. What could mean "neglect" in English may indeed have been expressed as "hate" in Aramaic. Bullough does concede that the verse "might mean that man must sacrifice everything, even his wife and children if necessary, to achieve salvation", yet he is unable to divide the asceticism evinced in the citation from misogyny, "it [the citation] also indicates a growing trend toward asceticism and misogyny". (102) We must be aware however that asceticism and misogyny are not interchangeable terms, and that most of the time the New Testament urges control of body and not of woman.

⁹ As well as St. Paul, this chapter will focus on the philosophies of Tertullian, Jerome and Augustine, for these four thinkers are the source of many mediaeval perceptions of women. Derrick Sherwin Bailey states that among the authors on the subject of women and sexuality, "none occur more frequently than Tertullian and Jerome, and none (excepting St. Paul and Augustine) have left a deeper or more lasting impression upon Christian sexual ideas and attitudes." (49) Frequent references to Ambrose and St. John Chrysostom will amplify the discussion.

¹⁰ See 1 Tim. 2:14 and 1 Cor. 11: 9-12, for example.

¹¹ Although Tertullian does address men in La Toilette des Femmes, exhorting them not to pay too much attention to their physical appearance, embellishment is clearly a female fault. Tertullian perceives vanity as a female frailty, regardless of the gender in which it manifests itself. Moreover, although both sexes are to be censured for ceding to their weaker nature, the defect is prevalent in women in a way it is not in men. Thus when men embellish themselves they are faulted for acting like women. A vain man is criticised for "tailler sa barbe avec grand soin, l'épiler par places, en raser le pourtour, ordonnancer ses cheveux, les teindre même, supprimer immédiatement tout ce qui commence à blanchir, user de dépilatoire comme les

femmes pour faire disparaître toutes les villosités du corps.” (II. 8.2) The criticism carries implications of feminine behaviour. Men must be censured for self-ornamentation, but their mistake is feminine, or at least more typical of woman than man.

¹² And also, “ainsi, cette beauté qui, a tous égards, n’a que faire en vous, vous ferez bien de la mépriser si vous ne l’avez pas, de la négliger si vous l’avez”. (II.3.3)

¹³ There will be a full discussion later in the chapter on the tendency of the Church Fathers to see women as existentially dangerous to male chastity.

¹⁴ For example, the Wife of Bath’s fifth husband nightly abuses her by reading to her from Against Jovinian. Alisoun is so exasperated by Jerome’s condemnation and her husband’s glorification of it that she tears up the book.

¹⁵ Jerome had many [virgin]female friends and seemed to have great respect and affection for them. Brown points out, for example, that although Jerome’s translation of Origen’s Homilies on the Song of Songs was dedicated to Pope Damasus, it actually “was intended for his new circle of female spiritual charges”. Jerome corresponded frequently with these women, and when he went to Jerusalem after his banishment, Paula and Eustochium followed him.

¹⁶ Jerome here agrees with Augustine (see below) that men make better companions than women. However, he does not agree that women were primarily created for childbirth. For Jerome, a woman was created above all for virginity, and he believes that by remaining virgin a woman could overcome that which is female and appetitive about her body to ascend to a masculine form of spirituality. The discussion of this belief and its consequences are at the heart of the section on positive masculine women, to be found later in this chapter.

¹⁷ Rather than Jerome’s anti-matrimonial tract, Augustine’s On the Good of Marriage holds wedlock as good not only for the control of “that carnal or youthful incontinence” (3), but also for companionship because the “first natural bond of human society is man and wife ... [It is] possible that there should exist in either sex, even without ... intercourse, a certain friendly and true union of the one ruling, and the other

obeying.” (1) And although Augustine’s idea of marriage remains hierarchical, he concedes that in both genders there is a reciprocal need for social interaction.

¹⁸ Augustine’s position on the role of women in relationship to child-bearing is contradictory. Although he believed that womankind was created for procreation, paradoxically, he is also believed that motherhood as a primary role is now passé. In case contemporary women understood from the Genesis IX statement that the role allotted to them firstly by God, and secondly by Augustine, was as child bearer, Augustine peppers his writings with exhortations against child bearing: “In the first times of the human race, chiefly for the propagation of the People of God, through whom the Prince and Saviour of all people should ... be born, it was the duty of the Saints to use this good of marriage, not as to be sought for its own sake, but necessary for the sake of something else; but now ... there is on all sides from out all nations an over flowing fullness of spiritual kindred.” (Marriage IX; see also Virginity XIV.) Jerome makes the same argument in “Letter 22”. Augustine further declared that “they who wish to contract marriage only for the sake of children, are to be admonished, that they use rather the larger good of continence”. The paradox that sees women as having been designed to be something that is now unnecessary is stated repeatedly in the ironically entitled On The Good of Marriage: “It is good to beget children, to be a mother of a family; but it is better not to marry, because it is better not to stand in need of this work, in order to human fellowship itself.”

¹⁹ For a complete discussion of the Augustinian notions of the driving force of sexuality see Brown 406-8 and 416-19.

²⁰ Augustine’s own battle with sensual pleasure is well recorded. The Confessions portray the struggle with physical desire, his affection for his mistress, and his conversion to a life dedicated to celibacy. For a more in-depth discussion of Augustine’s dilemmas see Sherwin Bailey 49-60.

²¹ Howard Bloch points to a paradox here, in which “if woman is conceived to be synonymous with the senses or perception, then any look upon a woman’s beauty must be the look of a woman upon a woman, for there can be no such thing as a male gaze from desire.” (15) This is an interesting conundrum, but one which smacks of literalism on Bloch’s part. It is simply solved by the fact that the Middle Ages had an

allegorical comprehension of things which made possible such contradictions. Although sense, and arguably perception, are feminine, no writer denies that fallen man is a compound of spirit and flesh. All humankind is dualistic, and although there is an undeniable parallel made by the early Christian writers between flesh and woman and spirit and man, these are indeed only metaphors and not concrete equations.

²² St. Paul speaks of an equal debt of body between husband and wife: "The husband must give his wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence ... otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan." (1 Cor. 7:3-6) Chrysostom, who perhaps based his opinion on Paul's advice to the Corinthians, does not maintain Paul's balanced approach. Moreover, nowhere does Paul mention that a wife's vow of continence is more to blame for a husband's debauchery than his own weakness. Chrysostom evidently here lays the blame for mankind's sexual failure on womankind.

²³ Significantly, the biblical incident that anticipates these attitudes lays the blame on the beholder rather than the beheld. In Matthew 5: 27 Christ points to the man's duty to control his own predilections: "Do not commit adultery. But what I tell you is this: If a man looks on a woman with a lustful eye, he has already sinned with her in his heart." The onus here lies with the man rather than with the woman.

²⁴ Many current critics have shown that certain strata of society, most notably that of noble women, refused to accept that the defects of nature were any more inherent to womankind than they were to mankind. See for example Caroline Walker Bynum's work, especially Holy Feast and Holy Fast, as well as the work of Jo Ann McNamara and Marina Warner, amongst others.

²⁵ One must be aware that Chapter 31 of Proverbs actually demonstrates the good wife. Unlike the New Testament where good wives are defined as women who cede to their husbands as their "heads", this "capable wife" is described as "clothed in dignity and power". She opens her mouth "to speak wisely, and loyalty is the theme of her teaching" (10-26). Apart from the fact that she "teaches", she is also depicted as strong, caring, and industrious. She is moreover a business woman for she "buys a field and plants a vineyard

out of her earnings" (15-6). Although this woman acts in independent and masculine ways, she is obviously to be admired and emulated.

²⁶ It is important to note that unambiguous references to a relationship between female masculinity and unconstrained sexuality are missing in the Christian portrayal(s) of masculine women. In fact, in 1 Timothy it is male fidelity that is clearly articulated. The deployment of the negative woman four part structure thus differs in the New Testament specifically because of this lack of willingness to posit female sexuality as a monstrous cause for all of women's weaknesses. The sexual drive was seen to be a weakness for both genders, and woman was not perceived as a trap for man in the way she became afterward.

²⁷ As for men who marry in order to have children, especially sons, Jerome is hardly less forgiving. To wish to continue the family line and name is "the height of stupidity" (1.47). To marry for children is "stupid"; to marry for a manager of a house is emasculating.

²⁸ See, for example, Cyprian's On the Dress of Virgins, Tertullian's On the Veiling of Virgins, Ambrose's Instructions of a Virgin, Jerome's "Letter 22" and "130", Augustine's Of Holy Virginity, and in England Aldhelm's On Virginity, amongst many others.

²⁹ "Letter 130" is more moderate in its instructions on virginal behaviour than "Letter 22". However, both letters counsel the same sort of physical and psychological control. "Letter 22" demonstrates a subordination of the body that goes beyond neglect to punishment: "Let your companions be women pale and thin with fasting ... Take food in moderation, and never overload your stomach. For many women, while temperate as regards wine are intemperate in the use of food ... Read often, learn all that you can. Let sleep overcome you the roll still in you hands; when your head falls, let it be on the sacred page. Let your fasts be of daily occurrence and your refreshment such as avoids satiety ... If you are excited by the alluring rain of sensual desire, then seize the shield of faith ... the love of the flesh is overcome by the love of the spirit . Be like the grasshopper and make the night musical. Nightly wash your bed and water your couch with tears." In addition to instruction on limiting the body, Jerome emphasises the intellectual ability of the virgin.

Spirituality rendered a woman male in all but body. While a married woman was perceived only in terms of representing an obstacle to her husband's spiritual education, the virgin is herself urged to read and learn.

³⁰ Chapter three expands this statement and portrays exactly how Mary's miraculous maternity counterbalanced Eve's fault.

³¹ St. Juliana, for example, was a dedicated and pious virgin who was forced to endure the tortures of her father and the pagan king who wished to marry her. After withstanding many tortures which through miraculous intervention proved the legitimacy of her claim, Juliana was martyred.

³² The Gospel is a Gnostic Coptic collection of Jesus' saying. It was written in Greek, in Syria during the early post-apostolic period. The surviving manuscript is a Coptic one, translated from the Greek in the middle of the 4th c. AD. There were versions of the Greek original in Egypt from the beginning of the third century. (Nag Hammadi 38). For more information on the dates and origins of the Gospel see the prefaces and Introductions of Nag Hammadi.

³³ Perpetua was martyred in the amphitheatre. The night before her ordeal she dreamt that in the circus she encountered an Egyptian. When she was stripped God transformed her into a man, and thus she won the battle. During the real encounter the next day Perpetua was killed. McNamara comments that "Perpetua dreamed of herself as a man because she expected to play the part of a man in battle". (154)

Chapter 3

Transvestism in Mediaeval Hagiography

The Church Fathers' bilateral approach to female masculinity was accompanied by a similar division in literature. Fictional unruly women like the Wife of Bath, for example, continued to be reviled for their unfettered lust and wilful desire for "maistrie" over their independence and their husbands. Literary representations of the virile and rational virgin, however, developed in a more paradoxical and intriguing manner. The hagiography of the early monastic period produced a fascinating order of women who at first glance seem to have assimilated the patristic equation between reason and masculinity. These women cross dress at a young age and consequently spend the remainder of their lives disguised as men. Traditionally critics have speculated that the transvestism substantiates the Church Fathers' doctrine that in masculine form women attain a virile, rational (male) religiosity that is more pleasing to God than an affective irrational (female) piety.¹ Other hypotheses perceive the transvestism as a symptom of the psychological impulse of human bisexuality.² However, as critical analysis will illustrate, the saints do not unproblematically absorb the Church Fathers' definitions of femininity or masculinity, nor are they bi-gendered in any way. In spite of the masculine clothing the saints are rather encodements of the difficult and often contradictory mediaeval conception of womanhood. The transvestite saints articulate a paradoxical phenomenon: by modifying their physical appearance from female to male they purchase the opportunity to be the women they desire to be. By choosing one of three positive female roles available to them, virgin, mystic intercessor, and mother, the women continue their feminine personas behind the camouflage of male attire. This chapter will discuss the

significance of these life-roles before illustrating how transvestism permits each individual saint to decipher the conundrum of mediaeval womanhood.

As demonstrated earlier, mediaeval theories on womanhood generally agree on at least one principle: the female body and its anatomical functions limit the possibility for spirituality. Until recently, literary and historical scholarship has been inclined to interpret mediaeval society as uncritically assimilating the early Church's diminishment of the role of woman in a rational religion. Rosemary Ruether, for example, over-determines the impact of the Fathers' attitude towards female nature:

[The] assimilation of male-female dualism into soul-body dualism in patristic theology conditions basically the definition of woman, both in terms of her subordination to the male in the order of nature and her 'carnality' in the disorder of sin. The result of this assimilation is that woman is not really seen as a self-sufficient, whole person with equal honour, as the image of God in her own right, but is seen, ethically, as dangerous to the male. (156-7)³

Recent feminist mediaevalists such as Caroline Walker Bynum, Jo Ann McNamara, and Marina Warner have demonstrated, however, that not all pious mediaeval men and women invariably or entirely absorbed the patristically ordained status of female inferiority. Bynum, for example, demonstrates that

the later Middle Ages, especially the period from the twelfth to the early fourteenth century, witnessed a significant proliferation of opportunities for women to participate in specialised religious roles and of the type of roles available. The number of female saints, including married women saints, increased. Women's piety -- whether monastic or lay -- took on certain distinctive characteristics that powerful males, both secular and clerical, noted, sometimes with awe, and sometimes with suspicion. (Bynum, Holy Feast 13-4)

On the subject of hagiographic transvestism, however, the criticism of the past four decades or so has tended to agree with Ruether.⁴ In spite of the increasing interest in the cross dressed saint, and the variety of approaches taken in discussing her, much of the scholarship has tended to maintain that the culture that produced her unilaterally held the female body to present more of an impediment to religiosity than the male. Evelyne Patlagean, for example, perceives the saints as exchanging femininity for masculinity in order to achieve a spirituality normally denied to their gender: "Il y a ici ... la négation fondamentale de la féminité, où le dépouillement physique manifeste l'évasion spirituelle hors de la condition native." (605) Vern L. Bullough also assesses the saints in terms of status gains and losses. He cites the Bible, Jerome, Ambrose, Aquinas and others to conclude that because the male was perceived as more rational "progress meant giving up the female gender, the maternal, passive, corporeal, and sense perceptive world,

and taking the active rational male world of mind and thought. The easiest way for women to approach the male level of rationality was for them to deny their sexuality, to remain virgins." ("Transvestites" 1381) Even those critics who do not discern holy transvestism as the rejection of femininity do not perceive it in terms of successful mediaeval womanhood. Hippolyte Delehaye approaches the saints as versions of the one legend of Pelagia⁵. (197-206) Hermann Usener defines them as remnants or Christian reworkings of the classical legend of the bisexual Aphrodite of Cyprus.⁶ Marie Delcourt analyses them as psychological productions of humankind's hermaphrodism.⁷ John Anson understands them rather as signals of the author's subconscious, and he declares the *vitae* to be "products of a monastic culture written by monks for monks, and it is in this situation that the psychological explanations should be sought". (5)⁸

While each of the theories summarised here elucidates in part the phenomenon of holy transvestism, none is wholly satisfactory. None, for example, resolves why the theme of female transvestism was adopted into a religion that unequivocally prohibits cross dressing,⁹ and none explains why a disregard for male authority is sanctioned and rewarded: some women disobey fathers by fleeing arranged marriages while others dupe abbots by entering monasteries dressed as men. Why, then, is a cross dressed and independent woman validated by a religion and culture that iterated a deep suspicion of womankind?

The response lies partly in the fact that the denial of a woman's sexuality does not signify a denial of her gender. What Patlagean, Bullough, Anson, and others like them

often fail to recognise is that while the female sexual persona is held to blame for deficient rationality, there remained other roles that validated the particular abilities of woman. An unsexual woman is not a man, nor was she perceived as such in the Middle Ages. Virginity, after all, befitted femininity in a way that exceeded masculinity. Faced with the conflicting stricture of excising sexuality from gender in the encomium of women, the culture that fabricated the transvestite saints found a secret passage to a metaphor that enabled them to praise a woman's gender but not her sex.

As will be demonstrated, the requirements for mediaeval womanhood at its best cannot be achieved in actuality. In order to execute these prerequisites a fiction must be formulated. The transvestite saints are not historical figures. Rather, they are societal constructions, perhaps even fantasies. The ramifications of a people's psychological impulse to invent such figures are beyond the parameters of this chapter. The discussion instead focuses on the literary artefacts that endow the fictional saint with historical verisimilitude (the woman, for example, is granted details of lineage and nationality) to enable her to express in a real manner what cannot exist in reality. The saints' narratives are thus fictions that masquerade as non-fiction in order to solve a conundrum; the fiction simultaneously articulates and resolves a contradiction. The tensions between real and unreal, history and fiction, female and male, and by extension, emotion and reason, produce a figurative representation -- the saint -- who is prescribed as the point of the coincidence of conflicting opposites. The saint's fictionality allows her to enact a form of feminist religiosity that is paradoxically rational but not masculine. The masculine disguise assumed by Sts. Anastasia (Anastasius), Athanasia (Athanasius),

Euphrosyne (Smaragdus), Pelagia (Pelagius), Apollinaria (Dorotheus), Eugenia (Eugenius), Margaret (Pelagius), Theodora (Theodorus), and Marina (Marinus),¹⁰ itself empowers the female life role.¹¹

The three empowered female life roles at the heart of the transvestite saints' narratives are virginity (a denial of the voracious female sexual appetite), mysticism (a contemplative and intimate, quasi-spousal relationship with God), and motherhood (an affective bond that ensures the survival of the vulnerable). As will be demonstrated, all three roles, ironically even motherhood, thematically turn on the repudiation of female sexuality. Having disguised their gender and thus evaded objectification as sexual beings, the saints remain essentially women. By establishing that they are neither imitation men nor hermaphrodites, these saints will be revealed as women who embody one or more of the positive attributes of the feminine while simultaneously avoiding the negative.

Virgin

When women look like men they frequently achieve liberation from being perceived in sexual terms by men. In this category, once freed of the constraints of sexuality imposed upon them by others, Anastasia, Athanasia, Euphrosyne and Pelagia are able to pursue their preferred life role of virgin, perhaps the most popular enactment of positive womanhood in the Middle Ages. Virginity granted a woman temporal success: as demonstrated in the preceding chapter, virgins were universally lauded and respected. The value of virginity in the early Church is underscored by St. Paul's opinion on virginity in Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:8-10; 34), Jerome's belief that "Christ loves virgins more than

others” (Against Jovinian I. 12), his decree that marriage was tolerable only in its engendering of more virgins (“Letter 22”), and the emphasis laid by mediaeval theology and culture on female asceticism in general, and on Mary’s spiritual and physical purity in particular.

When their virginity is threatened the saints of this category are compelled to escape a world that has rendered it unfeasible to be the very thing required of them. They thus disguise their gender, as Delcourt has demonstrated, in order to avoid circumstances that have either already delineated them as sexual objects or are threatening to do so. (Hermaphrodite 90) Anastasia, for example, is obliged to avoid Justinian’s sexual obsession, and Euphrosyne desires to escape a planned marriage. Eluding a context that sexualises them enables the women to define themselves in non-sexual but nevertheless feminine terms: Anastasia is a virgin and not a whore. The saint’s concept of womanhood becomes imposed not by an external male authority but by an internal female individuality. Virginity thus often granted a woman self-government. As Bynum observes, a woman whose self-definition avoided the sexual, for example a nun, won for herself an otherwise impossible autonomy: “Set apart from the world by intact boundaries, her flesh untouched by ordinary flesh, the virgin ... scintillated with fertility and power.” (Holy Feast 20) Beneath the male attire the saints’ self-elected and maintained virginity empowers them as women.

The archetypal representation of the fertile and powerful virgin is of course the Holy Virgin. Mary, simultaneously virgin and mother of a virgin child, was a paradoxical

model for the mediaeval woman. The miraculousness of her virginal maternity was often disregarded as she was held up as an *exemplum* to the mediaeval woman. Warner portrays the simultaneously divine yet human, impossible yet possible, status of Mary in the Middle Ages:

Mary is mother and virgin ... [she is] the one creature in whom all opposites are reconciled, her virgin motherhood has been the chief sign of her supernatural nature. Metaphysical mysteries must defy reason, for if the human mind could compass them, they would lose their sacred character. So Christ the God-man and Mary the Virgin-Mother blot out antimony, absolve contradiction, and manifest that the impossible is possible with God ... [Nevertheless] she is the symbol of the ideal woman and has been held up as an example to women since Tertullian in the third century and John Chrysostom in the fourth lambasted the sex. (336)

Although Mary miraculously “absolves contradiction”, her human condition simultaneously signals her as a member of temporal womanhood. Her power originates in divine favour as well as in the achievement of such secular requirements as virginity. As Warner observes, “through the ascetic renunciation of the flesh, a woman could relieve a

part of her nature's particular viciousness as the Virgin Mary had done through her complete purity." (68)

Mary's virginal maternity is further ratified in the mediaeval perception of it as the avenue that restored womankind's nature from inherent depravity. The devaluation of motherhood by early mediaeval theology¹² resulted in an elevation of virginity as the temporal woman's key to that redemption. From the earliest conception of her, Mary is designated as an restituted Eve, the source of rebirth rather than death. Origen, for example, balanced out the Fall in the Salvation: "Just as sin began from a woman, and then found its way even to man: so too the beginning of salvation had its origin from women, that the rest of women laying aside the weakness of their sex might imitate the life and conversation of these blessed women [Mary and Elizabeth, John's mother]." (*Fragment. in Luc. Hom. vii. Tom. 13; qtd. in Livius 47*). Similarly, Tertullian's extreme position on women was mitigated by marian compensation: "It was whilst Eve was yet a virgin that the word crept in, which was the framer of death. Into a Virgin, in like manner, must be introduced the Word of God who was the builder up of life: so that by that same sex whence had come our ruin, might also come our recovery to salvation. Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel. The fault which one committed by believing, the other by believing blotted out." (*De Carne Christi 17*) Jerome also discerned the virgin birth as a quasi opportunity for female emendation: "Now that a virgin has conceived in the womb and borne to us a child ... now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of

virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman." ("Letter 22").¹³

Virginity is thus manifestly not simply a limitation particularly befitting the female body but rather an empowering and positive attribute, perhaps even action, for the female mind and spirit. It warrants celibacy and chastity, but furthermore it regenerates the fallen, inherently flawed female body and nature. As Warner notes, "the idea that virginity confers power operates on two different planes. First, the Fathers of the Church taught that the virginal life reduced the special penalties of the Fall in women and was therefore holy. Second, the image of the virgin body was the supreme image of wholeness, and wholeness was equated with holiness." (72) Although men were encouraged to practice chastity, virginity remained an especially female virtue, lending to the female body a redeemed purity not attainable by adult males.

Renouncing external feminine appearance paradoxically permits the transvestite saint to sustain internally the estimable female role of redeemed and redeeming virgin. In one unique case, transvestism even enables such redemption. When Pelagia wishes to atone for prostitution she disguises herself as Pelagius the Eunuch and seeks seclusion. Her action symbolically repudiates depraved femininity, but it does not appropriate superior masculinity. Her transvestism rather ransoms her virginity, which in turn endows her with perfected femininity. The further ramifications of Pelagia's redemption will be discussed below. This brief example suffices now to portray that "the life of self-denial was seen as a form of martyrdom, and the virgin was encouraged to suffer

physically ... Martyrdom made amends for nature's wrongs ... [and] through virginity and self-inflicted hardship, the faults of female nature could be corrected" (Warner 68-9).¹⁴ As will be demonstrated, Pelagia aside, the essentially feminine self-denial of the saints in this category perseveres even under male clothing.

In addition to rescuing and maintaining redeemed femininity, the transvestism of the virginal saint further delivered men from the temptations of the female body. As argued in the preceding chapter, the mediaeval perception of the sexual trap as genderless nevertheless designated women as more liable victims. By resisting the pull of the desire that deviated the soul from heavenly contemplation, both sexes ascend to greater spirituality. The onus of the weakness of the flesh, however, remained solidly planted on the shoulders of womankind. Jerome's warnings about the inevitable impediment a wife represented to intellectual and spiritual pursuits (AJ I.47), for example, agree with Augustine's belief that women drew men's minds away from the spiritual not through evil intent but by virtue of their being and their beauty (The Free choice of Will III 10). By altering her physical appearance, the saint symbolically avoided her own sexual impulses as well as physically rendered inoperable that which could lure men away from the spiritual. In so doing she extended her chastity to include others. When Anastasia masquerades as a eunuch she safeguards her virginity from the adulterous Justinian and simultaneously enforces upon him a chastity he does not possess. And because the saints' rejection of the demands of the temporal world is borne out physically by their retreat into an eremitic existence, female virginity rescued both genders from the sensual trap.

The value of virginity is further emphasised by the *vitae*'s thematic emphasis on the ruinous nature of sexuality regardless of gender.¹⁵ Male sexuality is always portrayed either as deliberately and consciously contained, as in the case of monks or chaste widowers, or as wilfully unfettered and destructive in the extreme, as in the case of rapists or adulterers. On the one hand, Marina's father is both widower and monk, while on the other hand, the married Justinian pursues the unwilling Anastasia throughout her life. Sexualised women who appear in the *vitae* are also depicted as sinners or pagans. Pregnant, unwed and deceitful women figure in the stories of Margaret, Marina and Theodora, and Eugenia in male disguise is first desired by a lustful woman and later accused of seduction by her. Many of the saints, once desexualised as women, also appear as desexualised men, demonstrating that even the trappings of male disguise are deliberately non-sexual. The motif of the saint either referring to herself as a eunuch or leading her life as a monk is found in all the legends. The narratives thus actively devalue sexuality in order to highlight further the benefits of virginity.

The mediaeval appreciation of female virginity as empowerment, both personal and in relationships with men, emphasises that the saints' defeminisation is but superficial. At first glance the defeminisation seems extensive, for the women appear to garb themselves in spirituality when they cross dress. On further scrutiny, however, the narratives reveal a persistent and upheld femininity. The perception of female nature as flawed and depraved offers as a consequence the view that repudiating such a nature confers redemption, power and salvation. Emotion, appetite and rational weakness become the other side of the coin to chastity, asceticism and virginity.¹⁶

Intercessor

Virginity disabled female sexuality but liberated other female talents. One such talent, mysticism, offered women an avenue to both spiritual and political power. Spiritually the visionary was endowed with supra-human qualities, mostly asseverated in new insights of the Divine and the faculty to commune with Him. Politically the mystic's raised consciousness enabled her to intervene with God on behalf of the needy. As critics have recently demonstrated, such intercession often obtained for the woman the respect of her society. In an extreme example, David Herlihy argues that the loss of women's financial power and their diminishing importance within kinship systems claimed for the mystic "an alternate route to personal fulfilment and social leadership, that through charisma" (16). He concludes that charismatic women, for example Julian of Norwich and Joan of Arc, "represent a triumph of individualism over the collective restraints of traditional mediaeval society". Less extreme in celebrating the effects of economic and political deprivation, Bynum nevertheless holds that mysticism permitted the mediaeval woman to define herself in terms neither coined nor imposed by a society that attempted to restrain her gender:

Pious women elaborated a religiosity that was in no way moderate, a sense of self that was in no way secondary. Instead, immoderate and frantic, women mystics soared beyond all careful gradations and distinctions into the immediate presence of God. The extent to which women's spirituality was itself a rejection of a successful and moderate church, with its cosy domestication of women and

of the laity, can be seen in the alarm with which preachers viewed it.

(Holy Feast 240-41)¹⁷

Mysticism was thus frequently accompanied by a form of political autarchy. The heightened spiritual status of the visionary obtained for her a civic voice, sometimes tolerated even sanctioned, other times not. Unlike the eremitic virgins above, Apollinaria and Eugenia earn the privilege to function within society and to influence powerful and consequential sectors of the public. Such prestige prefigures that of Hildegard of Bingen, for example, who was abbess and nurse-physician of the double monastery of Mount St. Disibode and who professed for herself and womankind superiority to men in the particular case of mysticism.¹⁸ Like Hildegard, Apollinaria and Eugenia acquire much of their authority through divinely endowed medical prowess.

The saints' intercession between temporal and heavenly is played out in a complex fashion. Transvestism yields opportunities and rewards simultaneously with adversity and punishment. Apollinaria and Eugenia's accomplishments as physicians and workers of miracles earns them fame and respect as well as accusations of seduction. The narratives finally resolve the conflict in the revelation of the mystic's true gender identity. In both legends, the saint's male appearance belies a power that is manifestly feminine.

Like virginity, intercession establishes a relationship between the Virgin Mary and the temporal woman, albeit less prevalently. All women by virtue of birth have that which can be developed into consecrated virginity. Only the elect few can be mystic intercessors. Nevertheless, bodily purity remained a fundamental prerequisite for spiritual enhancement. Only Mary's purity and her puissant and immediate alliance with God

permit her to interpose for humanity with Him. Like virginal maternity, the tradition of *Maria Mediatrix* thus pivots on the dual natures of physical and metaphysical. Warner notes "Mary's peculiar qualities of bodily and spiritual integrity" as reasons why she is "the supreme medium of healing and rendering whole again" (293). And as Caroline Eckhardt observes, "the function of Mary as intercessor ... is part of the general mediaeval conceptualisation of her as the merciful mother of God, willing to intervene on behalf of sinners" (71). Joining the spousal relationship of wife with reason grants the mystic a form of rational spirituality that is particularly feminine.

Mother

Mysticism and virginity both eschew the physical body to liberate a rational spirit. Not all mediaeval women perceived themselves in ways that necessitated such categorical disunion, however. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, mediaeval women did not all define themselves as either body or spirit. Critics like Bynum and Warner have advanced the idea that women played a role that combined sexuality with spirituality and yet remained empowering and worthy of emulation. That role is mother: generator of life, nurturer, and protector. Margaret, Theodora and Marina, the saints of this category, all discover ways to access the benefits of motherhood without enduring its penalties. Disregarding the limitations imposed upon them by the Church Fathers, mediaeval women continued to construe themselves positively as mothers.

In spite of the patristic devaluation of motherhood as secondary to virginity, the metaphor of positive motherhood coloured the religious thought of the Middle Ages, sometimes to the point of veneration. On the one hand Paul held marriage and progeny an

alternative to virginity only because “better be married than burn with vain desire” (1 Cor. 7:9), Jerome decreed that to marry to have children is the “height of stupidity” (AJ I.47), and Augustine argued that God’s edict to multiply was relevant during “the first times of the human race, chiefly for the propagation of the People of God, through whom the Prince and Saviour of all people should both be prophesied of, and be born”, but that now “there is on all sides from out all nations an overflowing fullness of spiritual kindred” so that “they who wish to contract marriage only for the sake of children are to be admonished” (On the Good of Marriage 9). On the other hand, Mary’s motherhood was venerated as one of the originating points of a human God, Julian of Norwich formulated a notion of the trinity in which the second principle acted as “God our mother”, and the Cistercians relegated attributes of motherhood such as affectivity and nurturance to abbots and to God.¹⁹ Motherhood as an indicator of affection, humility, and protection was thus a prevalent image during the Middle Ages.

Patristic theology emphasised Mary’s maternity. Early Christianity venerated her virginity but complexly held her motherhood in no less an elevated position. As Warner notes, “while Mary provides a focus for the steeliest asceticism, she is also the ultimate of fertility symbols” (274). The virgin mother paradox gained steadily in importance, and from the beginnings of Christianity until the end of the fifteenth century much thought was devoted to the Immaculate Conception and the miracle of Mary’s virgin motherhood. The most important role in reproduction during the early Christian Middle Ages was believed to be played by the father.²⁰ Maternity, however, could not be fully despised because its highest symbol, Mary, is the mother of God and the locus of his humanity.

Warner encapsulates the biological enigma played out in Mary: "The Christian idea of the virgin birth gives rise to an ... interesting puzzle. There is no more matriarchal image than the Christian mother of God who bore a child without male assistance ... [Yet] it is highly paradoxical that this parthenogenic goddess fitted into the Aristotelian biological scheme." (47)

The biological dilemma was resolved in favour of the power of Mary. The divine yet earthly nature of Christ became a point of contention in the early Christianity, and as a result the role of Mary as mother grew in consequence. In the fourth century, the years before the inception of the transvestite saints, the primary threat to Christianity was Arianism. Arianism proclaimed Jesus to be an ordinary human being whom God had 'adopted'. To counteract the heresy, the orthodox Church laid emphasis on the divinity of Christ, so elevating into prominence the miracle of the virgin birth. "As the arguments raged over the empire, the mother of Christ was forced into a more and more prominent position. Her unbroken virginity suspended the law of nature, and thus manifested the presence of the divine, but her parturition of Christ served to prove his manhood. The virgin birth was the key to orthodox Christianity." (Warner 64)²¹

Mary's motherhood emphasised the divinely impossible as well as the biologically feasible. Due to the Immaculate Conception, Mary herself represents a juncture where metaphysical and physical converge. Conceived immaculately and thus a pure vessel for the child Christ, she became a sinless conduit for Sinlessness to enter the world. Able to bypass concupiscence, Mary ensured for herself and her Son the paradox of fully human

experiences without the degradations resulting from the original sin. Mary's motherhood was thus essential to Salvation in both its secular and miraculous natures.

Mary's temporal maternity paradoxically contrived to value asexuality concurrently with the fruit of sexuality. In modern ideology, the desexualised woman is a negative image because women are recognised as possessing a sexual identity, if not identical to the male, at least equal in value to it. In mediaeval terms, however, a desexualised mother is a positive image for it validates a woman's natural function while negating her concupiscent sexuality. The virgin mother conundrum thus desexualises a woman but does not, to coin a phrase, 'de-womanise' her. Therein lies one of the most intriguing paradoxes of early mediaeval Christianity: in order to become mother, a most positive feminine role, a woman must experience sexuality, the source of all negative femininity.

The temporality of Mary's motherhood is emphasised in her ability to share the biological function of breastfeeding with all mothers. Because of her favoured situation, Mary circumvents the punishments and humiliations that are associated with mundane mothering, namely sexual intercourse and labour. As evidenced by her iconography in the early centuries, however, Mary is allowed lactation, an act that encompasses both the miraculousness and naturalness of child-bearing: "Milk symbolised the full humanity of Jesus at one level, but it also belonged in an ancient and complex symbolic language. For milk was a crucial metaphor of the gift of life. Without it, a child had little or no chance of survival before the days of baby foods, and its almost miraculous appearance seemed as providential as the conception and birth of the child itself." (Warner 194)²²

While Warner defines lactation as a valuable biological function specifically because of an almost divine connotation, Bynum takes a socio-cultural position on the matter. While it indeed evokes the miraculous, breastfeeding in mediaeval quotidian culture further served to elevate the woman beyond the limitations of the virgin / whore dichotomy. Bynum asserts that breastfeeding imparts power because “through lactation, woman is the essential food provider and preparer”. (*Holy Feast* 190) Food preparation ensures survival and thus it offers women a political strategy to implement for or against family and authority. The thesis of *Holy Feast* focuses on the subversive authority gained by women in manipulating food, either by fasting, donating it to the poor, or refusing to cook it, and posits that the relationship between women and food provides an “alternative to and a critique of the asymmetry between the sexes in the ordinary workaday world” (279). As well as being the weapons of insurrection, food and feeding could also cement familial relationships. By cooking for a family a woman could enter into a partnership with her husband, the food provider: “One of the strongest social links between male and female lay in the fact that wife or servant cooked what husband and lord provided and in the even more consequential fact that mother’s womb and mother’s milk guaranteed survival for the next generation.” (277) Motherhood as food and nurturance thus granted some measure of power to the temporal woman.

The pinnacle of female behaviour was thus contradictory. Virginity impressed upon the woman the duty to limit and contain the body and the sexual, while the demands of biology and every-day life offered her a valuable role that necessitated the experience of body and sexuality, and which was illustrated in the highest example of spiritual

womanhood. While these conflicting demands were impossible to fulfil in reality, literature found ways of expressing them. Saints like Marina and Theodora are offered the rewards of motherhood without having to experience the punishments of intercourse or labour. Because of the manipulation of narrative events their children are neither their own biological issue nor adopted. The male disguise again allows the saints to fulfil the conflicting demands of mediaeval femininity.

*

Thus in spite of the patristic equation of spirituality with masculine rationality, mediaeval women and society found fictional yet real ways to describe the spirituality of women in feminine images. Bynum has demonstrated that mediaeval women develop feminine “social links” into powerful spiritual images and that their religious symbols were often extensions of their quotidian life. While the feminine symbolism of feeding and lactation was used by men writing for men, for example the Cistercians²³, women do not evince a corresponding need to co-opt specifically male language to represent their spirituality: “Gender reversals were not crucial in women’s religiosity.” (*Holy Feast* 291, original emphasis) Moreover, as a whole, “symbolic reversals are less important in women’s spirituality than in men’s”(280). Rather, women “represented the religiously inspired soul in metaphors that suggest a profound continuity between [their] biological and cultural role in the world and women’s spiritual vocations”. (281)

Contradictorily, while she insists that women could and did define their religious selves in feminine images, Bynum refuses that honour to the transvestite saints. She argues that these saints reveal not the validation of the feminine but rather the interests of

male fantasy: "Male hagiographers and chroniclers were fascinated by stories of women's cross dressing in order to enter religious houses, probably to the point of fabricating such instances." (287) There is no evidence, however, that the saints' legends were authored by men. Instead the *vitae* are mostly folklore, and the saints' cults were constituted by both genders. As Hippolyte Delehaye establishes in the seminal work on hagiographic literature, The Legends of the Saints, writers on the subject tend to commit the "gross error" of placing "an exaggerated confidence in the biographers of the saints ... without ... taking the trouble to specify the biographer referred to, show[ing] clearly that people implicitly attribute the highest qualities of the historian to every member of the fraternity" (216).²⁴ Bynum's dismissal of the transvestite saints as male inventions for a male psychology must, therefore, be tempered

Mysteriously, in the same discussion Bynum argues that because female spirituality did not turn on gender inversion, cross dressing was "primarily a practical device" that allowed women

to escape their families, to avoid the dangers of rape and pillage, or to take on male roles such as soldier, pilgrim or hermit. But once freed from the world by convent walls or hermitage, by tertiary status, by the practice of continence, by mystical inspiration, or even by miraculous inedia, women spoke of their lives in female images. They saw themselves, metaphorically speaking, not as warriors for Christ, but as brides, as pregnant virgins, as housewives, as mothers of God. (291)

Bynum's approach on holy transvestism seems to be contradictory. Whereas she observes that even in male attire women could and did define themselves in feminine images, she takes pains not to extend the courtesy to the saints under question. Once liberated from constraints by the male disguise, however, the saints demonstrably elect to continue their womanhood in the roles of virgins, healers or mothers.

Before analysing each of the saints according to the above three categories, one more observation is obligatory: the narratives intriguingly refract the three positive images into negative versions. Virgins, vanquishers of concupiscent sexuality are inverted in sinners or whores; mystics, personifications of spirituality empowered to commune and intercede with God are inverted in irrational, intellectually feeble women; and mothers, nurturers and sustainers of the young and vulnerable are inverted in lustful, sexually active women. Virginity, mysticism and motherhood all require transcendence of self, of body to a certain extent, and rejection of selfishness. All three positive categories are present in Mary. She is virgin, she is *Maria Mediatrix*, and she is mother. The inversions are also interconnected in their reference to the body, the sexual, and the lack of rational control over the appetites. Holy transvestism allows the eschewing of the negative characteristics of the feminine to make possible the fulfilment of the positive. Each saint thus manifests one or more of the positive definitions, while her legend points to the inversion she is repudiating.

The saints' narratives thus contrive to validate female spirituality over and against feminine depravity in part by providing a 'compare and contrast' model. To understand why transvestite women saints became popular and canonised, both in the Church and in

literature, one must therefore understand the theme itself. As previously indicated, the stories are neither identical nor uncomplex, as a brief summary will reveal. I have divided the saints into the previously established categories: virgins or whores, mystic intercessors or irrational women, and mothers as nourishers and providers, or mothers who are guilty of concupiscence. The divisions can further be entitled saints who become hermits, saints who become healers, and saints who become mothers.²⁵

Virgins or Whores: Saints who become Hermits

Anastasia: Anastasia was an Egyptian patrician from Constantinople who dedicated her virginity to God. When she became the involuntary object of the Emperor Justinian's sexual attention and the subsequent jealousy of the Empress, Anastasia fled to Quito, near Alexandria. There she sheltered in a convent until she heard that the widowed Justinian had renewed his search for her. To avoid him she escaped to Scetis where she encountered the abbot Daniel. After hearing her story, he "without delay ... gave her the habit of a monk and the necessary instruction for becoming a hermit" (Lives of the Saints I 546), in the process assigning her the name of Anastasius the Eunuch. Anastasia dwelt in a cave for twenty-eight years, isolated excepted for a disciple who brought her food and water. When she perceived that she was dying, the saint requested Daniel to have her buried without revealing her true gender. The Acta Sanctorum adds the detail that the follower who placed her in her tomb discovered the truth nevertheless, and that Daniel explained to him that disguise was the only way for Anastasia to escape the Emperor's lust.²⁶

Euphrosyne: Euphrosyne was the daughter of Paphnutius of Alexandria who had long been childless. Paphnutius had high expectations for his beautiful daughter and engaged her at a young age to a wealthy young man. Initially Euphrosyne seemed contented, but she changed her mind after witnessing the monastic life on a journey with her father. As a result she donated her jewellery and ceased to wash her face “in order to make herself less attractive” (Lives I 4). Fearing that her father would “find her and carry her off by force” if she entered a convent, she enlisted the help of a monk to escape to a monastery disguised as the eunuch Smaragdus. Unfortunately the beauty of the eunuch proved too much of a temptation for the brother monks, and the abbot was requested to order Smaragdus to live in isolation.

Unable to locate his daughter, Paphnutius petitioned the abbot to pray and fast for her safe return. The unsuccessful abbot recommended Paphnutius to visit the serene Smaragdus, thus allowing Euphrosyne the opportunity of consoling her unsuspecting father by reassuring him that his daughter had placed God above her earthly parents. Paphnutius found much solace with Smaragdus and continued to visit him over the next thirty-eight years until, at death’s door, Euphrosyne revealed her true identity and urged her father to attend to her burial in order to keep her secret intact. One of the monks overheard Paphnutius lamenting his daughter, however, and shared the knowledge with the brotherhood. During her burial a monk who was blind in one eye had his vision miraculously restored. The miracle impressed Paphnutius to the point of enclosing himself in his daughter’s cell until his own death, ten years later.

Athanasia: Athanasia was “happily married” (Lives IV 69) to Andronicus, an Alexandrian who lived in Antioch. Although technically not a virgin, Athanasia belongs to this category by virtue of the fact that she symbolically retrieved and re-enacted her virginity. After the birth of their two children the couple agreed to share a chaste marriage, and Athanasia spent her remaining years denying the pleasure of the flesh and the temptations of the temporal world. As a result of such asceticism, and after both children died on the same day, the couple donated their belongings to the poor and left Antioch on a pilgrimage to Egypt. In Scetis Daniel “sent St. Andronicus to the monastery of Tabenna, and St. Athanasia to be an anchoress in the wilderness, dressed in the habit of a man. And so they lived for twelve years.”

On a pilgrimage to Jerusalem twelve years later Andronicus befriended Athanasius, a “beardless old monk” (69), who was actually his wife in disguise. Although she recognised him, he did not her, and she did not reveal her identity. Unwilling to be parted upon their return to Egypt, they entered a monastery near Alexandria where “a cell was found there for Father Athanasius near to that of Andronicus”. They spent the remainder of their lives there, dying a few days apart.

Pelagia: Pelagia (also known as Margarito or Margarita because of her beautiful pearls) was a dancer and prostitute in Antioch. Like Athanasia, Pelagia also reasserts her lost virginity. The Bishop Veronus, upon seeing Pelagia, wept copiously for the loss of such beauty to sin. However, he was also severely tempted by her loveliness. After hearing Veronus preach, Pelagia converted and petitioned for a private audience. Fearing his weakness for her, he denied her request and wrote to advise her to attend him only in

company. When she finally came to him as one in a crowd, he blessed and baptised her. To indicate rupture with her former life Pelagia bequeathed her belongings to charity, donned a hair shirt and male clothing, and retired to a small cave where she spent the rest of her life disguised as a hermit. There she achieved a reputation as the good brother Pelagius the Eunuch. Many years later Veronus dispatched a deacon to visit her, and she requested him to ask Veronus to pray for her because he is a "true apostle of Christ" (Golden Legend 612). When the deacon returned three days later, Pelagia was dead. At her burial her true identity was revealed.²⁷

*

A superficial reading of the saints of the first category may infer that they improve their piety when they don male attire for it is then that they become hermits or monks. More significantly, it is then that they achieve fame for the depth of their devotion. Aside from Pelagia, however, the saints' dedication to the spiritual predates their 'masculinisation'. Counterfeiting the male rather grants them opportunities to avoid constraints imposed upon their femininity by others. Anastasia eludes the whoredom to which Justinian intends to subject her, Euphrosyne avoids the marriage her father plans for her, and Athanasia circumvents the monastery's gender barrier to share her life with her husband. Pelagia alone inverts her life style when she inverts her gender. By assuming the persona of the hermit-eunuch Pelagius she essentially turns upside down her character of the materialist-prostitute Pelagia. However, subsequent to the disguise, all the women, even Pelagia, sustain fundamentally female roles.

Anastasia's assumption of masculine appearance is prompted solely by Justinian's unfettered sexuality. It enables her to remain virgin (an *exemplum* of successful womanhood), and to avoid whoredom (the representation of failed womanhood *par excellence*). The disguise, however, is but a thin veneer, for even as Anastasius she is assimilated as a eunuch. Eunuchry will be discussed below, but it is essential to note here that Anastasia's inherent and self-chosen asexuality manifests itself even under a disguise that diametrically opposes her gender.

If Anastasia were to continue in female appearance, she would eventually be compelled to surrender her conception of interior femininity and her autonomy and authority to construct such definitions. To remain true to her notion of womanhood, therefore, she is pressed into camouflaging it from assault. Manifestly for Anastasia the male disguise is not an advancement in piety but rather a device that enables her to safeguard it and herself. In fact, Justinian's wanton adultery inverts Anastasia's asceticism and emphasises the idea that men are not more ontologically masters of their appetites than women. Anastasia's life as a hermit-eunuch becomes a metaphor for her life as a virgin. In both cases her existence is distanced from worldliness and physicality: "For twenty eight years ... [Anastasia] never beheld the face of man, but gave herself up to prayer and mortification" (*Lives* I 547). By disassembling the male Anastasia paradoxically remains virgin and succeeds as a woman.

Euphrosyne's transvestism also preserves her self-defined role of dedicated virgin. Her disguise functions in a similar manner to Anastasia's, permitting her to assert her self-elected femininity and repudiate that imposed upon her by [male] others. Her feminine

persona is doubly maintained for as well as insuring her virginity, she exchanges her role of daughter for that of mother when she undertakes the care and comfort of her father. The inversion of visible gender is thus undermined, ironically, by another inversion, one in which the daughter becomes mother of the man. Anson analyses the situation with some liberty when he claims that "Paphnutius' loss of the daughter he treated as property leads him to rediscover her as his spiritual father, so that through his loss the parent becomes as a child" (16). First, the legend does not make explicit Paphnutius' treatment of his daughter "as property". Rather, the reader is given to understand that he loved his daughter greatly and desired only her prosperity: "The little girl was fascinating and marvellously beautiful, and because of the joy she caused to her parents, they named her Euphrosyne." (Lives I 4) Second, although the parent-child inversion is significant, Anson ought to have accorded Euphrosyne the status of motherhood rather than fatherhood. For even as Smaragdus Euphrosyne is, as are all women, the comforter, the sustainer, and the emotional side of the reason / emotion duality. As such, although he initially turns to men, only she is able to solace her grieving father. The Lives, in fact, states that "the Greeks call St. Euphrosyne 'Our mother', and pay her great honour". (4) It is significant that a cross dressed female saint generates devotion which penetrates the disguise and highlights her affective femaleness.²⁸

Moreover, the monks who like Euphrosyne have opted for the solitary life are less able than she to overcome the behaviour and temptations of the outside world. They are less successful in controlling their weaker natures than she. Their monastic life is therefore one of continued struggle while Euphrosyne's is peaceful and comforting.

Evidently rationality and asceticism are not more easily accessible to men than to women. Euphrosyne cannot be said to become male in her spirituality when she dons male clothing for her legend reveals that male spirituality is not devoid of failure.

Athanasia also fulfils a mediaeval definition of womanhood by simulating the male. Her transvestism is again a ruse to achieve a practical goal, that of living in companionship with her spouse. Even as Athanasius, the saint plays the female role of wife to the man she married and loves. That this 'second' marriage is sexless is a boon in mediaeval terms and moreover reflects the status of their 'first' marriage. Athanasia's chaste wedlock is furthermore analogous to her own, personal state of sexual transcendence. As she has conquered the limitations of a sexual identity, so too has her marriage exceeded the boundaries placed on love by the physical.

Athanasia does not transpose genders in a valuation of manhood over womanhood. Rather, she forges a method by which she may be both virgin and wife in a community that excludes women. The author of the *vita* implicitly condones the saint's artifice by emphasising the couple's mutual love: after the second pilgrimage, Andronicus and Athanasius "realised that they had a great regard and affection one for another and were unwilling to be parted" (Lives IV 69). In the monastery the saints' cells are thus adjacent to each other, and their affectionate intimacy is confirmed when Athanasia's death is imminent. At death's door the saint weeps for the soon to be widowed Andronicus: "I am grieved for my father Andronicus ... for he will miss me." The narrative consistently manifests the couple's successful and enduring marriage. Athanasia's male disguise therefore allows her to be non-sexual yet wife to the man she loves and who loves her.

Pelagia poses more difficulty for our reading for initially she is vain and sexually incontinent, in fact, a traditionally irrational mediaeval woman. Unlike the other saints, her disguise seems indeed to signal her 'unwomaning'. By exchanging her gowns and pearls for a hair shirt and male clothing, Pelagia trades the symbols of vain femininity for those of an austere masculinity. The narrative element of Veronus' lust, however, functions to prevent the interpretation that Pelagia's transvestism is a passage from cupidinous female to rational male. The Veronus incident reminds us that all human beings are sinners, regardless of gender. Enraptured by Pelagia's beauty, Veronus reveals his irrational weakness: "Tempt not my humility, I beseech thee, for I am a sinful man." (Golden Legend 611) Veronus is male, Christian, and moreover a bishop, a representative of the Church authority elect. In spite of the trappings of superior intellect, he is as guilty of the propensity to sin as is Pelagia, female, pagan, whore, and a representative of the unredeemed masses. The rational spirituality supposedly indicated by Pelagia's male disguise is hence rendered void by her own biography.

Pelagia's legend further compels the reader to reassess the illusory significance of male attire: just as masculinity is deprived of its ontological superiority, so too femininity is not delineated as naturally inferior. Pelagia's feminine strength in fact grants her victory over Evil. After conversion and baptism but before disguise the saint encounters the Devil who entreats her to regress to sin. "Desert me not," he implores her, "lest I be made a thing of scorn to the Christians!" (612) When she makes the sign of the cross and blows on him, "he disappeared forthwith", however. If there is virility in the life of Pelagia it is conspicuous here, in her triumph as a woman over Satan. The Devil, in

fact, addresses her as "Lady Margaret", a reference to her criminal femininity, and offers her her heart's desire to restore her old ways. His exhortations contemplate her return to the life of female fleshliness, but her transcendence of sin rather banishes him from her life permanently. Pelagia metaphorically rightens her femininity: where it formerly sinned, it now abjures the symbol of all sin.

The male disguise is further qualified in its virility in her persona of Pelagius the eunuch. Although initially eunuchry may be interpreted as authorial concern for the verisimilitude of the narrative, a device by which to explain the perpetually beardless state of Pelagius, more profoundly it also provides a key to the eventual decoding of the paradox. In a somewhat ironic way, Pelagia and the other saints of this category are indeed eunuchs, in as much as they are not male; they are also eunuchs in a higher sense, however, that of having transcended sexuality altogether. As Patlagean avers, "l'eunuque participe de la virilité spirituelle sans être assujetti à une catégorie sexuelle, il transcende la distinction des sexes, dont il est libéré". (606)

Eunuchry functions on the dual levels of the physical and spiritual. The three mediaeval criteria of eunuchry are birth, compulsion, and choice: one is born a eunuch, made so by another, or makes oneself so. (Robert P. Miller) The first two criteria, based respectively on Deuteronomy 23 and Isaiah 56: 3-5, are of less value than the third, based on Matthew 19:12. For the Middle Ages, the conscious and deliberate act of surpassing sexuality is indicative of achieving a spirituality that is unhampered by temporal limitation; exceeding the physical permits the self-made eunuch's emancipation of the spiritual mind. Miller cites Rupertus who comments that the self-made are

"without doubt ... those laudable eunuchs to whom, according to the aforesaid Prophet [Matthew], the Lord will give 'a place to in his house and in his walls'" (*De Trinitate et operibus ejus*; qtd. in Miller 224-25).

Eunuchry and virginity thus coincide in that asexuality becomes second, perhaps even first, nature to the devotee. The cross dressed Pelagia personifies the integral transcendence of concupiscent nature. The Golden Legend underscores her asceticism in terms which evoke the rejection of her physicality: she "served God with fasting and self denial" (612). The saint becomes, in effect, neither man nor woman but an example of the more complete achievement of the ideal defeat of the sexual self. She is spiritually Virgin/Eunuch, freed from all sexual definitions. In the Pelagia figure, paradox is achieved when the whore becomes the fullest representation of the Virgin.

Mystic Intercessors or Irrational Beings: Saints who become Healers

Apollinaria: Apollinaria was promised in marriage by her father the emperor. Opting for the monastic life she fled to Scetis, disguised as a man, where she dwelt temporarily in a swamp. During her sojourn her beauty was destroyed by voracious mosquitoes. One day God's voice advised her that when asked her name she was to reply Dorotheus. Further guidance led her to the monastery in Scetis where she became postulant to St. Macarius. There she was acclaimed for her miraculous cures.

When the Emperor's second daughter was possessed by a demon she was sent to the famed Dorotheus for her cure. Dorotheus exorcised the demon but it later returned, causing the sister to appear pregnant. The Emperor believed Dorotheus to be the father and summoned him from Scetis. At court Apollinaria disclosed her true identity but

requested to return to Scetis, her secret intact. She died shortly thereafter, and her true gender was then revealed. She continued to perform miracles posthumously and to be venerated for it.

Eugenia: Eugenia was the beautiful daughter of Philip, duke of Alexandria, who governed Egypt on behalf of Rome. After conversion and wishing to avoid an arranged marriage, she dressed like a man and fled her home. Before entering the monastery she went to the Bishop Helenus for baptism. Helenus had been warned in a prophetic dream that Eugenia was not male. He did not condemn the disguise, however, for he was convinced that she was “behaving as a man” by guarding her chastity and declining the attractions of a more worldly existence: “Justly you call yourself Eugenius, for you are behaving like a man and may your heart be strengthened for your faith in Christ.” (*Acta Sanctorum*; qtd. and translated by Anson 22)²⁹

Eugenia performed miraculous cures in the abbey and “led so holy a life that at the last she was made abbot of the same” (*Lives* IV 612). Melanthia, a prominent woman, became besotted by Eugenius and attempted to entice the beautiful youth. When he rejected her she accused him to the Duke of seducing her. The Duke, Eugenia’s father, ordered punishments for all the Christians, including Eugenius. During the public ceremony, however, Eugenia disclosed her identity. The revelation caused the whole court to convert, and a fire consequently destroyed Melanthia’s house. Later Eugenia’s father was murdered for his rebellion against Rome, and after other adventures and miracles, during which time Eugenia lived as a woman, she and her mother were martyred for the same crime as her father.

*

Both women of the second category possess curative powers. By healing they sustain the well-being of others, thus enacting the second of the mediaeval valued female roles under discussion here. Like the saints of the first group, Apollinaria and Eugenia continue to exercise their femininity even under disguise.

As in the first category, the saints' disguise is not uncomplexly a positive sign of rational asexuality; although the saints cross dress to flee destructively sexual perceptions of them as women, they are ironically re-sexualised as men. Furthermore, while masculine appearance incurs adversity in the form of accusations of seduction, the return to the feminine persona extracts them from it. By revealing to the court and their fathers that they are women - long lost daughters, in fact - they extricate themselves from a situation which has sexualised them against their will.

Apollinaria and Eugenia's *vitae* thus present extreme examples of dynamic metaphoric transference. The male costume initially liberates the women, then subsequently encumbers them with tribulations. Their femaleness initially poses limitations to conquer, then later extricates them from adversity. In both cases the limitations (planned marriages to pagan men), and the adversity (charges of seduction), are sexual. The metaphor of sexuality is here highly ironic and paradoxical: gendered existences are dynamically related - neither is sufficient, yet both cannot co-exist. In the final analysis, however, and in spite of the multi-faceted paradox, the saint's particular brand of femininity emerges victorious.

The conflict between male and female is rendered more complex by the struggle between positive and negative womanhood. The positive *exempla* offered in the saints are counterpointed by the negative portrayals of other women. Both legends depict intellectually feeble and sexually controlled women who function to highlight the inversely rational and ascetic saint. Apollinaria's sister represents weak, sexual and vain womanhood, as is evident in her possession by the demon and her resulting appearance. When the sister's body swells it becomes a physical indicator of her vulnerable femininity. It is significant that the visible sign of feminine weakness is rooted in a bodily function that remains exclusively in the domain of a woman's sexual life. Apollinaria, the virile, virginal, and spiritual doctor, is the inversion of her sister, and thus she ransoms her from evil and herself from charges of seduction.

Apollinaria's rescue is predicated on the strength of her femininity. Only when she declares her true gender does the demon permanently leave her sister. Her dismissal of the devil and the restoration of her sister to her rightful virginal state emulates Pelagia's redeemed womanhood. The success of Apollinaria's womanhood is confirmed when after her demise she continues to perform miraculous cures. Apollinaria's disposition is victorious: it dismisses the devil, it restores two daughters to the emperor, and it cures the ill.

The Apollinaria legend has been interpreted as womanhood denied and suppressed rather than womanhood restored. Indeed, Apollinaria loses her beauty when she is ravaged by mosquitoes in the swamp. Critics like Anson interpret the loss as betokening the surpassing of vain and weak femininity, the self-same femininity that has made her

sister vulnerable to the devil. Anson refers to Delcourt when he terms Apollinaria's disfigurement as "self-castration" and then proceeds to argue that "as if this were not sufficient vengeance upon womanhood, she then disguises her sex and enters a monastery" (20). But Apollinaria is not bent on extracting vengeance upon womanhood any more than those other 'self-castrators', the eunuchs, are bent on extracting vengeance on manhood. Rather, when the vain version of womanhood is removed there yet remains another. This other version is not manhood, but womanhood redefined and self-defined. The power that comes from personal discipline, a mystical power that makes possible the impossible, is accompanied by the power to be fully a woman, a capable care-taker and a strong redeemer of others.

In Eugenia's legend the inadequate woman is wilfully wicked, unlike Apollinaria's vulnerable and ineffective sister. Melanthia doubles her sin when she deliberately incriminates Eugenius. She exercises her carnality and she lies, portraying both the perverse yet powerful hold of female lust and the debility of female rationality. Because Eugenia is posited against Melanthia, the former is manifestly an example of desexualised and rational womanhood. Again, the revelation that she is a woman and a long lost daughter saves Eugenia from a situation in which her masculine disguise had trapped her.

The strength of Eugenia's revelation is cause for the conversion of the entire court, thus endowing her with the privilege of symbolically leading it into the new life of Christianity: "She rent her coat and showed to him [Philip, her father] that she was a woman and daughter of him that held her in prison, and so she converted her father unto

the Christian faith.” (Lives IV 612) Euphrosyne’s theme of the child-becoming-parent is once more apparent here. In exposing her female body to her father, thereby bringing into being his new Christian self, Eugenia symbolically gives birth to a new Philip. Her strength, then, is maternal, mystic and feminine. Her femininity is confirmed in her future life when, in female attire, she establishes convents and aids other women, especially virgins, to lead the desexualised, ascetic life.

By becoming conduits between God and humankind, between miracle and nature, Apollinaria and Eugenia become healers and caretakers - positive aspects of mediaeval womanhood. Like the virgin saints yet unlike the perfidious women in their own narratives, they continue to be validated as women even when disguised.

Nurturers or Copulators: Saints who become Mothers

Margaret: Margaret was of noble parentage. On her wedding night she was struck with horror at the thought of wedlock, perceiving “all the joys of this life as dung” (Golden Legend 613). To avoid her husband she cropped her hair, put on male clothing, and escaped to a monastery where she lived as the brother Pelagius. Her piety was rewarded when she was appointed Prior of a neighbouring convent. When the portress of the convent began to show signs of pregnancy “such shame and grief beset all the virgins and monks of both monasteries” (613) that they immediately accused Pelagius. Margaret was consequently enclosed in a cave and allowed only bread and water for sustenance. When she sensed her impending death, Margaret wrote letters revealing her true gender and clearing her name.

Theodora: Theodora was a married woman from Alexandria who yielded to a lover after initially rejecting him. The subsequent guilt drove her to cut her hair short, borrow some of her husband's apparel, and flee to a monastery. There, as Theodore, she performed the lowliest tasks and became known for her healing powers.

Frustrated by losing such a promising candidate, the devil set out to destroy Theodora. While Theodore was staying at an inn, the host's daughter proposed to spend the night with him, but he refused. When she became pregnant, however, the innkeeper's daughter blamed Theodore. Rather than refuting the allegations made to the abbot, Theodore only "pleaded for pardon" (Golden Legend 541). Instead, the abbot "laid the child [a boy] upon [Theodore's] shoulder and drove him out of the monastery". Theodore lived for seven years outside the monastery, looking after 'his son'. During that period the devil again tried to tempt and terrify Theodora into sin but she remained stoic. After seven years the abbot readmitted her and the child into the monastery. Two years later she perceived that she was dying and commended the monastic life to her son. Immediately after her death the abbot received a vision which informed him that Theodore was actually a woman and innocent of the crime of which she had been accused. When the vision was confirmed the abbot revealed the story to the innkeeper. Theodora's child later became abbot of the monastery.

Marina: Marina was the only daughter of a Bythnian called Eugenius. After being widowed Eugenius wished to enter a monastery. In order to take Marina with him he disguised her as a boy, Marinus. Following her father's death Marina continued at the monastery, performing servile tasks like fetching wood. Oftentimes she would have to

venture far and was forced to spend the night at an inn. After one such stay, the host's daughter, who had been seduced by a knight, blamed Marinus for her pregnancy. When questioned by the abbot Marinus only replied "I am a sinner" (Golden Legend 318), and was thus expelled from the monastery.

When the child was weaned from his mother, he was given to Marinus. After dwelling for five years on the outskirts of the monastery, Marinus and the child were readmitted because of the former's "humility and his patience". Back in the fold Marinus performed the most "menial" tasks and led a patient and devout life. After her death Marina's true identity was revealed. The accusing mother was then possessed by a devil who released her only when she had confessed her sin and prayed at the saint's sepulchre.

*

This group of saints is, in fact, the richest of the three. The enigma of mediaeval womanhood receives its fullest articulation when unsexual women are offered the rewards of maternity. In essence, Margaret, Theodora, and Marina surrender their womanhood only to have reconfirmed in motherhood. They enjoy the fruit of sexuality without being carnal. The impossible of a sexually innocent mother here becomes translated into a possible. The language of hagiography, a language that permits the miraculous or irrational to exist really, is the most adequate vehicle to asseverate an authentic and valid version of what existentially cannot exist: a natural phenomenon that has avoided and surpassed nature.

In the *vitae* of the third category, the literary encodement of the fantastic makes possible the earthly representation of the marian paradox. As argued above, Mary's

miraculous parturition of God renders her both a woman unlike others and yet the paradigm of womanhood. Her situation is unique miracle and unfeasible mundane *exemplum*. Margaret, Theodora, and Marina succeed in resolving such unfeasibility however. They do so not, like Mary, via divine intervention, but rather through a manipulation of narrative events that make practicable a metaphoric maternity. Again, the paradox is complex: a virgin who has no need of divine intervention in order to become mother is impossible in nature yet viable in the fictional sphere, and yet hagiography was not perceived as fiction by the early Middle Ages. The legends thus foreground then unravel the frictions between real and figurative, nature and miracle, virgin and mother, and woman and man.

To solve the conflict of mediaeval womanhood Margaret enacts Mary and her Son. Margaret both "engenders" a child without experiencing concupiscence and redeems the biological mother by becoming her scapegoat. When the mother's sin becomes transferred onto Margaret, the latter is forced to pay the price, or rather to do the penance, in spite of her innocence. The Golden Legend states that initially Margaret's career as a powerful spiritual guide was respected by all: "She blamelessly nourished her charges in soul and in body, while the devil in his envy sought means of hindering her prosperous career and bringing her into disrepute." (613) And yet when the portress' pregnancy became obvious the shame of both monasteries impelled them "without trial or examination [to] condemn Pelagius as the guilty man" and later to banish him to a cave. Margaret's Christological qualities, first as spiritual care-taker and leader, and second in suffering an unmerited and severe punishment in order to repay another's sin, are

confirmed when “Pelagius bore all these things with patience, nor was troubled thereby” (614). In a final *imitatio* of Christ, Pelagius’ penalty results in his death and the subsequent revelation of his innocence.

Significantly, Margaret’s womanhood is what eventually redeems her in the eyes of society. Sensing her impending death, she composes a letter that posits her gender as the badge of her innocence:

I am of noble birth, and was called Margaret in the world; but
 in order safely to cross the sea of temptation, I called myself
 Pelagius and was taken for a man. I did this not for a lie and
 a deception, as my deeds have shown. From the false accusation
 I have gained virtue, and have done penance albeit I was innocent. Now I ask that the holy sisters may bury me, whom
 men have not known; and that my death may show forth the
 innocence of my life, when women acknowledge the virginity
 of one whom slanderers accused as an adulterer. (614)

Margaret articulates her virtue in feminine terms. In spite of the virile fortitude generated by the injustice, Margaret is a woman.

Indeed, Margaret’s meek acquiescence to a destiny designated to her by society is conventionally female. Her portrayal of patience and humility also allies her further with the Christ who willingly sacrificed himself for the redemption of humankind. Margaret’s humility is female, but it is also Christ-like. Women, as Bynum suggests, “strove not to eradicate body but to merge their own humiliating and painful flesh with that flesh whose

agony, espoused by choice, was salvation. Luxuriating in Christ's physicality, they found there the lifting up - the redemption - of their own." (Holy Feast 246)

The combination of Mary and Christ reinforces and sheds new light on the metaphor of androgyny as well: Margaret is male like Jesus, female like Mary. The saints of the first two categories are more female than male in their chosen vocation. Though Margaret chooses virginity over marriage, unlike them she is perhaps the perfect living balance between the two genders. Ironically it is her death and not her life that validates her femininity and her innocence.

Theodora and Marina also exhibit attributes characteristic of both Jesus and his mother. Both women are Christ-like in their self-sacrifice on behalf of another and in their redemption of their child-charge from his biological mother's criminality. Marina also ultimately redeems the mother. After the saint's death, the sinning mother confesses and through Marina's intercessions "was made whole at once" (Golden Legend 318). Also, like Margaret, both Theodora and Marina are humble and endure undeserved punishments and humiliations.

More significant than their *imitatio* of Christ, however, Theodora and Marina are also archetypes of the Virgin. They are more completely maternal than Margaret because they *de facto* feed, nurture, and raise the child. They do not suffer the humiliating processes of fallen reproduction and yet they become mothers. The point is worth belabouring because these two saints discover the code to deciphering the conundrum of mediaeval femininity. Unlike other women they may enjoy the results of sexual intercourse without having to suffer its inconveniences; without losing their virginity,

without experiencing concupiscence, and without the punishing pain of labour, they 'engender' children.

Theodora's is a fascinating case, for although she commits the sin of adultery, her repentance is rewarded with a virgin birth. The saint counterfeits the male and conceals herself in an all-male monastery not only to elude her husband's efforts to find her but also to counterbalance the sin she has committed as a woman. By repudiating her womanhood she attempts to ransom herself from sin. Yet the form the penance finally takes casts her in the role of mother, a role that validates her as a woman, and moreover one she did not experience in her previous married life.

Theodora is both punished and rewarded for her womanhood. She is a woman seduced who becomes, for narrative purposes, metaphorically a male seducer. She does penance for the latter, of which she is not guilty, and *ipso facto* redeems the innkeeper's daughter, who is in a sense Theodora's former self. Thus Theodora's sin of adultery is transferred to the host's daughter and then back onto the saint. By paying the price for the other woman's indiscretion, Theodora symbolically redeems her, herself and perhaps even the guilty males, the man who originally seduced Theodora and the man who dishonoured the child's true mother. Anson suggests that "by bearing the shame of another woman's fornication, the saint make a perfect *quid pro quo* atonement for her own adultery - satisfying exactly the stringent mathematics of sacrifice. Thus, throughout the legend the transvestite disguise takes on new meaning as an expression of the heroine's proper psychology." (32) Unfortunately, Anson does not proceed to the next logical conclusion: Theodora's male disguise is an opportunity not only to pay the price of fallen femininity,

but also to reassert it. Her transvestism generates a redemption that exceeds her mistake. By delivering the child's biological parents and her seducer, Theodora guides them, even metaphorically gives birth to them, into a new and innocent life.

The saint's converted womanhood is confirmed when she banishes the devil in a manner that echoes Pelagia's triumph. The Golden Legend recounts that "unable to bear [her] holiness" Satan appeared to upbraid Theodora in terms which specifically raise the issue of her failed womanhood: "Most degraded and adulterous of women, thou hast abandoned thy husband to come here and to heap contempt upon me ... if I fail to make thee deny thy crucified, say that I exist not." (541) When Theodora signs the cross, however, "instantly the Devil vanished". In spite of her adultery, the saint dismisses the Enemy and due to his own ultimatum denies his existence.

The most significant aspect of Theodora's revised femininity is her maternity. Theodora is presented with a baby that is biologically not hers yet symbolically her own. As such she is the primary, and through narrative manipulation the unique, nourisher and protector of the child. Her legend accentuates her [feminine] role of food provider and nurturer. After being expelled from the monastery the saint "nurtured the child with the milk of the flocks" (541). Da Voragine's inclusion of the detail subtly lends weight to Theodora's maternity, allowing her a metaphoric breastfeeding. With the ability to nourish a child she has not borne, Theodora again redeems her adultery and atones for her specifically female fault with a specifically female function. She is offered one of the highest rewards of mediaeval womanhood to mitigate one of the basest crimes of which women were thought capable. In a continuation of the marian elements, the saint's son

becomes a respected and venerated holy man, abbot of the monastery that had proven to be the site of Theodora's salvation.

Marina similarly re-enacts aspects of the Virgin. Possibly, because unlike Theodora she is not a sinner, her marian role is more absolute. Though innocent, Marina nevertheless embraces her exile with fortitude and resilience. Her monastic existence has precluded her from sin, and the only crime of which she may possibly be culpable is her gender deception. The legend, however, bears no signal of authorial blame or of sensations of guilt on Marina's part. Moreover, of all nine saints, only she does not personally elect the transvestite disguise. That decision is instead imposed upon her by her monk-father and thus divested of any nuance of feminine deception. Furthermore, references to her imposture are stated almost dispassionately by the text: "When she was twenty-seven years of age, her father, feeling the approach of death, called her to his bedside and told her never to reveal to anyone that she was a woman. The maiden oftentimes went out to the fields with the plough and the oxen, etc. ..." (Golden Legend 317)

Marina's non-justified acquiescence in her punishment brings the marian metaphor into sharper focus. Her compliance with a pre-ordained destiny -- Marinus "admitted his guilt, saying: 'I am a sinner'" (317-8) -- echoes the submission to a higher authority explicit in Mary's reply to the Angel Gabriel, "I am the Lord's servant; as you have spoken, so be it" (Luke 1:38). The annunciation theme common to both Mary and Marina's lives contains a highly informative reversal. Mary, a virgin, embraces her divinely decreed role and becomes a mother while remaining virgin. Marina, a virgin,

concurr with the future determined by her father and [disguised] as a man subsequently becomes a mother, thereby achieving virgin motherhood.

Marina is moreover emancipated of all constraints of female sexuality. Untainted by carnal sin like Theodora or Pelagia, she is furthermore innocent of such legitimate sexual encounters as those experienced by the married Athanasia. More significantly, she is spared the sexualising masculine gaze that Anastasia and Margaret seek to elude. As a woman, then, Marina never provokes desire. Even in male form her sexuality is limited to occurrences outside the monastery, and unlike Smaragdus she avoids the homosexual perceptions of the brother monks. Her transvestism thus endows her with a virginity that exceeds physical and spiritual wholeness to grant her purity in her perceptions of others, and in the perceptions others have of her. Unlike Augustine's woman, who by virtue of being corrupts the male, Marina's virginity spares almost everybody acquainted with her.

Almost but not all. In an ironic reversal of the patristic depiction of the existentially dangerous female sexuality, it is Marinus who elicits a sexual response from the host's daughter. Marina's single erotic experience occurs in that encounter. Although the saint rejects the woman's advances, her innocence in terms of perceptions is over. That perception, however, interprets her as male rather than female. Having given rise to concupiscent thoughts in a woman, Marina is truly guilty, but only as a male. Nevertheless, her true gender enables her to symbolise the sinning woman, even as she paradoxically maintains complete innocence as a woman. As with Theodora, then, when Marina is handed the child as a token of her guilt it is genuinely hers on one level. The transference of the host's daughter's sin onto Marina makes possible the transference of

motherhood too, and through her absolute purity the saint is able to modify it from a crime to an unsexual and redemptive act.

Marina's assent to a guilt that is not, at least in its commission, authentically hers, and her subsequent atonement for it, conjoin again the roles of Mary and her son. Marina is Mary for she is a virgin and mother who patiently and devoutly accepts a fate she has not chosen. Her continued femininity is borne out in her role of nourisher and protector of the child: "[Marinus] cared for [the child], bearing all this with great patience and thanks to God." (318) Marina is also Christ. Adopting the child signals her appropriation of the guilt of the sinning mother, just as Christ's adopting human form makes possible His assumption of the original sin. Just as His sacrifice redeems fallen humankind, so too does her penance redeem the child born in sin. The child is thus both the sign of guilt and of its expiation, and it is the saint's self-forfeiture and relinquishment of personal benefit that achieves the latter. She atones for her small sin, the mother's larger sin, and for the child who is innocent yet guilty by virtue of issuing from sin. Marina's paradoxical status is thus rendered even more complex in her simultaneous representation of a virgin mother and the saviour who results from such motherhood.

The saint's dichotomous nature is ultimately resolved in favour of her femininity. During her life Marina symbolises the contrite mother and thus exempts herself from punishment. Marina's death, however, eliminates this symbol from the temporal world, and as a result the sin reverts to the biological mother who is then "possessed by the

Devil" (318). The mother's subsequent confession is not in itself sufficient, and she is not released from her shame until "she was led to the virgin's tomb [where] she was made whole at once". Later, many miracles were "wrought ... [at the tomb] daily". The narrative motif of vanquishing the Enemy represented female strength in Pelagia, Apollinaria, and Theodora's *vitae*, and it plays a similar role here. Marina's posthumous redemption of the mother and her other miracles denote her role as intercessor, as intermediary between earthly and heavenly. Unlike Christ, she is unable to wash the mother of her sins simply by dying.

So Marina depicts Christ, but more completely Mary; she is a mediating virgin mother, beyond sexual temptation, who submits her will to accept an arduous destiny. Her experiences and attributes as a Virgin Mary type all stem, ironically, from a life spent in male disguise. More significantly, however, these female qualities are safeguarded by the transvestism. The male costume, therefore, is a device, but beyond that, an opportunity, for Marina to succeed as an *exemplum* of the conflicting strictures of mediaeval femininity.

*

The *vitae* of the transvestite saints are thus most completely fathomed when analysed as allegories that validate temporal mediaeval womanhood. In some cases, most especially in the third category, a further allegorical level representing the conflation of Mary's numinous role with that of her Son is subtextually present. On the narrative and moral levels, the women take on male disguise only to mask and preserve a societally menaced femininity. The legends subsequently manifest that the saints do not deny their

femininity for a more austere masculinity. Rather, they are women who fulfil interior potentials of womanhood by assuming a male exterior. The disguise enables the coincidence of paradoxical demands: the women may be virgins, healers, and mothers, and simultaneously not emotional, irrational, and sexually voracious.

Ironically, although male attributes such as virility, rationality and strength are discernible in the lives of the saints, they are not due to the transvestism. All female saints, especially the virgin martyrs of the early years, are powerful physically, rationally, and spiritually. They withstand physical and mental tortures designed to force them to renounce their faith.³⁰ Thus the virility exhibited by all female saints cannot be ascribed, in the case of the transvestites, to masculine dress.

As inadequate as the gender transformation theory is the one that interprets the saint as merely a figment of male imagination, misogynous or otherwise. Anson, for example, portrays the women as products of monastic fantasy or guilty desire. Of all the legends except those of the third category, he claims that

where in those stories ... the emphasis tended to fall on hostility towards women as demonic seductresses, what finally comes into view with ... [Margaret, Theodora, and Marina's] lives is the guilty desire that underlies the whole dream-work: for instead of an overture rejected, a sexual act is committed and laid to the blame of the saint, who undergoes the punishment as a kind of surrogate. Thus, quite simply, the secret longing for a woman in a monastery is brilliantly

concealed by disguising the woman as a man and making her appear guilty of the very temptation to which the monks are most subject; finally, after she has been punished for their desires, their guilt is compensated by turning her into a saint with universal remorse and sanctimonious worship. (30)

Despite a certain facile psychologism, Anson's assertions would be valid only if the legends were indeed exclusively products of a monastic imagination, if psychological assessments of men who died fifteen hundred years ago is good science, and if literature were really limited by authorial intention, conscious or subconscious. Even so, his position nevertheless begs the questions of why the monks of later periods, when celibacy was more emphasised and stringently enforced, did not experience the same psychological needs as those of the late patristic age? The Cistercians, for example, did not allay their frustrated desire by inventing a sluttish, cross dressed, scapegoat of a saint. Moreover, why is it that of the many hagiographic legends that abounded in the early monastic period, those about female transvestism engaged the imagination of a mass audience, an audience constituted of women and men? Early hagiography, as Delehaye has extensively demonstrated, is as much the product of the "anonymous abstraction known as the spirit of the people" as it is that of "the man of letters, the editor". (5, 11) Furthermore, excepting Pelagia, in what manner do the narratives of the first two categories represent the saint as a "demonic seductress"? And finally, why is the guilt that Anson perceives as being at the heart of the legend never substantiated by her narrative? The *vita* maintains

the woman's innocence, even if she, like Marina, admits to guilt. Under careful scrutiny, therefore, Anson's analysis fails in almost every claim.

More feasible than either the masculinising or eroticising theories, the transvestite saint is best interpreted first as a literary encoding of the conflicting requirements of mediaeval womanhood, and second, though less uniformly, as a representation of the divine paradox of a human God who is both male and female. The legends blend themes, such as female desexualisation, and metaphors, such as eunuchry representing a masculine form of feminine virginity, in order to express in 'real fiction' what is essentially inexpressible in reality. 'Looks like a man but acts like a woman', or more complexly 'looks like a man to act like a woman', becomes, to mix a metaphor, a riddle that fleshes out the theoretical vision of temporal womanhood. On a second and more cryptic level, certain of the saints are avatars of a feminised Christ. In Holy Feast Bynum documents that "descriptions of God as a woman nursing the soul at her breasts, drying its tears, punishing its petty mischief-making, giving birth to it in agony and travail, are part of a growing tendency to speak of the divine in homey images and to emphasise its approachability". (129) While the mystics of whom she writes lived in the eleventh century, it seems feasible to argue that some of the transvestite saints are at the very least precursors of this feminised conception of the divine.

In their conflation of female with male and temporal with divine, the saints who become mothers are perhaps the most comprehensive substantiation of the androgynous God. Margaret, Theodora, and Marina are validated through maternity and redemptive sacrifice. They achieve consummate womanhood by becoming mothers, virgins, and

spiritual mediators, as well as expressing Christological qualities such as atoning self-sacrifice, and love for the innocent and guilty alike. In these three women, paradox is most confounding yet most revelatory.

Paradox, as it pertains to the transvestite saints, is a truth arrived at in spite of linguistic logic. It renders the impossible possible via metaphor. Paradox, therefore, is a force outside language that yet depends on language to state that which cannot be fathomed within the confines of language. D.W. Robertson extends this mediaeval art of revelation through obscurity to an essential function of understanding itself:

The incoherence of the surface materials is almost essential to the formation of the abstract pattern, for if the surface materials -- the concrete elements in the figures -- were consistent or spontaneously satisfying in an emotional way, there would be no stimulus to seek something beyond them ... It follows that the concrete materials of figures do not need to be "realistically" conceived to obtain the effect desired ... In literary art or in the visual arts, neither surface consistency nor "realism" is necessary to its effectiveness. Paradoxically, there is a sense in which "enigmas" are more readily understood than literal statements, for an unusual configurations of "things which are known" stimulates the perception of an abstract unknown. (56-7)

The polarities of the transvestite saints all contribute to the "unusual configuration of things" to render more readily present the "enigma" of the triumphant mediaeval woman.

Furthermore, the third category discloses through obscurity the theophany of a God who is both male and female, neither male nor female, beyond both being male and female, and not being male and female.

In conclusion I would like to focus on the triumph, qualified though it may be, of the mediaeval temporal woman. The saints are insidious, perhaps even subversive, cryptograms that enable a strong feminine presence in a world that is impossibly exigent of its women. The irony of all inversions is that they are dualities which infer and inform each other. The irony of paradox is that it simultaneously expresses the possible and the impossible. The inversions and paradoxes represented by the transvestite saints reflect the absurdity of ideal mediaeval female behaviour, thus implicitly critiquing it, and yet offer a possible resolution to the conflict. The resolution in turn undermines the criticism aimed at ideal female behaviour, because it makes it possible, and yet ironically empowers the female character as a female. In the female transvestite saints of the early monastic period, therefore, we are witness to the paradox that women disguised as men in truth refer to the original, undisguised, and puissant woman.

Endnotes

¹ For example see Bullough "Transvestites".

² For example see Delcourt Hermaphrodite.

³ For other examples of the criticism that establishes a link between patristic thought and misogyny and the assimilation of that misogyny by mediaeval society see Bloch "Mediaeval Misogyny" and Bullough "Mediaeval Medical and Scientific Views of Women".

⁴ Ironically, when it comes to the transvestite saints, even Bynum participates in the dated interpretation of mediaeval society's indiscriminate reception of female inferiority. Bynum's interpretation will be discussed in detail below.

⁵ Pelagia is one of the transvestite saints, and her narrative and an analysis of it follow below.

⁶ Hermann Usener, Legenden der Pelagia. Bonn, 1876.

⁷ Delcourt breaks down the saints legends into a tri-partite structure: rupture with a former existence, hostility towards family and authority, and renunciation of a sexual life. (Hermaphrodite 84-102 and "Le Complexe de Diane")

⁸ One more work may be mentioned here, Susanna Elm's seminal research on the historical forerunner of the literary transvestite, Virgins of God. Elm discusses female asceticism, and monasticism in particular, in Asia Minor and Egypt. Significantly, these two areas are designated by the legends as the countries of origin of the transvestite saints (see the summaries of the *vitae* below). Elm's work, however, is strictly focused on real women and as such her reference to the literary transvestite saints is minimal and offers little opinion. The real women of her research do not often cross dress, but sometimes they define themselves or are defined in masculine terms: "The transformation of women into athletes and thus into men no longer remained solely a metaphorical concept or the momentary transfiguration of a vision. The transformation became real and permanent, in part quite simply as a result of the harsh life in the desert. After long periods of fasting, all

external remnants of feminine features disappeared: the women of the desert had truly become 'fathers' and 'athletes', fighting against the same demons, suffering the same extremities. In so doing, women and men not only became equals, as 'men of God', but women even achieved a form of superiority. Since their nature was by definition seen as 'weaker' and softer, their ascetic achievements in comparison to those of men were in effect greater." (269) Thus according to Elm the transformed women did indeed achieve a certain level of masculinity, and she does not perceive them as continuing a feminine life role. However, she also discerns the desert as a site of the blurring of sexual difference: men and women both became something new that exceeds urban humanity. Elm fleetingly hints at a relationship between these historically real woman and the literary transvestite saint, but only in terms of influence: "Not surprisingly, the motif of the religious transvestite ... enjoyed continuous popularity. Numerous stories circulated, centred around women hiding in, living in, and even guiding male monasteries; and such stories were often embellished by dramatic accusations of 'fornication' suffered patiently by the heroine until she is finally vindicated by the discovery of her true sex after death." Elm has little to say on the literary manipulation of gender expectations that so define the *vitae* under discussion in this chapter.

⁹ "No woman shall wear an article of man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's dress; for those who do these things are abominations to the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 22:5.

¹⁰ In brackets are the male names assumed by the saints.

¹¹ There are other saints who use the male disguise, but in their cases the disguise is maintained for a short period of time and for one specific reason. When the need for cross dressing is over, the saint reverts to female clothing. These saints are Thecla, Galyphra and an unnamed woman. See Delcourt, "Le Complexe de Diane" 7 for more details. For an in-depth discussion of Thecla see Anson 1-11. Delcourt also adds Mary the Egyptian, also known as Mary the Harlot, who issues from the same period and culture as the saints under discussion, but who is strictly speaking not a transvestite. Mary spends most of her life wandering naked in the desert and for one year only wears the cloak of Zosime the abbot. However, she is not disguised for any

purpose other than covering her nudity. There are also other female saints who cross dress for longer periods. In "Le Complexe de Diane" Delcourt adds Matrona, from Perge (*Patrologia Graecae*) Papula, from Gaul (*Gloria Confessorum*), and Hildegonde, from Nuits (*Acta Sanctorum*). Bullough also mentions Wilgefortis (see endnote 27 in this chapter), and Galla and Paula, who are bearded saints ("Transvestites" 1387-88). These women, however, are from a time period and a tradition which are incompatible with the saints under discussion in this chapter.

¹² See Chapter 2 n. 18

¹³ The balancing out of Eve and Mary is a long and strong tradition in the history of Christianity. In Chapter 1 of *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries*, Thomas Stiverd Livius presents an extensive discussion of the contributors to this tradition listing, amongst others, St. Justin, St. Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ephrem, St. Epiphanius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Maximus, St. John Chrysostom and St. Peter Chrysologus.

¹⁴ St. Jerome's Letter 22 lists the "self-inflicted" hardships a virgin was expected to endure, amongst them hunger and fatigue. The passage is cited in the preceding chapter.

¹⁵ The danger of sexuality is a theme in all nine *vitae*, not solely the four that belong to the category of virgin.

¹⁶ The fact that the definition of a good woman as virgin itself reflects an early mediaeval, Christian, patriarchal society is undeniable. However, given that virginity was a positive contemporary definition of womanhood it must be accorded its validity. These legends must be scrutinised within their own parameters of history and tradition.

¹⁷ Although Bynum is writing of a period that is later than the patristic and monastic ages, her comments are nevertheless pertinent to the transvestite saint's mysticism. As will be demonstrated, the cross dressed mystic also obtained power when she was recognised by society as having "soared into the presence

of God" and being spiritually favoured. For a further discussion of the resistance of the Church authorities to the freedom obtained by the mystic see Bynum, Holy Feast 241-44.

¹⁸ Prudence Allen underlines Hildegard's mystic feminism: "Woman, who is inferior since Eve, will be made superior to man, by the direct infusion of Divine knowledge." (Concept of Woman 294)

¹⁹ For a discussion of Julian's theory see Jacoff. For a full development on the theme of God and abbots exhibiting feminine qualities see Bynum, Jesus as mother 110-169 and "Women's Stories" 110.

²⁰ Aristotelian theories of reproduction held that because of a woman's inability to process blood, and in spite of being herself possessed of a soul, she could contribute only the matter for a foetus. The man provided the animating spirit that imparted life and a soul to the child. (De generatione animalium 727b) Unlike Aristotle (384-322 BC), Galen (131-201) believed that women did contribute actively in conception through a female seed. That seed was however less puissant than the male because, and here Galen agreed with Aristotle, women were colder than men. (De usu partium II. 299) See Blamires 38-45 and Bullough "Mediaeval Medical" for more on the theories of reproduction that were prevalent during the early Middle Ages.

²¹ Warner points out that during the fifth century a disagreement developed between Antioch and Alexandria on one side, and Constantinople on the other, about the status of Mary. Proclus of Antioch stated that Mary was the mother of God. Nestorius of Constantinople held such motherhood to be impossible because God always was, and he argued that Mary could be the mother of Jesus the man but not of God. Cyril of Alexandria supported Proclus, and in 431 held a council in Ephesus that proclaimed Mary as the mother of God and excommunicated Nestorius (in spite of the fact that Cyril's authority to do so was questionable). Cyril's decision was massively cheered by the populace. Warner notes that "the crowd's testimony to the Virgin's popularity in 431 was indeed eloquent, and the decision of Ephesus stands as the first landmark in the cult of Mary as mother of God". (66)

²² There are visual representations of the Virgin Mary breastfeeding as early as the third century. Mary's milk was also believed to have healing powers and there are many legends in which the Virgin appears and though lactation cures the sick. In the thirteenth century there were even vials in which her milk was reportedly preserved. From the fifteenth century on, however, breastfeeding was considered a humiliation because it referred to Eve's sin and the Fall. See Warner 192-201 for examples of the classical and ancient symbolism of milk, and for a full discussion on the rise and fall of the popularity of images of the Virgin breastfeeding.

²³ For a full discussion of the Cistercian co-option of female symbols of lactation see Bynum, Jesus as Mother 110-169 and Holy Feast 279-88.

²⁴ Moreover, each hagiographer is a product of his/her environment and so reflects a wider sense of culture. Writers borrowed, changed, adapted and extrapolated from each other and from other legends and myths. Many legends are also adulterated with pre-history, mistakes in names, dates, and facts, contemporary political requirements etc.

²⁵ There are many versions of the saints' stories, as Patlagean has pointed out. There exist original Greek, Syriac, and Coptic versions for some or all the saints, as well as the Latin renditions in The Golden Legend and the Acta Sanctorum. The dates of the original versions are very difficult to pinpoint accurately. All the stories stem from between the fifth and ninth centuries, with most of them focused in the sixth and seventh (Patlagean 599-604, Bibliotheca Sanctorum and Acta). The difficulty in ascertaining the exact dates is due to the fact that many of the manuscripts are not dated but make reference to some or other contemporary detail (Patlagean); that the legends are heavily influenced by each other (Delehaye); that many versions of the stories exist; and that the work executed in collecting and juggling the original manuscripts to prepare a compendium version for the Acta Sanctorum has to a certain extent obscured the exact dates and blurred the differences between the various versions which have yet to be published, let alone translated. The renditions of the stories I am primarily using all come from the Bibliotheca Sanctorum, and are summaries of

by the critics working on the subject (see, for example, Delcourt "Complexe", Anson, and Bullough "Transvestites"). The *Bibliotheca* and the critics' understanding of the *Acta* are virtually interchangeable. I also cite the versions of these stories present in the most popular of all mediaeval hagiographic collections, *The Golden Legend*, which dates from the thirteenth century (and which was one of the first books printed by Caxton in English in the fifteenth century). The continued popularity of the saints from the time of their inception to the latter Middle Ages and beyond is attested to by the fact that they appear in the *Legend*. All nine saints appear in the *Bibliotheca* and the *Acta*, and Pelagia, Eugenia, Margaret, Marina, and Theodora appear in the *Legend*. I also cite Butler's *The Lives of the Saints*, which like the *Acta* is based on historical manuscripts. I am unable to cite the originals or give precise dates because of the lack of availability and the aforementioned confusion which has arisen. However, it should be noted that there is no disagreement between the versions presented by the *Bibliotheca*, the *Acta*, the *Golden Legend*, the *Lives*, and their reiterations in the critics' works. Moreover, while research into the original dates of the manuscripts and comparison between the various interpretations of the stories in the same language as well as between the different languages would be fascinating work -- and remains a rich area for scholars from all walks of the discipline of mediaeval studies -- the interests of this chapter are not put in dispute by the lack of it here. This chapter rather focuses on the obvious and recurring theme of transvestism, the accompanying mediaeval notions of the feminine and the masculine which stretch beyond the texts, and the place of these themes and notions in recent critical interpretation.

²⁶ Delcourt paraphrases the *Acta* in "Le Complexe de Diane" about the subject: "Mais le disciple qui la met au tombeau voit sa poitrine nue et s'étonne. Le travestissement, lui dit l'abbé, était le seul moyen d'échapper à l'empereur." (6)

²⁷ One more saint may be mentioned here, although she does not issue from the same time period as the others. Wilgefortis is a Portuguese saint from the fourteenth century. Instead of cross dressing, she manifests a physical sign of masculinity by growing a beard. As with some of the other saints, Wilgefortis wishes to avoid a marriage arranged for her by her pagan father, the king of Portugal. When she prays to

wishes to avoid a marriage arranged for her by her pagan father, the king of Portugal. When she prays to God for help in preserving her virginity, she grows a beard. Regardless, her father insists on the marriage, hiding her face under a veil. The fiancé discovers the truth, however, and refuses to be married. In a fit of anger Wilgefortis' father has her crucified. The result is a bearded figure on a cross, a familiar enough image, but with breasts, a less frequent image. Like the saints of this category Wilgefortis uses her disguise (or more precisely physical change) to maintain her virginity and escape sexualisation. Unlike them, however, she is heavily punished for her transgression. Wilgefortis is also different in that she does not exhibit a continued or augmented femininity in her change. Instead, she portrays a full hermaphroditism. Her depictions portray her as a woman with breasts and a beard: an emblem of a double gendered Christ. David Williams has pointed out that Wilgefortis' iconography bears out her hermaphroditic nature. Thus Wilgefortis is the same as the transvestite saints yet different. She is worthy of some notice but must perforce remain a footnote or, in scientific terms, a 'control' in the experiment of proving that the transvestite saints increase and fulfil the potentials of womanhood in their male disguises. For a full discussion of Wilgefortis' dual nature and her iconography see Williams "Wilgefortis".

²⁸ Significantly, Euphrosyne is further sexualised when she is perceived in sexual terms by the Christian monks, the representatives of the asexual haven to which she has retreated ironically in order to avoid the sexual life. In an astonishing twist of the story, the monks' attraction to the young man (the homoerotic connotations legitimated by the fact that Smaragdus is really a woman) underscore that the threat of sexualisation is a constant one for women. In a society that sets such store by virginity, especially female virginity, it is not enough that the saint dresses as a man, she has to hide as well. After all, the monks are not attracted to each other, only to Smaragdus.

²⁹ *"Recte te Eugenium vocas; viriliter enim agis, et confortetur cor tuum pro fide Christi."*
(*Patrologia Latina* 73.614)

³⁰ Juliana, for example, is viciously tortured in sexual and other ways by Eleusius, a heathen governor, and with the approval of her pagan father Africans. She refuses to reject Christ, however, and her persistence confounds the men to the point where the only resolution to the impasse is her murder.

Chapter 4

The Renaissance Polemic and Female Monstrosity

I

The literary figure of the cross dressed woman increased in popularity after the Middle Ages. The woman who assumed male clothing became a favourite topic amongst pamphleteers, poets, romance writers and playwrights alike. The topos surfaced in almost every written genre: court records attest to the fact that some Renaissance women wore breeches in public¹; social commentators remarked on the tendency of women to cross dress in real life as well as on stage; and polemicists waged a pamphlet war on the subject. Fiction writers used the transvestite woman variously as allegory for chaste and virile femininity, as comic endearing heroine, as the subject of satire, and as the instrument of social critique. Most Renaissance literature on female transvestism belongs to the last two categories, and the remainder of the dissertation will thus focus on the polemical tracts² and the drama.

Whereas the diversity of Renaissance female transvestism prohibits a single all encompassing thesis on the subject, a couple of general statements are nevertheless required. First, there is a distinction between the subject as it appears in the polemical literature and in the drama of the period. The polemics stem almost exclusively from a tradition of commentary on female debility that stretches back in an unbroken line to the earliest written word³. The drama of the period is beholden rather to a variety of traditions, most notably continental romance, mediaeval hagiography, and aspects of the polemical controversy itself. Second, while the polemicists almost invariably criticise the public cross dresser⁴, the drama is more diverse in its response and frequently

demonstrates the playwright's fond endorsement of the character. Although the last statement is admittedly overly schematic with reference to the dramatic representation of the subject, it nevertheless serves the purpose of demonstrating the uniformity of the polemical attitude. Thus although there is a relationship between drama and polemic, they are by no means identical.

The question of why such a division in attitude developed has not been fully addressed by the critics. This deficiency in the scholarship is probably in part due to the fact that few writers recognise the distinction between pamphlet and drama,⁵ and in part to the fact that others discuss one genre without addressing the begged question of the other⁶. While I can point out this lack within the scholarship, I can but offer some tentative responses.⁷ First, there are traditions of writings that present themselves as non-fiction which criticise masculine women, while there is a tradition in fiction in which the cross-dressed woman is lauded and approved⁸. Historical precedent thus might justify the fact that the 'non-fictional'⁹ polemics undermine the cross-dressed woman while the fictional drama approves her. The "historical precedent" argument is insufficient, however, because there is a simultaneous non-fiction tradition which posits masculinity as properly befitting women and a fiction tradition that criticises female masculinity.¹⁰ The heritage of non-fiction and fiction thus cannot satisfactorily answer the dilemma in question.

A second possible account for the Renaissance division in attitude may be that while polemical literature attacked women *per se*, women on stage were in truth disguised boys. Thus paradoxically female transvestism was regarded as legitimate only when it was not a real woman who was cross dressed. To countenance such explication would be to accept that women on the Renaissance stage were perceived as boy actors first and

female characters second.¹¹ Such a view seems to be inaccurate. In An Apology for Actors (1612) Thomas Heywood evinces his disapprobation of cross dressing as social custom but holds no such objection to it on stage. Heywood is both a polemicist and a dramatist and he bases his divided attitude not on the gender of the cross dresser but on dramatic conventions:

Nor do I hold it lawful to beguile the eyes of the world in confounding the shapes of either sex, as to keep any youth in the habit of a virgin, or any virgin in the shape of a lad, to shroud them from the eyes of their fathers, tutors, or protectors, or to any other sinister intent whatsoever. But to see our youths attired in the habit of a woman, who knows not what their intents be? Who cannot distinguish them by their names, assuredly knowing they are but to represent such a Lady at such a time appointed. (Sig. C3v)¹²

Although Heywood's final remarks address the cross-dressed boy-actor rather than the cross-dressed female character, the principle remains the same: on stage cross-dressing is acceptable, in society it is not.

The reasons behind the attitudinal opposition to transvestism between polemics and drama are therefore multitudinous and too slippery to determine. That such a division exists, however, is real and critical to the appreciation of the Renaissance writings on the subject. This chapter will bear in mind the opposition as it analyses the polemical literature on female transvestism, and the discussion will provide an informed background

against which the more complex issue of the dramatic representation of the figure may take place.

II

English Renaissance polemics perceived female masculinity as monstrous social and gender transgression. While there is “no way empirically to answer [the] question ... [of] how many people cross dressed in Renaissance England” (Howard, “Cross Dressing” 418),¹³ the pamphlets nevertheless represent female transvestism as one of the primary causes of a crumbling society. The treatises that appeared between 1580 and 1620 designate the transvestite woman as a locus *par excellence* of a myriad of Renaissance fears, among them social, political and natural disruption. The cross dressed woman personifies anxieties engendered by mutations within such previously stable political sites as society and economy; she represents the disruption of such significant social principles as sumptuary codes; and she undermines gendered and biological identities in her lack of social conformity. The pamphlet transvestite thus violates both lines that are improper to cross and those that are impossible to cross.

Because the pamphlet cross dresser embodied such extensive and prevalent social evils she merited at least three of the primary conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean social critique. First, she is associated with the upwardly mobile class presumer and his/her brazen appropriation of the apparel of the upper echelons. Second, because she inverts both society and nature she is often depicted in the satiric terms of the popular topos of the world turned upside down. Third, she is also associated with the monster, the Renaissance’s most fundamental disrupter of nature. In addition, she is frequently portrayed in such classical and mediaeval images of female perfidy as vanity, lust, and

irrationality. The transvestite woman is thus represented in ways that emphasise her extensive social and natural infractions.

This chapter demonstrates the various levels of Renaissance transgressions and their coincidence within the cross dressed woman of the pamphlets. It analyses the manner in which the polemics designated the cross dressed female as a social pariah, and it terminates with a discussion of *Haec Vir*, the only tract to include a defence of female transvestism. *Haec Vir* and its twin *Hic Mulier* are the apex of the debate over female cross dressing, having appeared at the height of the controversy. Together they are the most extensive, representative, and yet anomalous works on the subject. After their publication within one week of each other in 1620, the argument over cross dressed women began to dwindle.

*

In an era that was experiencing extreme changes, some of which brought success and some failure, what may be termed as an 'early modern malaise' spread into some of the period's writings. The "population growth put a heavy strain on food supplies, and the struggle for survival was intensified by persistent inflation, unemployment, and epidemic disease" (Greenblatt, *Negotiations* 137), and consequently the literature began to reflect both the accomplishments of the period and their occasionally unpalatable after-effects. Although Thomas More's *Utopia* is one of the earliest works of the Renaissance, it already expresses the dichotomous glorification of England as a new world and uneasiness at a society that has lost sight of the basic tenets of humanistic values.¹⁴ Philip Stubbs wondered "what Creature is there upon the face of the Earth comparable to man, either in body or in mind" ("Dedicatorie" to *The Anatomy of Abuses*), and yet "anatomised" the

copious “abuses” of England. Shakespeare marvelled at this “brave new world” and the “piece of work [that] is man” yet recognised that royalty seemed to have “taken too little heed” of the “poor naked wretches”(The Tempest, Hamlet, King Lear). Literature’s occasional distrust of social innovations thus reflected a pervasive societal ennui.

Transition in the Renaissance came swiftly to that which was perceived previously as ever-stable in politics, social stratification, science, and theology. Politically, England’s development from feudalism into a mercantile nation penalised the poor and caused new economic distinctions. Socially, the middle class was on the rise, also upsetting class distinctions. Scientifically, the solar system dislodged the earth as the focal point of the universe and with it a host of assumptions regarding the centrality of humankind within the cosmos. Theologically, the seemingly arbitrary political manipulations of religion, expected to be perpetual and beyond mortal control by nature, displaced the certainty of divine protection.¹⁵

The anxiety produced by the disintegration of the previously immutable in turn impelled Renaissance society to seek images onto which to affix said anxiety. Womankind as a locus of social problems was a readily available image from mediaeval and classical tradition. The rhetoric on the dissolution of social codes thus often holds women to blame as much as it does the ‘upstart middle class’. “Contemporary anxieties” Jonathan Dollimore asserts, “found expression in two main kinds of attack: the one on the dress violations of the emergent (middle) class, the other on the insubordinate (female) sex”. (“Early Modern” 288) The endemic association between female perfidy and the social quicksand of seventeenth century merchant society is quite evident in Thomas Gainsford’s The Rich Cabinet Furnished with variety of Excellent descriptions (1616):

Citizens in times past did not marry beyond their degrees, nor would a Gentleman make affinities with a Burgesse: but wealth hath taught us now another lesson, and the Gentleman is glad to make his younger son a tradesman, and match his best daughter with a rich Citizen for estate and living ... A Citizen is more troubled with his wife, than his wares: for they are sorted, locked up, and never brought out, but by constraint for the profit of their master; but his wife is decked, adorned, neatly apparelled, sits for the gaze, goes at her pleasure, and will not be restrained from any sights or delights ... A Citizen is in great danger of displeasure, if he deny his wife any thing which her mere fancy conceiteth: as she is in peril of despight, if he would restrain her liberty upon suspicious jealousy: in both love beginneth to break as ice, which once cracked, runneth further and further.

(Sigs. E3v-E4)¹⁶

The descriptions of the narcissistic woman who impoverishes her husband's pride and money chests are familiar enough. In fact, if "citizen" were replaced by "spiritual man" the passage would not be incongruous in the Jerome canon. Gainsford's additional link between female vanity and alterations in systems of economy and class couples an old tradition of female culpability with a new concern over unstable society. By locating in woman his disapprobation over the presumptions of a new and audacious society, and then punishing her, Gainsford can perhaps begin to release some of the anxiety engendered by these modifications. As Greenblatt suggests, "perhaps precisely because

this anxiety was pervasive and unavoidable, those in power wanted to incorporate it ideologically and manage it". (Negotiations 137) While Greenblatt's subject here is the anxiety caused by James I's efforts to control the problems plaguing him, the statement is likewise applicable to the polemical approach to women, and more specifically to cross dressed women. The woman who acted and dressed in a way not prescribed to her by politics, society, science or theology was thus a favourite cultural scapegoat of the early modern malaise, although by no means the only one.

Gainsford intimates a relationship between female vanity of apparel and class mutations, but he does not overtly state it. However, as Lisa Jardine, Jean Howard and Jonathan Dollimore have pointed out, clothing and rhetoric on clothing was fast becoming a language of cultural politics in the Renaissance. Mary Beth Rose sums up the issue:

The conservative spirit frequently links propriety of dress with the coherence of society and views as a threat to social stability the tendency of the pretentious or the newly prosperous to dress so elegantly that it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish among social classes by the varied attire of their members. Along with the upwardly mobile and the fop, women were singled out as creators of chaos for seeking to seduce men other than their husbands by wearing enticing clothes and for being generally disobedient, disrespectful, shallow ... and extravagant in their preoccupation with fashion. (369)

Self-ornamentation in the Renaissance continued to infer its mediaeval connotation of spiritually limiting vanity,¹⁷ but it also became one of the most recognisable signs of social infraction. In This Worlds Folly. Or A Warning-Peece discharged upon the Wickedness thereof (1615) the author I.H. complains that fashion disintegrated the signals of social distinction: "Dress is now so much alike for all classes ... that it is impossible to tell a countess from a courtesan, the chambermaid from her mistress, or a merchant from his factor." (Sig. A3v; paraphrased in Wright 481)

Clothing in the Renaissance was severely controlled and legislated according to social standing, as Jardine has extensively demonstrated in Still Harping on Daughters. For example, according to the 1597 Sumptuary Legislation nobody was allowed to wear "cloth of gold, silver tissued, silk of purple colour except Earls and above that rank and knights of the Garter in their purple mantles" (143). As evidenced by Gainsford's complaints, not all citizens abided by these laws, and the number of scoff-laws seemed to be growing. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus point to the Renaissance's mounting difficulty in distinguishing between noble and common: "The society of Renaissance England consisted of the titled, leisured classes (the nobility and the gentry) and the commons (yeomen, husbandmen, craftsmen, etc.), who worked for their living and were not considered 'wellborn'. The distinction was a real and important one, though somewhat fuzzy at the dividing line between gentry and commons, and merchants and yeomen in the upper echelons of the commonalty were sometimes quite wealthy." (268) The lines between rich and poor and aristocrat and *nouveau riche* were blurring, causing great distress to Gainsford and others like him. In The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience" (1596) William Perkins devotes considerable attention to the

“right, lawful and holy use of apparel” (208). Perkins was a Puritan cleric whose fame in the seventeenth century “was perhaps greater – certainly more widespread – than that of Richard Hooker” (5). His works “were translated in a half dozen languages, were reverently carried by the Pilgrims to the New World, and were considered as authoritative commentary on virtually every phase of the Christian life by Protestants everywhere”. Concern over fluctuations of class did not escape the attention of this influential and authoritative man. He decreed that clothing “must be answerable to our estate and dignity, for distinction of order and degree in the societies of men. This use of attire stands by the very ordinance of God.”(210) Unfortunately few follow this ordinance: “Many in these days do greatly offend. For men keep not themselves within their own order: but the Artificer commonly goes clad like the Yeoman; the Yeoman like the Gentleman: the Gentleman as the nobleman: the Nobleman as the Prince: which bringeth great confusion, and utterly overturneth the order which God hath set in the states and conditions of men.” (210-11) Assumptions of dress dissolve God’s laws.

What was a domestic issue for Gainsford and a religious one for Perkins re-emerges as a political concern in Philip Stubbs’ The Anatomy of Abuses (1583):

It is lawful for the potestates, the nobility, the gentry, yeomenry,
and for every private subject else to wear attire everyone in his
degree, according to his calling and condition of life requireth ...

As for private subjects, it is not at any hand lawful that they
should wear silk, velvets, satins, damasks, gold, silver, and
what they list ... except they being in some kind of office in the
commonwealth, do use it for the dignifying and ennobling of the

same. But now there is such a confused mingle mangle of apparel in Ailgna [i.e. London], and such preposterous excess thereof, as everyone is permitted to flaunt it out, in what apparel he list himself, or can get by any mind of means. So that it is very hard to know, who is noble, who is worshipful, who is a gentleman, who is not: for you shall have those, which are neither of the nobility, gentility, nor yeomanry, no, nor yet any Magistrate or Officer in the common wealth, go daily in silks, velvets, satins, damasks, taffetas and such like, notwithstanding that they be both base by birth, mean by estate, and servile by calling. This is a great confusion and a general disorder, God be merciful unto us. (Sigs. Cv - Cl)

The breakdown of the boundaries between high and low born and court officer and private citizen symbolises the dissolution of society as a unit. Howard notes that “for Stubbs transgressions of the dress code don’t just signal social disruption, they constitute such disruption. That is, when common subjects wear the gold, silk, and diamonds that properly signify an aristocratic birth and calling (as apparently a number did), they demean the social place they have usurped and erase necessary social distinctions.” (“Cross Dressing ” 422, original emphasis) Stubbs’ main concern is not so much clothing *per se*, as it is that which clothing represents: “Control of dress (for individuals and their households) was seen as a significant control of real social power and influence.” (Jardine, Harping 142)

More disruptive than the woman who dressed above her social status was the one who dressed opposite to her gender. Gainsford, Perkins and Stubbs bemoan the

fluctuations of that which ought to be stable, i.e. class and wealth. Excepting the few who have the misfortune to be born with a confusion of sexual organs¹⁸, however, gender was perceived as a line that could not be crossed. Greenblatt states that of the Renaissance's "normative structures" the

most powerful appear to have been those governing sexual identity.

Male writers of the period regarded gender as an enduring sign of distinction, both in the sense of privilege and in the sense of differentiation. A man in Renaissance society has symbolic and material advantages that no woman could hope to attain, and he had them by virtue of separating himself, first as a child and then as an adult, from women. All other significant differential indices of individual existence -- social class, religion, language, nation -- could, at least in imagination, be stripped away, only to reveal the underlying natural fact of sexual difference. ... beneath the apparel the body itself can not lie.¹⁹ (Negotiations 76)

But if the last bastion of boundaries was transgressable and arbitrary, as cross dressed women so visibly proved it to be, then a final apocalyptic disorder could not be distant. When women dress as men they decentre society and gender. The transvestite woman capsized class by appropriating a hierarchically superior male status, and compounded the crime by erasing sexual distinction between herself and mankind. The correlation between class and gender was sometimes overtly articulated by the writers; more frequently it was understood that a transvestite woman automatically signified both infractions.

In The Description of England (1587) William Harrison's protest against London's transvestite women couples the crime of improper status clothing with the disintegration of gender signification:

In women it is most to be lamented that they do now far exceed the lightness of our men ... and such staring attire as in times past was supposed meet for none but light housewives only is become a habit for chaste and sober matrons. What should I say of their doublets with pendant codpieces on the breast, full of jags and cuts, and sleeves of sundry colours? their galligaskins to bear out their bums and make their attire to fit plum-round (as they term it) about them? their farthingdales and diversely coloured netherstocks of silk, jersey, and such-like, whereby their bodies are rather deformed than commended? I have met with some of these trulls in London so disguised that it hath passed my skill to discern whether they were men or women. Thus it is now come to pass that women become men and men transformed into monsters.

(147)

Harrison perceives cross dressed women as perilous to the identity and social position of both genders. By dressing and acting like a man the transvestite emptied both womanhood and manhood from all signification; because of her conduct she was not female, because of her biology she was not male. If clothing and behaviour constituted manhood or womanhood, then gender identity lost an existential and autonomous status to become a nominative attribute. Such deconstruction of gender and gender roles was not permissible

to the Renaissance pamphleteer. Social infringement is thus almost always implicit in the opprobrium of gender transgression.

Unlike Harrison's insinuations the *Hic Mulier* author overtly declares that the crime of female transvestism contained that of social climbing. In berating the "masculine feminines" the author declaims

[you] have made the foundations of your highest detested work
from the lowest despised creatures that Record can give testimony
of: the one cut from the commonwealth at the Gallows; the
other is well known. From the first you got the false armoury
of yellow Starch (for to wear yellow on white or white upon
yellow is by the rules of Heraldry baseness, bastardy, and in-
dignity), the folly of imitations, the deceitfulness of flattery, and
the grossest baseness of all baseness, to do whatever a greater
power will command you. From the other you have taken the
monstrousness of your deformity in apparel, exchanging the
modest attire of the comely Hood, Cowl, Coif, handsome 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. (267)

The author is here referring to a Mrs. Anne Turner and a Lady Frances Howard who together conspired to kill Sir Thomas Overbury because he disapproved of Lady Frances' affair with his friend Robert Carr, earl of Somerset. The women were apprehended and Mrs. Turner was "cut from the Commonwealth at the Gallows" [hanged], while Lady Frances, "the well-known other", was imprisoned and later pardoned by James I. Anne Turner was credited with having begun the fashion of wearing yellow ruffs and cuffs to court, a fashion despised by James I.²⁰ As well as signifying bastardy in heraldry when mixed with white, yellow clothing was also a sign of the upper classes. Low born men or women who wore yellow were thus assumed to have social pretensions. Malvolio's yellow garters are not simply a sign of vanity, they also signal social impertinence. The *Hic Mulier* author patently conjoins the "folly of imitation" and the status-seeking yellow ruffs with the "deformity in apparel" and the "monstrousness" it engenders. Women who dress like men are transgressing boundaries of class distinction as well as gender.

The class/gender crime is revealed further in the pretext that the author imagines will be offered as reason for the transvestism. The author hypothesises that the "offending great Ones", i.e. high born transvestite women, are incensed at having their social eminence "aped" by the lower classes and thus cross dress to establish "difference among women". Transvestism for "these Chimeras of deformity" is ironically a way of protesting against the diminution of social meaning. Their clothing remonstrates against the fact that there is "no distinction of places, no respect of Honours, nor no regard of blood or alliance. Must but a bare pair of shears pass between Noble and ignoble, between the generous spirit and the base Mechanic? Shall [women] be all coheirs of one honour, one estate, and one habit?" (272) The cross dressers argue that if all women

dressed in a manner such that “everyone may be known by the true badge of their blood or Fortune”, they would joyfully return to the hell from which they issued. (274) Intriguingly, because previously permanent social signals were being emptied of universally recognised meanings and invested with new ones, some women donned male clothing in an effort to re-institute the badges of distinction. By dressing as men they differentiate themselves from the women who dress like them. The author is somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the aped nobility, “nor can [he] blame high blood to swell when it is coupled and counterchecked with baseness and corruption”. Ultimately, however, he dismisses their pretext as “show[ing] an anger passing near akin to envy” and revealing female irrationality. That women “offend themselves to grieve others is a revenge dissonant to Reason”. (274) The very act of dressing like a man indicates baseness and ignobility regardless of a woman’s station in life. These “mermaids, or rather, mer-monsters” are “but rags of Gentry, torn from better pieces for their foul stains, or else the adulterate branches of rich Stocks, that taking too much sap from the root, are cut away, and employed in base uses”. (Sig. B)²¹ In concordance with Stubbs the *Hic Mulier* author believes that transvestism, whether it apes the higher status of nobility, the higher gender of masculinity, or establishes a contrast between high and low born, necessarily vitiates both the status being sought and the one being denied.

Class anxiety is thus at the very heart of the issue of female transvestism. Recent scholarship on the subject has agreed that the topic became popular in the Renaissance due to the extensive agitation experienced in the period.²² As stated above, much criticism tends to conflate polemics with drama whereas this dissertation perceives a differentiation between them. Current critical commentary also tends to focus on economic and social

changes rather than scientific and religious²³ ones. Bearing in mind these murky areas there is surprising agreement, almost uniformity, in the critics' assessment of the background which gave rise to the writings on cross dressing. Howard, for example, points to the

clash in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries between emergent capitalistic social relations and older modes of social organisation based on status or degree. Especially in London, the emergence of an entrepreneurial middle class, the "middling sort" [Stone], seems an established fact by 1600, and to some degree enclosure movements, the putting-out system of cloth manufacture, and changes in agricultural practice were creating a rural proletariat dependent on wage labour for subsistence and creating that pool of "vagabonds and masterless men" so feared by the Elizabethan authorities. ("Cross Dressing " 421 n. 8)

Linda Woodbridge concurs: "The malaise of the early seventeenth century was a response to change. A changing economic system, changing configurations of social class, new discoveries in astronomy - all these were feared; partly because they seemed un-Christian, immoral, antithetical to humanism and to Order. But partly just because they were new." (149) Dollimore also argues that cross dressing in both drama and society "radically" challenged accepted norms: "Orthodoxy at that time insisted that differences in dress were not merely conventional but a reflection of one of God's most fundamental principles of order in the world: sexual difference. Cross-dressing spelt 'confusion' in the far-reaching, devastating, religious sense of the world. Intense anxieties about social change and its

unsettling of gender and class hierarchies ... were punitively displaced, in dramatic as well as non-dramatic literature, on to the issue of dress violation, especially women dressing in men's clothes."²⁴ (Radical Tragedy xxxv-vi) David Underdown also writes that

fears of an impending breakdown of the social order have been common in many periods of history. At no time were they more widespread, or more intense, than in early modern England ...

Among the causes and symptoms of the apparently growing instability were those now familiar problems of excessive population growth, inflation, land shortage, poverty and vagrancy ...

The flood of Jacobean anti-feminist literature and the concurrent public obsession with scolding women, domineering and unfaithful wives, clearly suggest that patriarchy could no longer be taken for granted ... late Elizabethan and Jacobean writers do seem to have been uncommonly preoccupied by themes of female independence and revolt. (116-7)

Jardine also perceives a correlation between the status of early modern society and the Jacobean preoccupation with cross dressed women: "Women bore the brunt of a general social uneasiness ... because the fear of the inversion of authority between men and women has a primitive force which is not to be found in the threat of the upstart courtier to usurp his 'rightful' lord. To point a finger at woman's affecting of the badges of male office -- dress, arms, behaviour -- was to pin down a potent symbol of the threat to order which was perceived dimly as present in the entire shift from feudal to mercantile society." (Harping 162) Lynda Boose likewise argues that the Renaissance's perceived

relationship between female sexuality and unruliness "constructs women as creatures whose bodily margins and penetrable orifices provide culture with a locus for displaced anxieties about the vulnerability of the social community, the body politic". (255) Sandra Clark posits that "in an age when preachers, moralisers, and satirists regarded with fear and dismay the gradual erosion of traditional distinctions and degrees of rank and hierarchy, the destruction of the sexual barrier readily suggested itself as further evidence of imminent social disintegration". (159) There are few dissident voices within the conformity of modern scholarship on the topic. Suzanne Hull holds the population imbalance as the primary cause for anti-female literature. Although nature creates "105.5 male babies for every 100 female babies that are born", more female than male adults survive, and the "overabundance of females helped to reinforce the culture of the dominant male ... To protect their advantageous position, men quite naturally (whether consciously or not) used religion, economic and social pressure, the influence of the women who conformed, and the bite of satire to maintain control ... The ultimate danger to men was permitting a woman to have power or to threaten the masculine prerogative of superiority." (124) Barring the occasional renegade, however, modern critics like Howard and Dollimore overwhelmingly concur with Renaissance authors like Harrison, Stubbs, and the *Hic Mulier* pamphleteer: the anxiety caused by a new, unprincipled, and uncontrollable world is embodied in the figure of the cross dressed woman.

Unsurprisingly, the polemics on the transvestite woman frequently express the malaise over the new regime in the rhetoric of the popular topos of the world turned upside down (WUD). Renaissance use of WUD was most often comic. Customarily the comedy exposed a serious reversal of procedure, however, and the masculine woman was

one such amusing topic of moral outrage.²⁵ In “The World Turned Upside Down: Inversion, Gender and the State”, Peter Stallybrass points out that the WUD topos must be regarded as culturally specific: “The high/low opposition ... can only be understood contextually ... [to understand WUD, we must move] away from a fixed iconographic hierarchy in which the high would be privileged over the low, the front over the back, the right over the left. The production of the system of analogies ... is not as unproblematic as it first appears.” (205, original emphasis) And whereas WUD has been variously understood as a way endorsed by the power elite to contain and deflate a threat²⁶, a way for an oppressed minority to critique and challenge the power elite, and a way for the powerful to “overthrow ... settled norms, but only so as to establish more pervasive forms of domination” (216)²⁷, Stallybrass’ own understanding of its function constitutes a fourth way, and one which is at the heart of the masculine woman topos. Stallybrass understands WUD not as a language that describes a political situation, but as politics itself. More than a literary motif which reflects the immediate world, WUD is a way of negotiating issues of power: “There is no intrinsic connection between inversions of class, inversions of gender and inversions of ethnic hierarchies. Politics is precisely the world of making such connections, not the reflection of a social order that is already known.” (217, original emphasis) Bearing in mind the cultural contexts that produce a WUD topos, the woman who dresses and behaves like a man became particularly apt in a Renaissance world that was re-inventing previously permanent structures of power. The transvestite woman of the Renaissance polemics was herself a political language in which was invested the disintegration of social, natural and divine order. Stallybrass affirms that “it was virtually impossible in early modern Europe to conceptualise the redistribution of political power

without figuring it in an explicitly gendered language". (206) As argued above, the transvestite woman became the locus of the anxiety caused by the redistribution of political power; she is the image of feared female emancipation, of class redistribution and, less specifically, the breakdown of all other boundaries.

The polemics use the WUD topos as regards the transvestite woman in a unique manner. WUD conventions in illustrations and forms of literature other than polemical ordinarily posit the masculine woman against a single, specific man, usually a husband. The polemics, however, erase the male presence and present the cross dressed woman as a pervasive threat against all of humanity, male or female. Other than the polemics, WUD usage in the Renaissance tended to imply that the masculine woman was an aberration to her gender and that she could be rectified by a disciplining male.

Many illustrations of WUD depict a woman in a superior position to a man, either sitting on him, standing over him, or dressed in breeches and carrying a musket while the seated man is occupied in a female activity, usually spinning.²⁸ Although a masculine woman is perilous to society at large, the implication is that had that one man been more efficient in spousal control the threat she poses would be annihilated. Keith Moxey believes that in Reformation Europe²⁹ WUD ultimately served as an agent of control for the hierarchically superior male. He associates the illustrations' function of empowering the husband over the wayward wife with "the social teaching of the Reformation [which] had less to do with the equality between the sexes, less to do with the promotion of the social status of women, and more to do with their continued social and economic oppression". (144) As with the four-part masculine woman structure pointed out in chapter two, the positioning of the offending female against a specific male confirms,

paradoxically by its absence, the hierarchical structure in which womankind must be controlled by mankind. Underdown emphasises the weak male's complicity in the masculine woman's offence: "Women who defied the authority of their husbands, whether in sexual behaviour or household governance, and the even more culpable husbands who feebly tolerated this, threatened the entire patriarchal order." (127)

The literature likewise commonly counterpoints a world-inverting woman against a single man. Humphrey Crouch's "Loves Court of Conscience" (1637) presents the poet's resistance to such a collusion:

Yes, I will ever bear my father's mind
 I scorn as much to stoop to women kind
 For if I should then all men would me hate
 Because from manhood I degenerate
 And surely I should have the love of no men
 If I were such a slave unto a woman
 Which to prevent, or to avoid ill speeches
 I'll look that thou shalt never wear the breeches.

(Illustrations of Old English Literature, ed. J. Payne Collier.

London: privately printed, 1866; qtd. in Hull 118)

Crouch's poem is further evidence of the Renaissance definition of manhood in relationship to womanhood: manhood includes the duty not to stoop to women, not to weaken the standing of men *vis a vis* women. Worried about his reputation in society, Crouch vows never to be a collaborative male. Less successful than Crouch is King Lear's gentle but initially ineffectual Albany. When Goneril jibes that she "must change

names at home, and give the distaff into [her] husband's hand" (IV.ii.17-18) she is aware that she is inverting hierarchy. The Riverside glosses "change names" as "assume the responsibilities that should be my husband's and hand over my wifely duties to him", and the reference to the distaff quite consciously points to the WUD motif.³⁰ The implication is that Goneril's cruelty and social destruction could, or even should, have been halted by Albany, had he not been so forceless. As Underdown avers, "on stage, as in carnival, gender inversion temporarily turns the world upside-down - but to reinforce, not subvert, the traditional order". (117)

The expression of the WUD between husband/wife in ritual also tended to lay the blame on the 'spineless' husband. The practice of charivaris or skimmingtons, in which the offending couple were mocked, customarily penalised the feeble husband more. When a woman committed a 'female felony' such as gossiping she was punished by being fastened onto a dunking stool and plunged into water, so effectively shutting her over-active mouth.³¹ But in a situation in which a man had allowed himself to be dominated by a woman the discipline was meted out primarily to the inferior husband, rather than to the superior wife:

The standard ingredients of the ritual [were]: a rough-music procession headed by a drummer and a man wearing horns; the enlisting of the next-door neighbours as surrogates for the offending couple; the acting-out of the proscribed behaviour by the "husband" riding backwards on horse or donkey and holding a distaff, the symbol of female subjection, while the "wife", (usually a man in woman's clothing) beats him with a ladle. The husband, it should

again be stressed, is as much the subject of disapproval -- for tolerating the offence -- as the wife. (Underdown 129)

The most punishment a dominating wife had to endure seems to be to participate in a carnivalesque dramatisation of her 'victory' over her husband. The husband on the other hand was forced to relive his humiliation in a more extensive manner. Certainly both wife and husband were castigated in this re-enactment of their life. As Howard notes, "these ritual punishments were all ways of registering the fact that important cultural boundaries had been erased, important social hierarchies disrupted, by the offending parties". ("Cross Dressing " 426) Whether carnival is ultimately an expression of freedom (see Natalie Davis), or of containment (see Valerie Lucas), it exposes the inverter of status. However, carnival also seems more emphatically to castigate those who actively or passively collude in that inversion.

Unlike illustrations, literature, and carnival, the polemics greatly lessen the collaborative role of the weak male. With two notable exceptions the pamphlets focus instead on the primary inverter: the cross dressed woman.³² The dimmed presence of the colluding male has two results. First, the transgressing woman becomes not an aberration within the gender but rather a whole type, one of many. Second, the origin of the danger and therefore its solution lies now less with the male than with the female. The transvestite women put at stake the whole "important social hierarchy" (Howard, "Cross Dressing" 426) of man's rule over woman. All cross dressed women turn the world upside down, but the peril presented by the pamphlet cross dresser is both greater and more difficult to contain. While related, these are two separate issues that illustrate respectively first the increase of feminine transgression and second the decrease of

masculine superiority. Thus in order to emphasise and augment cross dressing's epidemic effects on other women and its dangerous threat to society at large, the pamphlets generally skirt the issue of the colluding male

The far-reaching consequences of feminine transgression in transvestism is evident in many of the polemics on the subject. To entertain and forewarn simultaneously the authors provide an exaggerated warning about the epidemic effects of cross dressing; by sensationalising the numbers they comically inflate the scandal while accentuating their serious deprecation of these female criminals. A transvestite woman is thus often portrayed as infecting society in much the same way as a disease. In fact, the full *Hic Mulier* title characterises cross dressing as a “coltish disease of the staggers”, and the tract later equates it with “an infection that emulates the plague and throws itself amongst women of all degrees, all deserts, and all ages; from the Capitol to the Cottage are some spots or swellings of this disease” (269). A cross-dressed woman's sickness spreads to other women, and places the health of the whole society at risk.

The contamination of transvestism is evident also in the sermons of Thomas Adams. In “Meditations upon the creed” (1629) Adams warrants woman to “owe[] nothing but to her creator: Adam can no more challenge ought from her for his rib than the earth can challenge from him.” (30) When it comes to cross dressing, however, his opinion on female autonomy is radically different:

The Proud is the next Mad-man, I would have you take view of in this Bedlam. The proud man? or rather the proud woman: or rather *haec aquila*, both he and she. For if they had no more evident distinction of sex, than they have of shape, they would be

all man, or rather all woman: for the Amazons bear away the Bell:
 as one wittily, *Hic Mulier* will shortly be good Latin, if this trans-
 migration hold ... Such translations and borrowing of forms, that
 a silly countryman walking the City, can scarce say, there goes a
 man, or there a woman. Woman, as she was an humane creature,
 bore the image of God; as she was woman, the image of man:
 now she bears the image of man indeed, but in a cross and mad
 fashion; almost to the quite defacing of the image of God.

(Mystical Bedlam, or the World of Mad-Men (1615) Second Sermon

Sigs H2V-H2, original emphasis)

The danger discerned by Adams is as much the “transmigration” of the insanity of cross dressing as it is cross dressing itself. Transvestism has seeped so deeply into London life that an innocent countryman can no longer distinguish genders and woman has become a mutant of divine, natural and social order. Whereas a good woman profits from a direct relationship with God, a cross dressed woman is returned to the Pauline position of owing her image in God to man; when her ‘natural’ exterior alters it occasions an interior change reflected in her divinely created nature. A woman who dresses like a man is “mad”. She is guilty of inverting such natural laws as the “shape and distinction” of gender and of eventuating a danger that is far-reaching in its effects in each and every woman.

The Puritan William Prynne likewise warns against the epidemic of the cross dressed woman: “Our English Gentlewomen (as if they all intended to turn men outright and wear the Breeches ...) are now grown so far past shame, past modesty, grace and nature, as to clip their hair like men with locks and foretops.” (Histriomastix. The

Player's Scourge, Or, the Actors Tragedy (1633)) The woman who wears the breeches is a reference to one of the most typical aspects of WUD, and for Prynne the shocking behaviour of cross dressing threatens the right status of religion (grace), social behaviour (modesty) and nature of all "English gentlewomen".

Hic Mulier: or the Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers in the Masculine-feminines of our Times (1620), perhaps the most popular pamphlet censuring cross dressers and certainly the most extensive, also emphasises the far-reaching danger of transvestism:

Since the days of Adam women were never so Masculine; Masculine in their genders and whole generations, from the Mother, to the youngest daughter; Masculine in Number, from one to multitudes; Masculine in Case, even from the head to the foot; Masculine in Mood, from bold speech, to impudent action; and Masculine in Tense: for (without redress) they were, are, and will be still most Masculine, most mankind, and most monstrous. (265)

The running grammatical metaphor portrays both the extent and the paradox of female transvestism. The female cross dresser is a problem whose magnitude has touched every level of society. Furthermore, a female who acts in a masculine manner erases distinctions that are as quintessential to gender roles as grammar is to communication. When linguistic differences are impenetrable language becomes illogical and incapable of communicating effectively - without communication chaos soon follows. The "babbling", uncommunicative effect of a woman who conducts herself inversely to nature and moreover influences other women to follow suit has the potential effect of reducing

society to a tower of Babel, a society destined to fail. The author later underscores the political danger of transvestism by cautioning that left unchecked such barbarous behaviour would inevitably result in the “rude Scythian, the untamed Moor, the naked Indian, or the wild Irish, [becoming] Lords and Rulers of well-governed Cities” (269). As Howard notes, “in a stunning revelation of a racial and national chauvinism, the aspiration of women beyond their place is associated with the monstrous notion of the black in rulership over the white, the Irish over the English. Such consequences -- though imagined only -- invite reprisal.” (“Cross Dressing ” 425) In the world turned upside down the Irish rule the English, the untamed Moor rules London, and women rule men.

It is evident in the polemics on transvestism that although both genders are central to societal, natural and Providential success, the epidemic numbers of masculine women are a greater menace than the weak collaborative males. The missing element of potential male-control is manifest in pamphlet after pamphlet that castigates the cross dressed woman without mentioning a blameworthy man. John Williams’ Sermon of Apparel blames women and the devil for the practice but forbears to mention men:

[God] divided male and female, but the Devil ha[s] joined them,
that *mulier formosa* [beautiful woman] is now become, *mulier monstrosa superne* [a monstrous woman], half man half woman,
all (outwardly) of her new maker ... For a woman therefore to
come into a church *chimera*-like, half male and half female ...
first to profess repentance and remorse for sin. But how? By
holding up unto God a pair of painted hands, and by lifting up
to his throne two plastered eyes and a polled head. Secondly to

humble herself. But how? In satin (I warrant you) instead of sackcloth, and covered with pearls instead of ashes. Thirdly to move God to be gracious. But how? With a face and a countenance he never saw before, composed for smiling more than for sorrowing, and purled with onions, instead of tears. Lastly to protest amendment and newness of life. But how? As standing most manly upon her points, by wagging a feather to defy the world, and carrying a dagger, to kill (no doubt) the flesh and the Devil. (78-9)

As in Adams' and Prynne's warnings, the transvestite woman here disrupts laws that are prescribed by God, society and nature and expresses an irrationality that amounts to stupidity: by wearing a dagger the transvestite woman purports to be against "flesh and the Devil", the very things that make her what she is. Men, the natural possessors of power and control over women, are missing from the equation completely.

In The Anatomy of Abuses Stubbs demarcates his disapproval of the overdressed feminine woman from the cross dressed masculine woman, holding men liable for the former while absolving them from the latter. When critiquing the excesses of female clothing in Ailgna (a satirical substitute for England) Philoponus refers to the colluding male:

There Gowns be no less famous also, for some are of silk, some of velvet, some of grogram, some of taffeta, some of scarlet, and some of fine cloth, of ten, twenty or forty shillings a yard. But if the whole gown be not silk or velvet, then the same shall be laid

with lace, two or three fingers broad, all over the gown or else the most part. Or if not so, (as lace is not fine enough sometimes) then it must be garded with great gardes of velvet, four or six fingers broad at the least ... [etc. etc.] Then have they Petticoats of the best cloth that can be bought and of the fairest dye that can be made. And sometimes they are not of cloth neither, for that is thought too base, but of scarlet, grograin taffeta, silk, and such like, fringed about the skirts with silk fringe, of changeable colour ... So that when they have all these goodly robes upon them, women seem to be the smallest part of themselves, not natural woman, but artificial Women, not Women of flesh, and blood, but rather puppets, or mawmets of rags and clowtes compact together. So far has this cancer of pride eaten into the body of the common wealth, that every poor Yeoman his Daughter, every Husbandman his daughter, and every Cottager his Daughter, will not spare to flaunt it out, in such gowns, petticoats, and kirtles, as these. And notwithstanding that their parents owe a brace of hundred pounds more than they are worth, yet will they have it *quo iure quaque iniuria*, either by hook, or crook, by right or wrong as they say, whereby it commeth to pass, that one can scarcely know, who is a noble woman, who is an honourable, or worshipful woman, from them of the meaner sort. (Sigs. f4v-f5v)

By hook or by crook, with or without the approval of their fathers, these women bedeck themselves in a manner that belies their social status. As well as disrupting the laws of

society and rendering empty the signs which are to distinguish between the aristocracy and the middle class and between wealth and poverty, they turn the world upside down by ruling over their parents. Spudeus underscores the responsibility of the hierarchically superior to wield control: "Their parents and Friends are much to be blamed, for suffering them to go in such wanton attire. They should not allow them such large pittance, nor suffer them to measure their apparel, after their own licentious yards of self will, and wicked desires." (Sig. f5v) In reply Philoponus emphasises the weakness of the colluding parties:

Then shall they be sure, never to have good day with them. For they are so impudent, that all be it, their poor Parents have but one cow, horse, or sheep, they will never let them rest, till they be sold, to maintain them in their braveries, past all tongue can tell. And to say the truth, some Parents (worthy to be inaugurated with the laurel Crown of triple folly) are so buxom to their shameless desires, and so exorable to their prostitute requests, that they grant to their too too nice daughters more than they can desire themselves, taking a singular felicity and surmounting pleasure in seeing them to go plumed and decked in the Feathers of deceitful vanity. (Sig. f5v)

The woman vainly dressed has a husband or father who is held directly responsible for allowing such vanity to go unchecked.

Unlike the feminine vain woman, the masculine transvestite woman seems to be relationless and independent. Philoponus describes to Spudeus the curious habits of Ailgna:

The Women also there have doublets and Jerkins as men have here, buttoned up the breast, and made with wings, welts and pinions on the shoulder points, as man's apparel is, for all the world, though this be a kind of attire appropriate only to man, yet they blush not to wear it, and if they should as well change their sex, and put on the kind of man, as they can wear apparel assigned only to man, I think they would as verily become men indeed as now they degenerate from godly sober women, in wearing this wanton lewd attire, proper only to man ...

Spud: I never read nor heard of any people except drunken with Cyrces cups, or poisoned with the exorcisions of Medea that famous and renowned Sorceress, that ever would wear such kind of attire as is not only shrinking before the face of God, offensive to man, but also painteth out to the whole world the venerious inclination of their corrupt conversation. (Sigs. f3v-f4v)

Female transvestites disregard the laws of society, God and nature and dissolve the boundaries between a thing and its opposite. They turn the world upside down by adulterating that which cannot be adulterated and creating a new product that is undefinable and 'un-absorbable' by the status quo. Most significantly, no mention is made of the men who allow this mutant innovation. As in Williams' sermon, this

passage's patent aspersion is directed at the female cross dressed criminal; the male deserving of reproach or pity is absent.

The lack of male responsibility in female transvestism granted the cross dressed woman autonomy and political power, and thus rendered her essentially dangerous to the tenets that govern nature and human behaviour. The pamphlets' general perception of this woman was that along with her female clothing she had shrugged off the yoke of the laws that made her what she was. As mentioned above, however, there are two polemical works about cross-dressing that do address the colluding male: the edicts of James I as they are reported in the letters of John Chamberlain, and *Hic Mulier*. The political weight of the former and the popular appeal of the latter make these critically important exceptions. Regardless of their pre-eminent position in the body of polemical writings against cross-dressed women, however, they remain only two works in a sea of writing that lessens the male burden of responsibility.³³

The danger presented by the cross dressed woman to religion, society and Nature was evinced by James I. In a letter dated January 25, 1620, John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that

yesterday the Bishop of London called together all his clergy about this town and told them he had express commandment from the King to will them to inveigh vehemently against the insolence of our women, and their wearing of broad brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short or shorn, and some of them stilettos or poniards, and other such trinkets of the moment; adding withal that if pulpit admonitions will not reform them he would proceed by

another course; the truth is the world is very much out of order, but
whether this will mend it God knows.

Manifest in James' and perhaps even Chamberlain's concern is the fear of the infecting element of female transvestism and the worry over a world that is turned upside down by it. Women behaving like men put the world out of order; the pervasive anxiety over change is blamed on and encapsulated in the issue of female transgression.³⁴ It seems that although James' edict was followed enthusiastically by the clergy and others, the king was not satisfied. In a second letter to Carleton, dated February 12, 1620, only two weeks after the first, Chamberlain reports that

our pulpits ring continually of the insolence and impudence of
women, and to help the matter forward the players have likewise
taken them to task, and so to the ballads and ballad singers, so that
they can come nowhere but their ears tingle; and if all this will not
serve, the King threatens to fall upon their husbands, parents or
friends that have or should have power over them, and make them
pay for it.

Male authority is here held responsible for female misconduct. In Mary Beth Rose's words, "responsibility for the unconventional style of female dress, recognised by all as deformed, is seen to rest with men because she does." (377) But in spite of the threats there is no evidence that James did indeed pursue the "husbands, parents or friends" of transvestite women. However, excepting *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, published within one week of each other in 1620, the pamphlets on cross dressed women seem to

have petered out after James' complaints. Arguably the royal displeasure at female transvestism put an end to the popular appeal of the subject.³⁵

The second exception to the absence of the colluding male is *Hic Mulier*. Whereas most of the tract addresses the female culprit, the author also declares the "cure of this Impostume [insolence]" to belong to "the fathers, Husbands, or Sustainers of these new Hermaphrodites": "It is you that gives fuel to the flames of their wild indiscretion; you add the oil which makes their stinking Lamps defile the whole house with filthy smoke ... Do you but hold close your liberal hands or take strict account of the employment of the treasure you give to their necessary maintenance, and these excesses will either cease or else die smothered in the Tailor's Trunk for want of Redemption." (275) The author then refers to Seneca, Lycurgus, and other civic leaders who resisted changes in any form. Lycurgus "made it death in one of his Statutes to bring in any new custom into his Commonwealth". The early modern anxiety over change to the English commonwealth is here overtly expressed as ultimately the liability of the cross dresser, and initially the responsibility of weak male relatives. If men enact their natural duties of social and economic control the world can be "un-inverted", and "the monstrous deformity ... [that is] not half man / half woman, half fish / half flesh, half beast / half monster, but all Odious, all Devil" would be defeated.

The elements of WUD in which lines between male and female and animal and human become erased lead the *Hic Mulier* author to speak of deformity and monstrosity. Monstrosity and WUD indeed share an essential quality in that both contain the thing and its opposite. The image of the WUD masculine woman indicates both the kind of woman this woman is, and the kind of woman this woman is not: that which deviates from the

norm itself asserts norm. Likewise, deformity contains within it reference to the thing in its natural form. If the interpreter of the image was ignorant of the natural condition of a thing, then s/he would not recognise that it is in this instance deformed. Like all inversions, WUD and deformed monstrosities refer both to the right and the wrong, the high and the low, the sane and the insane, the natural and the unnatural, and the whole and the deformed. The language of distortion thus lent itself quite naturally to the subject of transvestism, and “masculine feminines” are frequently portrayed as “monstrous deformity” (*Hic Mulier* 266) in the pamphlets. In *Hic Mulier* alone the author refers to cross dressers as “stranger things then ever Noah’s Ark unloaded or Nile engendered” (266), “monstrous deformity” (267, 268, 272, 276), “Mer-monsters” (268), “barbarous, ... exorbitant from nature and an Antithesis to kind” (268), and “Hermaphrodites” (275).

Female grotesquerie in these pamphlets is itself hermaphroditically constituted, i.e. it has a double signification. First, the freak clothing indicates to the author a complementary abnormality in the wearer’s chastity. Women in male clothing inverted natural feminine chastity to become the “perfumed Carrion that bad men feed on in Brothels” (*Hic Mulier* 266). Second, by feeding into the traditions and theories regarding monsters as signs of God’s wrath the pamphlets identify the cross dressers as scapegoats for the early modern anxiety. After epitomising the new society’s problems in the transvestite woman the authors re-conceive her as the sign of God’s displeasure. The cross dresser paradoxically thus becomes both the sin and the sacrificial lamb, a “sacrificial monster” to coin a phrase. The disruption of the microcosmic order of female sexuality is thus mirrored in that of the macrocosmic order of providence.

Although motherhood was praised over virginity in the Renaissance, the mediaeval abhorrence of female sexuality remained a tradition in the latter period. The transvestite woman's rejection of gender-suited clothing thus frequently symbolised a similar rejection of gender-suited chastity.³⁶ The epitome of feminine behaviour in Renaissance England was "chaste, silent and obedient" as Suzanne Hull has extensively demonstrated. The *Hic Mulier* author describes the pinnacle of female conduct as unassailable domestic virtue:

You, oh you women, you good women, you that are in the
fullness of perfection, you that are the crowns of nature's work,
the complements of men's excellences, and the Seminaries of
propagation; you that maintain the world, support mankind, and
give life to society; you that, armed with the infinite power of
Virtue, are Castles impregnable, Rivers unsailable, Seas im-
movable, infinite treasures, and invincible armies; that are helpers
most trusty, Sentinels most careful, signs deceitless, plain ways
fail-less, true guides dangerless, Balms that instantly cure, and
honours that never perish. Oh do not look to find your names in
this Declamation, but with all honour and reverence do I speak to
you. You are Seneca's Graces, women, good women, modest
women, true women - every young because ever virtuous, ever
chaste, ever glorious. (265-6)

Juan Luis Vives insists that above all else a young girl's virginity should be closely guarded by her parents, both in her diet and in keeping her away from the company of men. "Chastity is the principal virtue of a woman", and because "shamefastness and

sobriety [must] be the inseparable companions of chastity” a woman must cover her face in public. Although she “must needs go sometimes, ... I would it should be as seldom as maybe, principally because as oft as a maid goeth forth among people, so often she cometh in judgement and extreme peril of her beauty, honesty, demureness, wit, shamefastness and virtue”. (70-1)

In opposition to the *Hic Mulier* author and Vives’ doctrine, the cross dressed woman exchanged her “prayerbook [for] bawdy legs” and arrayed herself in a way as “to give a most easy way to every luxurious action” (*Hic Mulier* 268, 267). Some of the pamphleteers emphatically establish a relationship between transvestism, female sexuality and world-threatening monstrosity, while others are content to hint at it. Harrison, for example, incriminates the London transvestites as being “trulls”, that is whores, and Stubbs suggests that women should “blush” to wear “the wanton, lewd kind of attire proper only to man” (Sig. f4). More subtly Williams intimates that the cross dressed woman in church carries a dagger “to kill (no doubt) the flesh and the devil” (79). Of the pamphlets in question *Hic Mulier* is the most insistent on the causal relationship between transvestism and unfettered female sexuality. Amongst many other references the author declares that the transvestite woman “will not work to get bread [but] will find time to weave herself points to truss her loose Breeches; and she that hath pawned her credit to get a hat will sell her Smock to buy a Feather; she that hath given kisses to have her hair shorn will give her honesty to have her upper parts put into a French doublet. To conclude, she that will give her body to have her body deformed will not stick to give her soul to have her mind satisfied.” (269) Female clothing protected a woman, male clothing allowed easy access to her: “[You] have cast off the ornaments of your sexes to put on the

garments of Shame ... [you] have laid by the bashfulness of your natures to gather the impudence of Harlots.” (266) Suspicious female sexuality is a tradition that easily lent itself to the topos of female transvestism, but unlike the Middle Ages where masculine clothing indicated the protection of the feminine attribute of chastity, in the Renaissance it signified the divesting of that self-same chastity.

Monstrous female sexuality reflected a greater metaphysical disruption. WUD is by nature constituted of monsters, of beings that are “antithesis to kind” (*Hic Mulier* 268), but the comedy of WUD is mitigated in the monster. During the Renaissance “monster” implied a “frightening sign of God’s wrath”. (Park and Daston 24) Whereas in the early years of the Reformation the correlation between monster and God’s ire was “almost universal”, by the “end of the seventeenth century only the most popular forms of literature -- ballads, broadsides, and the occasional religious pamphlet -- treated monsters in this way” (24). Significantly, discounting perhaps Chamberlain’s letters to Carleton, the polemical writings on transvestite women stem mostly from the popular literature of the years between 1580 - 1620. And whereas the meaning of “monster” began to take on implications of a medical and biological anomaly in the intellectual writings of the later Renaissance, in popular literature it remained a signal of divine wrath.³⁷

Luther is credited with being the first to use monsters as “a tool of religious polemic”(26), that is as satirical method of attack in order to warn against the displeasure of God.³⁸ The topos quickly became a favourite one in English popular literature. For example, in a ballad entitled “A Description of a Monstrous Child” (1562) monsters are beacons of the apocalypse of a world upside down:

The Scripture sayeth, before the end

Of all things shall appear,
 God will wonders strange things send,
 As some is seen this year.

The silly infants, void of shape,
 The calves and pigs so strange,
 With other more of such mishape,

Declareth this world's change. (Qtd. in Park and Daston 34)³⁹

The sixteenth century correlation between monsters and a world that has deviated from its divinely ordained intention to the point of expiration is at the base of many of the polemics on cross dressed women. The concept that the transvestite woman turned the world upside down has already been demonstrated as overwhelmingly present in the pamphlets; when *Hic Mulier* is accused of changing "for the Needles, Swords", (*Hic Mulier* 268) and addressed as "most courageous counterfeit of Hercules and his Distaff" (*Haec Vir* 279) the WUD motif in which the two sexes invert their life-roles and the accompanying accoutrements is evident. Just as prevalent as the motifs of WUD, however, are the accusations of monstrosity and deformity. Along with the onerous number of references in *Hic Mulier* listed above (Woodbridge states that the words deform(ed) and deformitie(s) are used twenty-one times in the pamphlet (145)), Harrison declares that when women become men they "transform[]" men into "monsters" (147), Williams bewails the "*mulier formosa* [beautiful woman] [who] is now become *mulier monstrosa superne* [a monstrous woman], half man half woman" (78), Adams asserts that woman now "bears the image of man indeed, but in a cross and mad fashion; almost to the quite defacing of the image of God" (Sig. H2) and William Averell criticises the

“Androgini, who counterfeiting the shape of either kind, are indeed neither ... While they are in condition women, and would seem in apparel men, they are neither men nor women, but plain Monsters” (*A Marvellous Combat of Contrarieties* (1588) Sig. B1). By emptying both genders of signification these androgynes dissolve other boundaries to pervert the world from its divinely ordained plan. The apocalyptic subtext is more blatant in Stubbs:

It is written in the 22 of Deuteronomy, that what man so ever weareth woman's apparel is accursed, and what woman weareth man's apparel is accursed also. Now, whether they be within the bands and limits of that curse, let them see to it themselves. Our Apparel was given us as a sign distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore one to wear the Apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the verity of his own kind. Wherefore these Women may not improperly be called Hermaphroditi, that is, Monsters of both kinds, half women, half men. (Sig. f4)

The hermaphrodites who deny God's distinction between the sexes and the biblical decree to keep those distinctions are “accursed” monsters. They derail the world from the course designated by God, and thus they become neither gender but monsters that bear the signs of a final, punitive destruction. The early modern anxiety over a world that has transgressed previously adamant laws of society, nature and God has become located in the transvestite female monster, a monster who symbolises divine anger and the future sanctioning of the transgression. The transvestite woman is paradoxically both the cause

of God's and society's anger and the promise / threat that this anger shall punish and scourge the offender: she contains both the offence and its punishment.

The equation between female transvestism and the monstrous inversion was challenged and refuted by only one of the pamphlets on the subject: *Haec Vir: or the Womanish-Man: Being an Answer to a late Book entitled "Hic Mulier"* (1620). When *Hic Mulier* runs into her male counterpart *Haec Vir* on the street in London, a comic scene ensues in which each mistakes the other for the opposite gender. *Hic Mulier* believes *Haec Vir* to be either mad or mocking her when he refers to her as "worthy Sir (for less than a Knight I cannot take you)", and when *Haec Vir* reveals that he is a man she calls him a "most tender piece of masculine". (278) Humour notwithstanding, *Hic Mulier's* social climbing is immediately evident when *Haec Vir* assumes that she is a Knight, and later he likewise claims to be "no stranger either in Court, City, or Country". While each initially attempts to out-manner the other with exaggerated courtesy, the trappings of polite society soon fall away upon recognition each other's true gender. *Haec Vir* then suggests to take "a full survey" of this being who "hath raised the whole Kingdom in Arms against her"⁴⁰. *Hic Mulier* agrees to let *Haec Vir* "survey" her but requests that she "may likewise take [his] picture and refer to censure whether [which] of [their] deformities is most injurious to Nature" (279). In this statement *Hic Mulier* demonstrates her awareness of the conventions of the invective against her and proposes to address the accusations of monstrosity and inversion (WUD). Her most significant contribution to the debate, however, will be a spirited and logically argued defence of change, which she complements by exposing the arbitrary nature of custom and tradition. Over three

centuries later, *Hic Mulier's* apology of her right to choice of clothing and lifestyle remains the most logical, modern-sounding, and intelligent of all the cross-dressing tracts.

Haec Vir begins by listing the charges made by *Hic Mulier* against *Hic Mulier's* "deformity of ... apparel": "Baseness, in making yourself a slave to novelty and the poor invention of every weak brain ... Unnaturalness, to forsake the Creation of God and Customs of the Kingdom ... Shamefulness, in casting off all modest softness and civility to run through every desert and wilderness of men's opinions ... [and] foolishness, in having no moderation or temper either in passions or affection." (280) *Haec Vir's* accusations distil the elements argued by this chapter as being at the core of the polemical vilification of transvestism. *Hic Mulier* is "base" because she brings change to societal laws that are perceived as immutable, "unnatural" because she monstrously perverts God's creation and turns upside down the kingdom, and shameful and foolish because she allows her sexuality to dictate her actions.

Hic Mulier's response does not so much deny her guilt as it questions the terms of the accusations. She does not accept that she is a "slave to novelty" as much as she disagrees that change and novelty are in and of themselves detrimental: "What slavery can there be in freedom of election, or what baseness to crown my delights with those pleasures which are most suitable to mine affections? Bondage or Slavery is a restraint from those actions which the mind of its own accord doth most willingly desire, to perform the intents and purposes of another's disposition ... by the force of authority and the strength of compulsion." (281) Redefining freedom as a personal choice rather than the dictates of convention, *Hic Mulier* strikes a blow for autonomy and individuation: "Now for me to follow change according to the limitation of mine own will and pleasure,

there cannot be a greater freedom.” Conscious that she may be further indicted with profiting from personal liberty at the cost of others she adds, “nor do I in my delight of change other than as the whole world doth, or as becometh a daughter of the world to do”. *Hic Mulier* does not perceive herself as a dissident. She is a member of society, and willingly so; she is a “daughter of the world” and loving change is simply an expression of that constituency, “for what is the world but a very shop or warehouse of change?” Clark hints that *Hic Mulier*’s response may seem an “espousal of relative rather than absolute values” (175). But *Hic Mulier* is not any more a relativist than she is a revolutionary. She rather espouses the idea that context matters: change cannot be summarily dismissed as base when nature is itself “sometimes Winter, sometimes Summer; day and night”, and people “hold sometimes Riches, sometimes Poverty, sometimes Health, sometimes Sickness, now Pleasure, presently Anguish ... to conclude, there is nothing but change which doth surround and mix with all our Fortunes” (281). In fact change is itself natural: “Nature to everything she hath created hath given a singular delight in change”, trees wither, leaves change and flowers bud and shrivel. Moreover, beasts have the “liberty to choose their food, liberty to delight in their food, and liberty to feed and grow fat with their food”, and likewise birds, “but to man [is given] both these and all things else to alter, frame, and fashion according as his will and delight”. (282) Unlike animalkind, humankind partakes in a natural ability to enjoy variety and thus change cannot be unnatural or base. Moreover change cannot be withheld from one gender: “Shall woman, excellent woman, so much better in that she is something purer, be only deprived of this benefit? Shall she be the bondslave of Time, the Handmaid of opinion, or the strict

observer of every frosty or cold benumbed imagination? It were a cruelty beyond the Rack or Strappado?"

Hic Mulier's defence of change is critically important, first because it articulates and focuses the anxiety that is frequently only implicit in the other pamphlets, and second because it defends rather than scapegoats it in one figure. Change can be natural, and with reason and intelligence it may be glorious rather than cause for apprehension. And foreseeing *Haec Vir's* retort that his objection was "not Change but Novelty" she illustrates that all change at its inception is regarded as novelty: "Alas, soft Sir, what can you christen by the new imagined Title, when the words of a wise man are 'That what was done, is but done again; all things do change, and under the cope of Heaven there is no new thing'⁴¹. So that whatsoever we do or imitate, it is nether slavish, Base, nor a breeder of Novelty." (282) Whereas there are defences and encomiums of innovation in Renaissance literature, *Hic Mulier's* is unique in the cross dressing pamphlets. The early modern malaise is here addressed and mitigated somewhat. *Hic Mulier* does not address the menace of class or economic disintegration, as does Stubbs for example, but she does proffer a conceptualisation of change as natural progress rather than irreparable decadence.

Hic Mulier thus demonstrates to *Haec Vir* that his challenge was really one of "opinion" and "imagination", that is of custom, rather than of change *per se*. Having redefined the terms of the debate *Hic Mulier* turns her attention to customs, asserting that some are convention while others are absolute. She argues that her choice of clothing must fall within the first category for she is "only offensive in attire, inasmuch as it is a Stranger to the curiosity of the present times and an enemy to Custom" (282). Her

debunking of custom is a learned and erudite one. In true Renaissance style she supports her argument with the classics, citing Martial, Virgil and Cato to reveal that habits such as how to bathe, where to sit, and what to eat fluctuate with time. Moreover, she quotes Guillaume du Bartas, a French religious poet who was favoured in the Elizabethan era to prove in du Bartas' own words that "Custom the World's Judgement doth blind so far, / That Virtue is oft arraigned at Vice's bar" (285). *Hic Mulier* does not simply reject custom. Rather she argues that it must be viewed in context of time and change; without intelligence and reason custom is folly: "To conclude, Custom is an Idiot, and whosoever dependeth wholly upon him without the discourse of Reason will take from him his pied coat and become a slave indeed to contempt and censure." (284)

Hic Mulier is insistent on her reason. In the face of *Haec Vir*'s accusation of a weak mentality and of "casting off all modest softness and civility" she firmly declares her rational, logical and controlled behaviour: "My countenance shall smile on the worthy and frown on the ignoble; I will hear the Wise and be deaf to Idiots; give counsel to my friend, but be dumb to flatterers. I have hands that shall be liberal to reward desert, feet that shall move swiftly to do good offices, and thoughts that shall ever accompany freedom and severity." (284) Her thoughts and acts are driven by careful consideration and logic.

Having dismissed gendered clothing as arbitrary custom and convincingly established her chastely rational and controlled mode of comportment, *Hic Mulier* turns her attention to WUD. Although *Haec Vir* has taxed her with changing creation rather than of inverting it *per se*, *Hic Mulier* is cognisant that WUD plays a central role in the indictment of cross dressers and she engages the convention: "To alter creation were to

walk on my hands with my heels upward, to feed myself with my feet, or to forsake the sweet sound of sweet words for the hissing noise of the Serpent. But I walk with a face erect, with a body clothed, with a mind busied, and with a heart full of reasonable and devout cogitations.” (282) The dignity of her response and its emphasis on rational thought and behaviour undermines the notion that a woman in man’s clothing is as ridiculous as walking upside down.

Hic Mulier likewise challenges the accusation of being a monstrous inciter of God’s wrath. Refusing the label of monster she portrays herself as pleasing God by acting in the way He expects of her: “How do I forsake my creation, that do all the rights and offices due to my Creation? I was created free, born free, and live free; what lets [hinders] me then so to spin out my time that I may die free?” (282) And again, “We are as freeborn as Men, have as free election, and as free spirits; we are compounded of like parts and may with like liberty make benefit of our Creations.” (284) Once more she redefines the terms of the charge, arguing that by acting freely she fulfils her divine destiny rather than monstrously transgresses it. She categorically refuses to accept that her behaviour is in any way monstrous and worthy of castigation:

I confess that Discretion is the true salt which seasoneth every excellence; either in Man or Woman, and without it nothing is well, nothing is worthy; that want disgraceth our actions, staineth our Virtues, and indeed makes us most profane and irreligious. Yet it is ever found in excess, as in too much or too little And which of these are we guilty? Do we wear too many clothes or too few? If too many, we should oppress Nature; if too few, we should bring sick-

ness to Nature; but neither of these we do, for what we wear is warm,
thrifty, and wholesome. Then no excess, and so no indiscretion -
where is then the error? Only in the Fashion, only in the Custom. (284-5)

Hic Mulier's defence of cross dressing extends past the transvestite woman to portray all women as rational, intelligent, free born members of society who are at the mercy of patriarchal custom. Her defence is a reasoned and impassioned plea. Whereas there are men and women who wrote in defence of the female and who portrayed the arbitrary and patriarchal nature of Renaissance custom, *Hic Mulier's* speech in *Haec Vir* is the only defence amongst many attacks on the subject of cross dressing.

However convincing to a modern reader, *Hic Mulier's* defence is unacceptable to *Haec Vir*, and rather than acknowledging her rational and reasoned freedom he taxes her with a "wilful liberty to do evil". *Hic Mulier's* apology also loses some of its initial impact for she admits that *Haec Vir* has "raised [her] eyelids up" although she maintains that he has "not clean taken away the film that covers the sight" (285). In justifying her rights she ironically admits to being blinded from truth, and although she proceeds to expose the "leprosy" she discerns in *Haec Vir*, the right to choice of clothing for both genders is somewhat negated by the remainder of the pamphlet. *Hic Mulier* turns the tables on *Haec Vir* to some extent by demonstrating that he commits the very sins of which he accuses her, charging him of appropriating female clothing, as well as "actions, sports and recreation". But ultimately her claim to an autonomous right to choice is undermined when she reasserts the male / female hierarchy. By declaring that women shall return to being women when men return to being men, *Hic Mulier* somewhat annuls

her redefinition of terms and concurs that her actions are in some ways deformed and inverted:

Cast then from you our ornaments, and put on your own armours:
 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
 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 though 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, and chastity in our thoughts, and sweetness both in our in-
 ward and outward inclinations. Comeliness shall be then our study,
 fear our Armour, and modesty our practice. (Sig. C4v)

As well as implying that transvestism is indeed unnatural and leads to the repudiation of chastity, *Hic Mulier* ironically restores the power of control and correction to men.⁴² *Haec Vir* in turn agrees that his action was “folly” and proposes that they should “exchange [their] attires, as [they] have changed [their] minds” and “pack” “deformity ... [back] to Hell”. (288)

Haec Vir has been interpreted by some critics as being in the final count recuperative of the hierarchical relationship between the genders and conservative in its position on transvestism.⁴³ Certainly it is consistent in its usage of the conventions employed by the other pamphlets on the subject. Like the history, sermons, letters and satires that preceded it, *Haec Vir* presented the Renaissance transvestite woman as encapsulating the anxieties of a world that was changing too fast to maintain economic

and social codes. The tract describes this female transgression in terms of comic WUD and serious God-angering monstrosity. Regardless of its conformity, *Haec Vir* must ultimately be recognised for its uniqueness in treating the transvestism of both genders extensively and indeed almost equally, and because it is the only tract which strikes a blow of any sort for female equality, independence, and rationality. As Dollimore argues, “to see the[] argument [that women shall return to being subordinate when men reclaim their rightfully superior status] as somehow cancelling what went before is probably to interpret the pamphlet according to inappropriate notions of authorial intention, character utterance, and textual unity (all three notions privileging what is said finally as being more truthful than what went on before)”. (“Subjectivity” 70) Mary Beth Rose likewise argues that elevating the concluding section over the remainder of the pamphlet is to overlook the most powerful aspect of it. *Hic Mulier*'s retreat is short, in comparison to her offence, and the “dominant logic” of her “stirring” apology of her freedom “remains the focus” of the work. (377) *Haec Vir*'s conclusion is conservative, but the tract is also simultaneously and perhaps paradoxically the most liberal and liberating of the pamphlets on cross dressing.

In “Subjectivity, Sexuality and Transgression: The Jacobean Connection” Dollimore delineates two notions of transgression, one conservative and the other radical. On the one hand conservative or what he calls “reinscriptive transgression”, a sixteenth century notion, inverts a thing into its opposite and thus ultimately confirms the hierarchy. “Radical transgression” on the other hand, a nineteenth and twentieth century notion, rejects the thing in favour of something new and completely authentic. Dollimore locates *Haec Vir*'s defence of transvestism in both categories. While it reinscribes hierarchies by

replacing female clothing and behaviour with its male inversion, it nevertheless radically transgresses the notion that gender is divinely immutable and replaces it with a notion that gender is "custom" and therefore variable. (53-70) Woodbridge perceives the transgression as being ultimately contained: "When *Hic Mulier* cried 'Custom is an idiot', she flung open the door to reveal vistas of freedom and equality. And then her creator, growing alarmed, bustled in and shut it again." (149) Regardless of the extent of the transgression engendered by this pamphlet, what is fundamentally at issue is power. Even if female transvestism reinscribes hierarchical notions of gender relations, that reinscription itself must be seen as an essentially momentous first step in finding a new voice for the female self. Renaissance women were attempting to make their voices heard in a variety of ways, including entering the debate on the value of women. When they entered the fray writers like Rachel Speght and Jane Anger were not just defending womankind, they were challenging masculine prerogatives by writing and publishing. By authoring fiction and pamphlets these women were by Renaissance standards also acting like men. Yet modern criticism does not now perceive them as reinscribing hierarchies or confirming the status quo by functioning within binary oppositions. If as modern readers we extend the same privilege to the cross dressed women of the pamphlets, or at least to the *Hic Mulier* of *Haec Vir*, we should be able to perceive transvestism not as women's efforts to become men but rather as serious negotiations for power qua women. *Hic Mulier* is not so much coveting maleness as she is insisting on her own freedom. As Woodbridge adds, even if the author finally closes the door on female freedom "at least the door had been found. Someday it would be opened again, and through it would march Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, Susan B. Anthony and John Stuart Mill,

Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan.” *Hic Mulier* cannot be construed as a complete feminist by twentieth century standards. By seventeenth century strictures however, her erudite, passionate and logical defences of women’s freedom and of change are not only feminist, they are downright revolutionary.

III

Coda

Although this dissertation is not treating transvestism in poetry, there are two poems which nevertheless belong to this discussion: “To Pamphilia from the Father-in-Law of Seralius” and “Railing Rimes Returned upon the Author by Mistress Mary Wrothe”. Both poems are polemical in nature for they address a “real-life” incident, contain polemical rhetoric, and employ the conventions of the tracts on cross dressing. After the publication of the first part of Mary Wroth’s *Urania*⁴⁴ “a violent quarrel erupted” between Edward Denny and Wroth (Roberts 31). Denny charged “that he and his family had been maliciously slandered in the work and that his personal affairs had been thinly disguised in the episode of Seralius and his father in law”.⁴⁵ In retaliation he wrote a poem to Worth in which he implied that by writing fiction Wroth transgressed boundaries that divide men from women. These poems blatantly reveal that what is truly at issue in the charge of hermaphrodism is the claim to power. Because of the light they shed on the polemical issues, both poems are here reprinted in full.⁴⁶

“To Pamphilia from the Father-in-Law of Seralius”

Hermophradite in show, in deed a monster

As by thy words and works all men may conster

Thy wrathful spite conceived in Idell book

Brought forth a foole which like the damme doth look
 Wherein thou strikes at some mans noble blood 5
 Of kinne to thine if thine be counted good
 Whose vaine comparison for want of witt
 Takes up the oystershell to play with it
 Yet common oysters such as thine gape wide
 And take in pearles or worse at every tide 10
 Both friend and foe to thee are even alike
 Thy witt runns madd not caring who it strike
 These slanderous flying f[l]ames rise from the pott
 For potted witts inflamed are raging hott
 How easy wer't to pay thee with thine owne 15
 Returning that which thou thy self hast throwne
 And write a thousand lies of thee at least
 And by thy lines describe a drunken beast
 This were no more to see then thou hast donne
 A Thrif but of thine owne which thou hast spunn 20
 By which thou plainly seest in thine owne glass
 How easy tis to bring a ly to pass
 Thus hast thou made thy self a lying wonder
 Fooles and their Bables seldome part asunder
 Work o th' Workes leave idel bookes alone 25
 For wise and worthyer women have writte none.

Denny accuses Wroth of hermaphrodism and monstrosity (1, 20-23, 25-26), of irrationality (2-3, 7, 11-12, 15-18, 24), of an infectious quality which engenders more grotesquerie (4), of failing the requirements of her class and his (5-6), of sluttish behaviour which stems from lack of reason (9-10, 14), and of irreligious sentiment (25-6). The possible pun on Wroth's name in the final line reveals Denny's belief that by writing fiction Wroth destroyed the lines of difference that divide men from women and good women from bad

Wroth's reply undertakes to respond to each of the accusations. Like *Hic Mulier* in *Haec Vir* she also turns the tables on Denny by levelling his very charges against him:

"Railing Rimes Returned upon the Author by Mistress Mary Worth"

Hermaphrodite in sense in Art a monster
 As by your railing rimes the world may conster
 Your spitefull words against a harmless booke
 Shows that an ass much like the sire doth looke
 Men truly noble fear no touch of blood 5
 Nor question make of others much more good
 Can such comparisons seme the want of witt
 When oysters have enflamed your blood with it
 But it appeares your guiltiness gapt wide
 And filld with Dirty doubt your brain swolne tide 10
 Both friend and foe in deed you use alike
 And your mad witt in sherry aequall strike
 These slaunderous flying flames raisd from the pott

You know are false and raging makes you hott
 How easily now do you receave your owne 15
 Turnd on your self from whence the squibb was throwne
 When these few lines not thousands writt at least
 Mainly thus prove your self the drunken beast
 This is far less to you than you have donne
 A T[h]rid but of your owne all wordes worse spunn 20
 By which you lively see in your owne glasse
 How hard it is for you to ly and pass
 Thus you have made your self a lying wonder
 Fooles and their pastimes should not part asunder
 Take this then now lett railing rimes alone 25
 For wise and worthier men have written none

Wroth's language satirises Denny's and further humiliates him by illustrating that many of the defects of which he accused her are in reality his own. She charges him with hermaphrodism and monstrosity (1, 23-24), with failing the demands of true nobility (5-6), with irrationality and drunken reason (7-8, 11-14, 20-22), with stupidly revealing his own guilt (9-10), with having committed much worse crimes than those of which he accuses her (19) and with failing the art of poetry (25-26). Lust and contagion are missing from Wroth's list, but every other issue at the heart of the polemical debate is present.

The two poems aid in sharpening the focus of the pamphlet debate. In spite of their personal nature they reveal that the polemics against female transvestism in the Renaissance were in truth a mode of limiting and controlling female power. By making

the woman who wears breeches a monster, and the woman who writes a hermaphrodite, certain elements of society sought to pinpoint an independent woman as a social pariah and to shame her into desisting her threatening actions. As demonstrated above, the transvestite woman was furthermore invested with a host of other anxieties which could conveniently be summarised in her. A scapegoat and a punching bag, the early modern pamphlet transvestite illustrates a despicable womanhood.

Not all early modern writings on empowered women sought to condemn them however. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the stage cross dresser illustrates powerful women in ways that lessen the purely female culpability evinced by the pamphlets. The drama presents the female transvestite as at most wholly admirable as a woman and at least as inherently no worse than a man. In spite of such contrast, both pamphlet and play aver an incontrovertible association between transvestism and the malaise over a new commercial way of life.

Endnotes

¹ Jean Howard cites the work of R. Mark Benbow who researched records from Bridewell and the Aldermen's court to demonstrate that cross dressed women were arrested during the latter half of the sixteenth century and charged with prostitution as well as wearing male clothing. Dorothy Clayton, for example, was arrested because "contrary to all honesty and womanhood [she] commonly goes about the City appparelled in man's attire [and] she has abused her body with sundry persons and lived an incontinent life" (Repertory of the Aldermen's Court, no. 19, p. 93; qtd. in Howard, "Cross Dressing" 420) R. Valerie Lucas also writes of women arrested for beating their husbands and for cross dressing. "A woman servant in Littlebury (1585) 'did wear man's apparel disorderly in her master's house.' When the wife of Jacob Cornwall of Terling was accused of adultery with one Thomas Burles in 1592, part of the evidence against her was that she 'useth to wear young men's garters and said she would do so until they came for them'." (66-68)

² The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory defines polemic as "a vigorous dispute, a controversy, especially in politics and religion". (726) The debate over female cross dressing was an ongoing one between 1580 and 1620, although there are references which precede and succeed these dates. The polemics are mostly non-fiction (see footnote 9) and are mostly composed of short, pamphlet-sized tracts, for example William Averell's "A Marvellous Combat of Contrarieties". However there are longer works, for example Thomas Stubbs' Anatomy of Abuses and William Harrison's The Description of England. Some of the tracts are completely dedicated to the subject, for example Hic Mulier and Haec Vir, while other works include the subject as one of many, for example The Anatomy and The Description of England. The polemics also cover many genres: sermons, for example Thomas Adams' "Mystical Bedlam" and John Williams' "A Sermon of Apparel"; history, for example The Description of England; and satire, for example Hic Mulier. In this and the following chapters I shall refer to these works variously as "polemical tracts", "polemical fiction", "polemical literature", "polemical pamphlets", "tracts", "polemics" and "pamphlets", even though there are some contradictions within these terms. I am using these terms

interchangeably here to mean a work which in any generic manner treats as real the subject of women who cross dressed in contemporary Renaissance society, and in which the author offers an opinion on the subject.

¹ As well as the continued success of the writings of Jerome and Tertullian amongst other Church Fathers, and such popular tales transmitted from continental writers like Boccaccio, Capellanus and Jacques de Vitry, there are during the latter Middle Ages specifically English works that continue the debate over the value of women. Works such as Walter Map's "Letter of Valerius to Ruffinus, Against Marriage" in *De nugis curialium*, John of Salisbury's *The Footsteps of Courtiers*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* as well as his translation of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, sustain the tradition of illustrating the destructive effects of womankind.

¹ The polemicists' response to stage transvestism is more variegated. See for example Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* which is cited later in this section.

¹ Jean Howard is a notable exception. She argues that "from at least 1580 to 1620 preachers and polemicists kept up a steady attack on the practice [of cross dressing] ... However, the subversive or transgressive potential of this practice could be and was recuperated in a number of ways. As with any social practice, its meaning varied with the circumstances of its occurrence, with the particulars of the institutional or culture sites of its enactment ... As part of stage action, for example, the ideological import of cross dressing was mediated by all the conventions of dramatic narrative and Renaissance dramatic production. It cannot simply be conflated with cross dressing on the London streets or as part of a disciplining ritual such as charivari or skimmington. ("Cross Dressing " 418) Unlike Howard, Linda Woodbridge tends to perceive pamphlet and drama as one. When she states that "the ambivalence with which the hermaphrodite had always been greeted allowed Jacobean moralists to use the hermaphrodite image either to damn or to praise modern sex-role changes [and] it is surprising how many writers use it for praise" (141), she is conflating pamphlet with drama in a way that does not accurately reflect Renaissance distinctions. This chapter will demonstrate that excepting *Haec Vir* the pamphlets all condemn female transvestism. The following chapter will illustrate

that though the drama was more kindly towards female cross dressing, it did not “praise” hermaphroditism by any means.

⁶ See Paula S. Berggren “‘A Prodigious Thing: The Jacobean Heroine in Male Disguise” for a discussion on the social attitude toward dramatic cross dressing that cites no contemporary social commentary.

⁷ The question of the correlation between genre and attitude is beyond the parameters of this dissertation for it is a large question that requires research in a separate direction.

⁸ The non-fiction that criticises the masculine woman has been demonstrated at length in the preceding chapters. Romance is the primary example of fiction that upholds female transvestism. Romances such as Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso (first English translation in 1591) and the anonymous Frederyke of Jennen (originally German and Dutch, and translated into English by 1518) present cross-dressed heroines who negotiate obstacles in order to be joined to men who love them.

⁹ I categorise polemical pamphlets as mostly non-fiction for the writers consciously present themselves as commentators on contemporary popular life. For example, William Harrison in The Description of England remarks on the current state of affairs in comparison with “in times past” and claims that he has personally “met with some of these” cross dressers in London. (147) Certainly some of his statements may be fictitious, but they are presented as non-fictive biographical observations. Truth about contemporary life is the motive behind all pamphlets whether the writer is an “historian” like Harrison; clergy like John Williams; or social critic like William Averell. The line between fiction and non-fiction indeed becomes a fine one in some of these works. In addition to polemical rhetoric and a subject that exists “really” in contemporary society, some works include fictional accounts of place and character. In spite of these attributes of “fiction” however the pamphlets never include plot or character development in any way. One of the most significant works which uses fiction is Philip Stubbs’ Anatomy of Abuses. The Anatomy is a dialogue between two fictive characters about the foibles of the made-up country of Ailgna. There is never any doubt that the focus of Stubbs’ satire is London and its inhabitants.

¹⁰ Jerome's spiritually male woman is legitimated but the Wife of Bath's domineering ways are not.

¹¹ Some critics have expanded this perception to argue that Renaissance theatre held a predominantly homoerotic appeal. Lisa Jardine "suggests" that "wherever Shakespeare's female characters in the comedies draw attention to their own androgyny ... the resulting eroticism is to be associated with their maleness rather than with their femaleness" (Harping 20). Stephen Greenblatt argues that in the Renaissance there was "a conception of gender that was teleologically male" (Negotiations 88) and that cross-dressed boy actors occasioned a homoerotic response from the audience. (See Jardine 9-36 and Greenblatt 66-93) These issues will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

¹² Heywood's defence of cross-dressed boy actors is itself part of another popular concern amongst the polemicists, that the cross dressed boy would himself become effeminate and engender 'unnatural' homoerotic desire amongst male spectators. John Rainoldes for example "charges" plays for "teaching them [young boy-actors] to counterfeit her [a whore's, like "the lewd woman in the Proverbs"] actions, her wanton kiss, her impudent face, her wicked speeches and enticements ... Thetis taught Achilles how to play the woman in gate, in speech, in gesture ... these are women's manners unseemly for Achilles to imitate: he should not have done it. How much less seemly then is it for young men to dance like women, though like those who praised God with dances: and much less seemly yet to dance like dishonest women, like Herodias? whereby what a flame of lust may be kindled in the hearts of men ... When Critobulus kissed the son of Alcibiades, a beautiful boy, Socrates said he had done amiss and very dangerously ... beautiful boys by kissing do sting and power secretly in a kind of poison, the poison of incontinency." (Letter from John Rainoldes to Thomas Thornton, 6 February 1592, in K. Young, "An Elizabethan defence of the stage", note 13; qtd in Jardine, Harping 17)

¹³ Only recently has there been studies executed on the numbers of women who cross dressed in public during the Renaissance. There are, for example, a dozen cases recorded in the extant Repertories of the Court of Alderman and in the Minute Books for the Court at Bridewell Hospital. These cases were reprinted in full only in 1994 as Appendix C in Michael Shapiro's Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage. Most of

the women mentioned in these cases were poor and were rightly or wrongly also accused of prostitution. There are also some middle class women who cross dressed but again there are no exact numbers. Shapiro simply states that "a number of women began wearing selected articles of male attire, such as feathered hats and doublets and real or ornamental swords. Unlike the women in Dutch or London court cases, these Jacobean women made no effort to pass as men or boys. This phenomenon was a manifestation of a controversy over gender roles between 1610 and 1620, although there are some earlier allusions to the practice, a controversy often referred to by the title of one of the pamphlets it evoked, *Hic Mulier*." (20-21) Shapiro is somewhat narrow in his dating of the controversy for it actually began in the 1580s. Moreover, it is unclear whether the polemics were reacting to female cross dressers or whether the women were cross dressing because of the pamphlets. The pamphlets indicate that huge numbers of women were indeed wearing male clothing, but there has been little evidence discovered to back up such a claim. The polemical cross dressed woman is therefore as much fiction as she is fact. The focus of this chapter is not the women who truly cross dressed in public, but rather the women who are represented as real by the polemics.

¹⁴ More mourns a society that, amongst other crimes, starves the poor in order that the rich may prosper: "Consider with your selves some barren and infrutiful year, wherein many thousands of people have starved for hunger. I dare be bold to say, that in the end of that penury so much corn or grain might have been found in the rich men's barns, if they had been searched, as being divided among them, whom famine and pestilence hath killed, no man at all should have felt that plague and penury." (*Utopia* II.ix. 305)

¹⁵ For changes in economy and society see Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* and Louis B. Wright's *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*. For changes in perceptions of the cosmos see Tobias Swinden's *An Enquiry into the Nature and Place of Hell* (London: Printed by W. Bowyer for W. Taylor at the Ship in Pater-Noster-Row, H. Clements at the Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1714) who gives 'scientific' proof that hell is located in the sun. For the effects of changing religions see Jonathan Dollimore *Radical Tragedy*. Dollimore argues that "on the Renaissance stage the idea that divine and/or natural law informs identity is being interrogated, [and] the result is not man released from mediaeval shackles, but subjects caught up in a messy conflictual displacement of the

metaphysical (divine/natural law) by the social. The contradictions of history flooded the space vacated by metaphysics.” (xxxi) See Also Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning.

¹⁶ For this and other citations from texts in their original form, for example Stubbs’ Anatomy of Abuses, I have modernised the spelling but kept the original punctuation, archaic verb usage, and capitalisation. Modern versions of the texts can be differentiated from the original ones by the pagination form.

¹⁷ For example, Arthur Dent in The Plain Mans Path-way to Heaven (1601) comments on the pride of women with regards to dress: “For when they have spent a good part of the day in tricking and trimming, pricking and pinning, prancing and pouncing, girding and lacing, and braving up themselves in the most exquisite manner, then out they come into the streets with their Peddler’s shop about their back, and carry their crests very high, taking themselves to be little Angels: or at least somewhat more then other women; whereupon they do so exceedingly swell with pride, that it is to be feared, they will burst with it as they walk in the street, and the beams in the houses do quake, and wonder at their monstrous, intolerable, and excessive pride: for it seemeth then they are altogether a lump of pride, a masse of pride, even altogether made of pride, and nothing else but pride, pride.” (Qtd. in Wright 478-9)

¹⁸ In “Fiction and Friction” Greenblatt recounts the story of Marin / Marie le Marcis who according to the medical documents of Jacques Duval believed herself first to be a woman, then a man, and was finally ordered by the court to wear female clothing until the age of twenty-five and not to have any sexual relations until that time. What happened after the age of twenty five the court records do not make clear. Greenblatt perceives Marin / Marie’s fluctuating sexual identity as an example of “Renaissance self fashioning” and concludes that “the concrete individual exists only in relation to forces that pull against spontaneous singularity and that draw any given life, however peculiarly formed, toward communal norms”. (75)

¹⁹ Greenblatt is by no means convinced by his words and he proceeds in fact to undermine his position by ‘proving’ that gender in the Renaissance was not so stable as might be understood from “the male writers of the period” (76). He holds that because the literature of the Renaissance included many stories about cross

dressing, "sexual difference, the foundation of all individuation, turns out to be unstable and artificial at its origin". Greenblatt here assumes that literature is more significant than what the "male writers of the period" believed, but gives no reason why. His discussion in "Fiction and Friction" is rather confusing, for he seems to argue that gender in the Renaissance is both stable and unstable. His conclusion is that the stability of Renaissance gender grew from its fundamentally unstable origin, and he bases his deductions on the medical writings of Jacques Duval. Duval argued that the gender of a child was decided by a struggle between male and female characteristics which ensued during conception and gestation. If neither characteristic was powerful enough, a hermaphrodite would be born, and the choice would then have to be made during that person's life time since female sexual organs were contained within the male. Following the discussion of Duval's theory Greenblatt states, "all of this implies, as I have suggested, the persistent doubleness, the inherent twoship of all individuals. But we should not conclude that the esoteric Neoplatonic speculations about androgyny in the Renaissance were in fact widespread; on the contrary, perceptions of gender doubleness were almost always closely linked to a belief in an internal power struggle between male and female principles. Proper individuation occurred as a result of the successful resolution of the friction between the competing elements, a resolution that was almost entirely bound up in medical manuals, as in theological tracts, with patriarchal ideology." In spite of the twists and contradictions in Greenblatt's argument, one may discern that at the heart of the matter is a Renaissance anxiety over gender identity. It is this anxiety that the cross dressed women embody.

²⁰ See Wright 482. The story of these two women seems to have been well known in the Renaissance, and it is often referred to as the "Overbury Case" or "Overbury murder". References to the murder occur within literary as well as polemical writings of the period. For a more extensive description of the Overbury affair see Henderson and McManus 267 n. 12 and Wright 482.

²¹ The modern adaptation of *Hic Mulier* leaves out certain passages which I have restored from the facsimile reprint edited by Baines. The page numbers refer to work in its modernised version, while the archaic pagination refers to the facsimile. Here, too, I have modernised the spelling, but maintained the punctuation, capitalisation, and the archaic usage of verbs.

²¹ Critics who wrote about fifty years ago do not see this same anxiety and instead tend to view the Renaissance as a period of stability and unhindered improvement. For example, in 1985 David Underdown disagreed with Peter Laslett's The World We Have Lost (London: Methuen, 1965) which "stress[es] the stability of English society throughout the entire pre-modern period, and dismiss[es] the signs of tensions as the minor conflicts that exist in even the most smoothly functioning social system." (116) In Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England (1935) Louis B. Wright also perceives Renaissance literature as celebrating new found freedom and change, even in the case of women: "Despite a recrudescence of mediaeval condemnations of the female sex, a new note of respect was creeping into the popular literature [of the Renaissance], as writers reflecting the trend of middle-class opinion arose to defend woman against her traducers ... Moreover, social progress was making for a new interest in discussions of the relations of the sexes, as women of all classes gradually increased their liberties ... In many crafts and trades, women took an increasingly important part, for the Renaissance woman was the able second-in-command to her husband, as many treatises on domestic relations ... testify." (465-66) However, as historians like Underdown, Stone and Herlihy have shown, Renaissance women lost such mediaeval liberties as the right to inherit and to pass on their wealth.

²² One exception to the lack of consideration of the crisis in religion, and an exception that itself treats the subject in relationship to the drama rather than the polemics, is Jonathan Dollimore's Radical Tragedy. Dollimore states that "in the Renaissance God was in trouble; 'he' was being subjected to sceptical interrogation, not least in the theatre. I say God, but mean a larger metaphysical scheme of things of which he is only a part, including providentialist theology and providentialist legitimation of the social order ... To deconstruct providence was also, necessarily and inevitably, to 'decentre' man." (xxix) Dollimore argues that because of this 'deconstruction of God', early modern identity is "constituted", that is, it is "an effect of what pre-exists it".

²³ Dollimore goes on to argue that "in some plays and tracts cross dressing is used to challenge traditional evaluations of women's inferior status" and to conclude that dress codes are cultural and therefore arbitrary constructions, rather than God-given inflexible laws. It "is custom, not nature or divine law, that

arranges things as they are; and that the laws of custom are also the laws of privilege and domination". (xvi) Whereas his statement is absolutely correct with regards to the drama, it is less so with regards to the tracts. For excepting *Haec Vir* the tracts uniformly condemn cross dressing. There are tracts that defend female dress. But barring the ambiguous *Haec Vir* there are none that in any way legitimate the wearing of male clothing by women.

²⁵ WUD is a comic motif in which elements are inverted into their opposite for a satirical and often entertaining effect. It is found in the popular practice of carnival, as Natalie Davis has extensively demonstrated, as well as in art and literature. Richard Brome's play *The Antipodes* has as premise a trip to the Antipodes, a land which inverts all that is natural and correct by English standards. Joseph Hall's Latin *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605), translated into English in 1609 by John Healey as *The Discovery of a New World*, sends a traveller to the Antarctic continent where he visits a topsy-turvy female ruled country called New Gynia (Lynda Boose argues convincingly that it should have been translated as Viraginia, i.e. a combination of "vir" meaning masculine and "gynia" a reference to female genitalia), which includes the city of Gynaecopolis and the province of Gynadria. Boose describes this country as one in which "the fear of a society based on gender inversion emerges into full-blown nightmare: men wear petticoats and remain at home 'strenuously spinning and weaving' while women wear the breeches, attend to military matters and farming, pluck out their husband's beards and sport long beards themselves, imperiously enslave their husbands, beat them daily, and 'while the men work, the women ... quarrel and scold'." (*Another World and Yet the Same: Bishop Joseph Hall's 'Mundus Alter et Idem'*. Trans and ed. John Millar Wands. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1981. II. 64; qtd. in Boose 261) For a description of some of the conventions of WUD in Renaissance drama, for example the "levelling of the nobility with the commonalty", see Ian Donaldson's *The World Turned Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* 1-23. David Kunzle in "The Iconography of the World Turned Upside Down" lists seven categories of world turned upside down motifs, culled from over sixty broadsheets from seven countries over three centuries. The first two in order of popularity are human to human, e.g. when the wife rules the husband, and human to animal, e.g. when the hare hunts the hunter.

²⁶ Valerie Lucas for example believes that "in popular festivals, transvestism and the reversal of sex-roles functioned as a kind of licensed misrule, and as such it was deemed unthreatening to patriarchal order because it remained safely contained within the realm of the 'festive' ... In English Renaissance poetry, drama, and pamphlet literature, writers attempt to overcome the threat which the unruly female poses to men." (65)

²⁷ Stallybrass locates the first theory of understanding WUD in the 1950s and to Max Gluckman's Custom and Conflict in Africa (1956), the second in the sixties, more specifically to the 1968 translation of Bakhtin's Rabelais and his World, and the third, in the seventies as a reaction to Bakhtin. See Stallybrass "World Turned Upside Down" 216-7 for a more extensive definition of the three "waves" of understanding the function of WUD.

²⁸ See for example Stallybrass' "The World Turned Upside Down" 203 in which the third panel from the left in the first strip of illustrations portrays the woman with the musket and the husband who spins. A French version of the same image can be found on Plate 1, between pages 20 and 21 in Ian Donaldson's The World Turned Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding.

²⁹ Moxey agrees with Stallybrass that WUD must be seen as culturally specific and argues that while in the Middle Ages WUD illustrations were used to argue against marriage, i.e. 'stay away from marriage or else you, like the man in the picture, will be controlled by your wife' (an attitude put forth by Jerome and Chrysostom amongst others), in the Renaissance they were used to urge husbands to control and curtail their wives' autonomy and independent wealth, i.e. 'when you marry do not let your wife have any freedom or money or she shall rule you'. Moxey believes that the change in attitude was caused by the decrease of work opportunities for women in the Renaissance due to the increase of the working class and the simultaneous efforts by the guilds to keep prices artificially low. As a result women were pushed out of the job market. The culture laboured to represent the working woman as a controlling monster in order to argue for the more rigid control over women and thus money. Moxey's theory is logical and has been put forth elsewhere, for example in David Herlihy's "Did Women have a Renaissance?". However, both Herlihy's and Moxey's

studies are poorly argued and do not provide sufficient evidence for a theory that is intriguing and, my instinct is to believe, correct.

³⁰ Spinning or weaving was a function appropriate only to women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. *Hic Mulier* for example berates the women who exchange "for Needles, Swords". John Taylor wrote "The Praise of the Needle", an introductory poem to a pattern book for needlework, in which he decreed that "for my country's quiet I should like, / that women kind should use no other pike, / It will increase their peace, enlarge their store, / To use their tongues less and their needles more, / The needle's sharpness profit yields, and pleasure / But sharpness of the tongue, bites out of measure."

³¹ See Underdown 123-26 for a discussion of the uses of the cucking stool, both in the Renaissance and before, and both in the towns and in the countryside. Underdown's conclusion is that there is an increase of the cucking of women for the offence of scolding during the Renaissance, an offence that did not seem to be as great a concern during the Middle Ages. Underdown further states that by the 16th century cucking had become reserved almost completely for women, whereas before it was a genderless punishment.

³² When it comes to the conventional, 'straight-dressed' unruly woman, the polemics follow tradition and hold the weak husband to blame, whether it be due to passive feebleness or active collusion. Joseph Swetnam's The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Forward, and inconstant women: Or the vanities of them, choose you whether. With a Commendation of wise, virtuous and honest Women. Pleasant for married Men, profitable for young Men, and hurtful to none (1615), a tract which went through ten printings by 1634 and which was avowedly written for middle class readers (Wright 486-7), calls women "night Crows for that commonly in the night they will make request for such toys as cometh in their heads in the day, for women know their time to work their craft. For in the night they will work a man like wax and draw him as the Adamant doth the Iron. And having once brought him to the vent of their bow, then she makes request for a gown of the new fashion stuff, or for a petticoat of the finest stamell, or for a hat of the newest fashion; her husband being overcome by her flattering speech and partly he yieldeth to her request, although it be a grief

to him for that he can hardly spare it out of his stock. Yet for quietness sake he doth promise what she demandeth, partly because he would sleep quietly in his bed.” (199)

³³ James' edicts and *Hic Mulier* are also very close to each other in terms of dates. Chamberlain's letters are dated January 1620 and *Hic Mulier* was published in the same year. It is thus possible to assume that the *Hic Mulier* author was following the royal command and changing the conventions of the earlier pamphlets which make little mention of colluding males.

³⁴ Woodbridge locates James' disapprobation of transvestism within a far larger more psychological than social misogyny: "Women of any sort, let alone viragos, received short shrift from James, whose misogyny was legendary ... His relationship with his favourites Carr and Buckingham was overtly homosexual ... James' pacifism helped create a climate where distinctions of the sexes broke down; but homosexuality allows the nation's leading woman-hater to re-establish barriers. Male homosexuality was peacetime's answer to the male bonding of soldiers ... both excluded women ... James' attacks on man-clothed women was the real-life equivalent of a prominent literary motif - the confrontation between the effeminate man and the aggressive woman." (144) James' homosexuality cannot be blamed for the popularity of the argument against cross dressed women, however, especially since the argument began in the 1580s, long before his accession. Rather James is expressing the same anxiety over uncontrollable change evinced by all the other writers on the subject.

³⁵ Whether or not Renaissance women stopped cross dressing in public after James made his opinion known is an unknown fact at this point in the studies of the subject. Arguably the subject might have become less appealing having run its full course with the publication of *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, two pamphlets which sum up and exhaust the arguments both for and against female transvestism. The topic did continue to appear sporadically but usually as a topic of fleeting interest. For example, in "In Praise of the Work", a dedicatory poem to the second edition (1620) of Alexander Nicchole's *A Discourse, of Marriage and Wiving*, William Lorte mocks the women who wear "poniards, pistols and the ruffling yellow, / The world and hell not parraling their fellow. / So base injurious shame of their creation, / Pleasing hell's

magistrate to wear his fashion. / Some reformation hath bin to their shames. / By his dread Majesty, thrice honoured James / Which in an instant of their choicest glee, / Unmasked their pride to widest infamy." (Qtd. in Wright 493) Significantly, even in passing the colluding males remain absent.

Paula S. Berggren argues that even in drama the cross dressed woman lost importance over the years, to the point that on the Caroline stage "deflowered and dishonoured, young women lurk on the sidelines of the action in the clothes of a boy, their identity not simply withheld but insignificant". (399) The Caroline stage was at its height in 1625, only five years after the publication of both *Hic Mulier* tracts.

³⁶ Boose offers the intriguing suggestion that the cucking stool could have been symbolic of the relationship between female sexuality and female unruliness: "Whether the term 'cucking stool' shares any actual etymological origins with 'cuckold' or not, the perceived equation between a scolding woman and a whore or 'quean' who cuckolded her husband probably accounts for the periodic use of 'coqueen' or 'cuckquean' for the cucking stool." (255)

³⁷ Katherine Park and Lorraine J. Daston argue that after 1620, and with the publication of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* in which he urged that "a particular natural history must be made of all monsters and prodigious births of nature; of every thing, in short, which is new, rare, and unusual in nature" (20), monsters began to be less the indicators of God's wrath and more the "signs of nature's fertility". Before that however, monsters were indicators of a world gone awry. To simplify a complex history, in the Middle Ages monsters were 'wonders', in the Renaissance signs of God's anger, and post Bacon they would become trivial curiosities.

³⁸ With Melanchthon Luther published *Deutung der czwo grewlichen, Bapstesels czu Rom und Munchkalbs zy Freijberg ijnn Meijsszen funden* (1523) in which he mocks the Roman Catholic Church with such woodcuts as the "monk-calf" and the "pope-ass". The "pamphlet was of great influence" and was frequently re-issued in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in English, French and Dutch, as well as the original German. For more information on the pamphlet and the Reformation's use of the monster as religious polemic see Park and Daston 26ff.

³⁹ This poem was originally published in 1562 and later reprinted in A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broadides, ed. Joseph Lilly (London, 1867) 202-3)

⁴⁰ It is tempting and quite logical to assume that *Haec Vir* is referring to James I protests against female transvestites, but without any further evidence the thought must remain an assumption.

⁴¹ It is not clear who *Hic Mulier* is citing.

⁴² In a highly ironic way *Hic Mulier*'s accusations constitute a third example of the colluding male.

⁴³ In spite of registering *Hic Mulier*'s contributions to the freedom of female autonomy, Woodbridge states that "one could argue that *Hic Mulier* is showing off female rhetorical skill by cleverly turning her opponent's arguments against him. But I am very much afraid that the passage was meant literally ... The praise of martial manliness and condemnation of peacetime effeminacy smack too much of Renaissance orthodoxy to be suspected of irony ... [Moreover], the dialogue would not have ended with *Haec Vir*'s proposal, apparently accepted by *Hic Mulier*, that they exchange clothes, behaviour, and Latin pronominal prefixes and live happily ever after." (147)

⁴⁴ The first part of the Urania was published in 1621, and the two poems that followed appeared in the same year. The poems were in circulation at the height of the *Hic Mulier* controversy and thus historically as well as conventionally are related to the debate.

⁴⁵ The "personal affairs" include an adulterous son in law, a miserable daughter, and a brutal and violent father in law (Denny himself) who threatened the life of his only daughter. Denny was apparently famed for his brutal ways, and James Hay, his son in law, for his extravagant and debauched behaviour. Roberts intimates that Wroth indeed intended Seralius and his father in law to be taken for Hay and Denny.

⁴⁶ I have chosen to copy these poems in their original idiosyncratic spelling to keep intact the metre and rhymes intended by the authors.

Chapter 5

Transvestism in Renaissance Comedy

I

Current scholarship on cross dressing in Renaissance drama revolves principally around two issues. First, female transvestism is perceived as integrally associated with sixteenth and seventeenth century boy actor conventions. The scholarship holds that the playing of female parts by boys led a Renaissance audience to construe a heroine's transvestism as a return to the actor's real gender. Critics like P.H. Parry and Michael Shapiro argue that the "self-referential practices of the English Renaissance theatre would probably have encouraged spectators to see the heroine's assumption of male disguise as the play-boy's resumption of his own identity" (Shapiro 51). These critics moreover advance that the playwright was permanently conscious of the character / actor dichotomy and hence constantly referred to it in the play. Second, and somewhat contradictorily, the scholarship engages the question of exactly how much power the playwright accorded his transvestite woman, and to what extent did he then reinscribe her within the constraints of Renaissance gender hierarchies. This query is primarily directed at Shakespeare's comedies. On the one hand critics like Juliet Dusinberre and Catherine Belsey argue that Shakespeare allowed his cross dressed female characters an "escape from the limitations of ... femininity" (Belsey 182). On the other hand, scholars like Lisa Jardine "maintain that the strong interest in women shown by Elizabethan and Jacobean drama does not in fact reflect newly improved social conditions, and greater possibility for women, but rather is related to the patriarchy's unexpressed worry about the great social changes which characterise the period - worries which could be made conveniently concrete in the

voluminous and endemic debates about ‘the woman question’” (Harping 6). This chapter focuses on the second issue. While it is true that the cross dressed character sometimes refers to or represents the transvestied actor, it is also true that female transvestism can be discussed as a distinct concern from early modern acting conventions. The interests of this dissertation are served by the study of character transvestism, and the manner in which transvestism relates to female empowerment and to the societal ills outlined by the polemics. Before discussing the implications of the heroine’s transvestism the chapter will proffer a brief justification of the position that these repercussions are not always inextricably involved in the boy actor convention.

While the transvestisms of the female character and male actor indeed sometimes coincide in the words or actions of the figure on stage, it is on the whole possible to analyse the dramatic practice of female cross dressing within the context of the Renaissance’s perception of femininity. Such a position argues against that of P.H. Parry who decrees that assessing the Shakespearean female character without awareness of the male actor “simply will not do”, and who mourns the fact that many scholars in fact ‘do’:

Every English dramatist who wrote for the public stage prior to the Restoration of the monarchy knew, when he imagined a woman in his plays, that she would have to be presented to an audience by a man - and by a man moreover who would be known to be a man throughout the entire length of the performance. This being so, one would expect some at least of the growing band of students of Shakespeare’s presentation of womanhood to have given some attention to this matter. But there seems

to be among them a curious reluctance to do so. (107)¹

Parry extends an “honourable exception” to Jardine’s Still Harping on Daughters which contends that “the [cross dressed heroines of Shakespeare’s plays] are sexually enticing *qua* transvestied boys, and that the plays encourage the audience to view them as such” (Jardine 29). As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, however, female cross dressing was perceived by the Renaissance as existing within separate and distinct concerns from such other subjects as male transvestism or female vanity. These concerns occur in the writings of social historians, clerics, and satirists, and perhaps unsurprisingly they recur with significant frequency in the drama. To argue that female character cross dressing unavoidably and without exception adduces male actor transvestism is to deny the substantial and influential tradition of the polemical debate.

Female transvestism can be divorced from male also in the context of the drama. Duke Orsino can comically refer simultaneously to Cesario’s femininity and the boy actor’s youth when he gently mocks the disguised Viola’s “small pipe [which] is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound, and ... semblative [of] a woman’s part” (Twelfth Night I.iv.32-34). Similarly, however, the non cross dressed Celia can reply to Touchstone’s “swear by your beards that I am a knave” with “by our beards (if we had them) thou art” (As You Like It I.ii.72-73). The comedy that arises from a boy actor’s subtextual presence in a female character thus does not necessarily require that the female character be in drag. Comic allusions to the boy actor exist separately from female transvestism, and inversely character transvestism can be assessed distinctly from acting conventions.

The tragedies also differentiate between female character and male actor, even when the heroine makes reference to a masculinising attribute. Lady Macbeth may beg to

be “unsexed” and filled with “direst cruelty” (I.v.41, 43), a quality that has often been interpreted to indicate masculine determination (see Harding), but within my experience no critic has perceived a frisson of a double entendre. Lady Macbeth has been identified in invariably female images that range from witch to emotionally distraught victim. Even Jardine argues that “on the whole ... in tragedy, the willing suspension of disbelief does customarily extend, I think, to the taking of the female parts by boy players; taken for granted, it is not alluded to”. (23) Jardine does not explain why (given that both comic and tragic heroines allude to masculinising attributes) a tragedy’s audience activated a “willing suspension of disbelief” while a comedy’s audience was “encouraged[d] to view [the cross dressed heroines] as sexually enticing *qua* transvestied boys”.

The issue of female transvestism in drama can thus be isolated from the cross dressing of male actors. Such dissociation is legitimated by the presence of two essentially separable polemical traditions, and by the fact that the double identity sometimes occasioned by the boy actor could and did exist outside of the cross dressed character. Finally, a masculine woman could appear on the Renaissance stage and be genuinely perceived as female - and moreover dangerous rather than amusing specifically because she contaminates her female traits with inappropriate male ones.² To decree that interpreting the cross dressed woman without reference to acting conventions is reductive is itself diminished logic. It is therefore not a “curious reluctance” that prohibits this chapter from focusing on male rather than female transvestism. This chapter rather considers the Renaissance dramatists’ wide spectrum of characterisation to argue that female transvestism is a much larger issue than a simple pun or a homoerotic facet of a theatre that was “teleologically male” (Greenblatt, Negotiations 88).

II

Current and recent criticism on comedic cross dressing often evaluates the subject in relation to the measure of freedom accorded to the disguised woman. Scholars tend to discern the drama as a single body that either increases female power, reinscribes a woman within patriarchal constraints, or more radically redefines early modern gender conceptions. Some critics are less wont to interpret all Elizabethan and Jacobean drama as uniform and instead perceive a distinction between the two periods. In spite of the diversity of approaches, the argument over dramatic cross dressing has remained rooted in the sometimes rather anachronistic issues of feminism. While the question of the extent of female empowerment remains the crux of the matter, this chapter proposes an assessment of the issue as it pertains to sixteenth and seventeenth century social concerns. It is my contention that the dramatic transvestite woman operates within the same paradigms as the pamphlet cross dressed woman. This chapter appraises the most extensively developed transvestite heroines against the background of the early modern malaise and its accompanying images of WUD and monstrosity. The discussion begins by reviewing and critiquing the major trends of the scholarship on the subject. It then propounds the two primary manifestations of transvestism on the Renaissance stage and assesses their relationship with the elements delineated in the preceding chapter. By applying the characteristics of the polemical controversy to William Shakespeare's Viola (Twelfth Night), Rosalind (As You Like It), Julia (Two Gentlemen of Verona), Portia (Merchant of Venice),³ Ben Jonson's Epicoene and the Collegiate Ladies (Epicoene), and Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's Moll (The Roaring Girl),⁴ this chapter will demonstrate that the women all issue from environments that are experiencing a crisis of

change. The transvestite is an integral member of the community yet alien due to her disguise, and she is delineated as either a legitimate figure of a celebrated corrective humanity, a reprobate inciter of the crisis, or a mutated result of a conflicted society. The chapter will thus discuss the play's representation of transvestism as much as the consequences of an unregulated mercantile society.

Recent scholarship on transvestism has been predominantly concerned with the Renaissance's legitimation or condemnation of female power. With some notable exceptions like Jean Howard the critics primarily evaluate the stage transvestite within the single element of female autonomy and not within the context of a whole and complex society. Does the cross dressed character accede to the right to make her own choices (Dusinberre), is she punished for stepping out of the rigid structure of gender hierarchy (Howard), does she radically challenge this structure (Belsey), or does the disguise allow her to plumb the depths of her femininity (Berggren)? These are the parameters of the current debate over Renaissance stage cross dressing, and all of them offer some insights that are valid and some that are untenable .

Juliet Dusinberre holds that transvestism empowers a woman and allows her an increased femininity. Furthermore, she argues that gender transgressive disguise exposes sexual behaviour as conventional rather than natural:

Defending their own theatrical practice the dramatists re-inforced the feminism of the masculine woman. They claimed that all clothes are a form of disguise and that theatrical disguise could be a revelation of truth about men and women. Secondly, they suggested that society's modes of identifying sexual be-

haviour required from its members not moral stability but good acting. If femininity and masculinity have any permanent validity, it exists independent of the clothes society ordains for men and women to wear. Thirdly, a woman in disguise – or the masculine woman in breeches – is changed by her male dress only because it allows her to express a part of her nature which society suppresses in the interests of that narrow femininity ... Disguise makes a woman not a man but a more developed woman. (232-33)

Dusinberre's defence of increased powerful femininity is unsubtle in its lack of distinction between such disparate playwrights as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Middleton. While her statement may be relevant to the heroines of Shakespearean comedy, it is reductive in relation to other cross dressed characters.

A host of other concerns is mixed in with Dusinberre's central issue of empowered femininity, most chiefly that of the Renaissance debate over custom and nature as it pertains to gender. This debate is at the heart of the polemical controversy over cross dressing and articulated clearly by *Hic Mulier* in *Haec Vir*, but it merits only a fleeting glance from the critic. Her reference to it begs the larger question of the nominal versus real aspects raised by the English despondency over the transitional nature of class, economy, and other previously immutable structures. Although Dusinberre begins to consider the role transvestite women played in this societal malaise, she rather simplistically concludes that "clothes, ceasing to advertise the real nature of the wearer, became a disguise ... [and because Renaissance] ideas grew out of a constant tension between old and new, and the new in this case asserted that all clothes were a disguise ...

clothes create artificial diversity among men. Custom ordains difference where there is none.” (235-36) She cites Lear’s disrobing in his encounter with Poor Tom as an example of the “disguising” and conventional nature of clothing. Dusinger’s position was developed in the mid 1970s and contradicts what is now known of Elizabethan and Jacobean sumptuary laws. Her argument agrees with *Hic Mulier*’s statement that “Custom is an Idiot”, but it ignores the crisis and controversy that so heavily inform the statement. Dusinger does not actually cite *Haec Vir* (although she does *Hic Mulier*) but her unfortunate reiteration of *Hic Mulier*’s declamation in *Haec Vir* ironically reveals the precariousness of her position.

Jean Howard’s stance on the measure of feminism accorded to the stage cross dresser is in broad terms opposed to Dusinger’s. Howard’s inquiry is the more subtle. Her materialist feminism addresses a wider spectrum of data and accords her a greater sensitivity to the larger societal aspects of the theme. (The more than ten years separating Dusinger and Howard’s works saw an increase in the interest and scholarship on Renaissance women and their position in society and literature.) Nevertheless, Howard’s conservative position is belied by the plays. The critic holds that generally plays that include cross dressing “are intensely preoccupied with threats to, disruptions of, the sex-gender system. Collectively they play a role in producing and managing anxieties about women on top, women who are not ‘in their places’, but are gadding, gossiping, and engaging – it is assumed – in extramarital sex, and in managing anxieties about the fragility of male authority.” (“Cross Dressing” 429) Unlike Dusinger, Howard does not extend her observations on Shakespearean dramaturgy indiscriminately to other authors: “While the thrust of many of these plays is toward containing threats to the traditional sex-

gender system, this is not uniformly so. The plays are themselves sites of social struggle conducted through discourse, and they were produced in a cultural institution that was itself controversial and ideologically volatile.” Her approach unfortunately leads her to divide between plays rather than between the larger thematic representations of transvestism: “Not surprisingly, the ideological implications of plays that feature cross dressing vary markedly.” Taken to its logical conclusion, the paradigm that each play stems from and thus offers an idiosyncratic vision of transvestism prohibits a scholarly extraction of the Renaissance attitude towards female cross dressing, complex though that attitude may be. Howard’s study is excellent in spite of some underlying contradictions and itself denies such prohibition.

Howard’s analysis of the plays demonstrates no such “marked” variation. Ironically, it allows her reader to conclude that Howard believes “female cross dressing on the stage is not a strong site of resistance to the period’s patriarchal sex-gender system” (439). Setting aside The Roaring Girl, as anomalous a play as Haec Vir is a pamphlet, Howard’s distinction between plays is based on the degree of recuperation. For example, she initially discerns a difference between Twelfth Night (hereafter TN), which she believes to be wholly recuperative of female power and its sister play As You Like It (hereafter AYL), which she believes “explicitly to invite, through its epilogue, a consideration of how secure even the most recuperative representations of cross dressing could be in a theatre in which male actors regularly played women’s roles” (434). Her perception of the opposed forces of TN and AYL is itself later recuperated when she concludes that the latter play has the “primary effect ... of confirming the gender system and perfecting rather than dismantling it by making a space for mutuality within relations

of dominance". Thus it seems that the difference between TN and AYL is not so "marked" as she first envisioned.

Howard's argument presents some other, more paradoxical problems. First, "confirming" a gender system whilst "perfecting" it is a contradictory statement. Perfection is improvement that changes rather than confirms the previous regime's imperfections. Second, she perceives AYL to be both redefining and reinscribing gender relations, another diametrical opposition. Third and most importantly, by positing that true change is "dismantling" the gender system rather than "perfecting" it via "mutuality", she steps out of the Renaissance and into twentieth century notions of feminism as the deconstruction of patriarchal power. Sixteenth and seventeenth century drama cannot be judged by twentieth century parameters if it is to yield increased perceptions into the earlier period. Such an approach is valid in terms of judging the genealogy of current relations of gendered power, but it is anachronistic in terms of revealing issues of gender in the early modern era.

Howard further complicates her argument by observing that

if a boy can so successfully personate the voice, gait, and manner of a woman, how stable are those boundaries separating one sexual kind from another, and thus how secure are those powers and privileges assigned to the hierarchically superior sex, which depends upon notions of difference to justify its dominance. The Epilogue playfully invites this question. That it does so suggests something about the contradictory nature of the theatre as a site of ideological production, an institution that can circulate recuperative

fables of cross dressing, reinscribing sexual differences and gender hierarchy, and at the same time can make visible on the level of theatrical practice the contamination of sexual kinds. (435)

Renaissance theatre is indeed subtle, but why the cross dressed boy actor is more truly radical than Rosalind as Ganymed remains obscure. The Epilogue's description of a space in which gender behaviour is negotiable seems to corroborate rather than contradict the play's suggestion. Yet Howard perceives the Epilogue as truly challenging the boundaries separating sexual kinds while she concludes that the play redefines them. According to Howard herself, therefore, female empowerment in Renaissance drama is more uniform than she asserts it to be: cross dressing comedies confirm the patriarchal hierarchy, even if in some cases they allow the heroine an opportunity to negotiate a small degree of reciprocity. The fictional character may possess no political voice but the institution of the theatre and the extra-dramatic narratives do sometimes lay siege to this patriarchy.

Catherine Belsey denies Howard's division and endows the Shakespearean heroine with the faculty to agitate contemporary gender boundaries: "Shakespearean comedy can be read as disrupting sexual difference, calling in question that set of relations between terms which proposes as inevitable an antithesis between masculine and feminine, men and women." (167) Moreover, transvestite drama "generate[s] a ... radical challenge to patriarchal values by disrupting sexual difference itself" (180). Belsey's analysis indeed illustrates that Shakespearean comedy empowers the female character. Ultimately, however, she fails at establishing the "radical ... disruption of sexual difference". Her accounts of the instances of non-antithetical sexual difference are themselves unable to

circumvent the language of gendered opposition. Her study asserts that “the contest for the meaning of the family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ... momentarily unfixed the existing system of differences, and in the gap thus produced we are able to glimpse a possible meaning, an image of a mode of being, which is not a-sexual, nor bisexual, but which disrupts the system of differences on which sexual stereotyping depends” (190). Such assertion is unfortunately somewhat undermined because the article is unable to iterate a position that does not itself depend on “the system of difference” and the “stereotyping” of sexual opposition.

Belsey contends that between two concurrent notions of family -- the family as a masculine dynasty and the family as an affective equal partnership -- a fissure emerged in the familiar definition of woman. This fissure found its most substantive expression in the drama of the period, especially Shakespeare's:

The contest for the meaning of the family which took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries disrupted sexual difference, and in the space between the two sets of meanings, the old and the new polarities, there appear in the fiction of the period shapes, phantasms perhaps, that unsettle the opposition defining the feminine as that which is not masculine - not, that is to say, active, muscular, rational, authoritative ... powerful. ... A radical discontinuity in the meaning of the family, which is not in any sense an evolution, produces a gap in which definitions of other modes of being for women are momentarily visible. The period of

Shakespeare's plays is also the period of an explosion of interest in Amazons, female warriors, roaring girls ... and women disguised as pages. (178, original first set of ellipses)

Like DusiBerre, Belsey locates the arbitration over gender meaning in early modern drama in the question of whether gender is naturally or conventionally circumscribed. The cross dressing drama presents both sides of the argument but it finally espouses the convention construction by undermining the very definitions of femininity and masculinity. That "women are vulnerable is seen as obvious and natural. It is not, on the other hand, seen as essential or inevitable, but as a matter of appearance ... Not all men are equally courageous, but they are all less vulnerable than women because they look as if they can defend themselves ... Even while it reaffirms patriarchy, the tradition of female transvestism challenges it precisely by unsettling the categories which legitimate it." (180) Transvestism reveals gender as mostly behaviour and so offers women a locus to negotiate communal expectations of femininity and masculinity.

Belsey's position does not become untenable until she expands the notion of negotiation into a radical redefinition of gender as a non binary construction. She alleges that the plays go beyond "unsettling" the conventions of gendered behaviour to disrupting and redefining them. Thus when Viola as Cesario offers Orsino the conundrum that she is "all the daughters of [her] father's house, / and all the brothers too" (II.iv.120-22), she becomes for Belsey a third kind of character and gender. Belsey questions the identity of speaker here, and "the answer is neither Viola, nor Cesario, but a speaker who at this moment occupies a place which is not precisely masculine or feminine, where the notion of identity itself is disrupted to display a difference within subjectivity, and the singularity

which resides in this difference” (187, original emphasis). That this new self cannot be sustained is granted by Belsey, yet it is arguable whether it has ever been truly manifested. For of all the characters in the primary plot Viola has the most lucid and stable comprehension of her own identity and even here is pronouncing her love to Orsino. Her subjectivity is thus overtly female, albeit solely to her and the audience. Moreover, her fixed identity is in this instance being underscored rather than dissolved for she is articulating the truth about herself. It seems rather contradictory to attribute a disrupted self to Viola in the very moment at which she is speaking clearly, truthfully, and perceptively, about her gender, her genealogy, and her grief over her brother’s believed death.

Belsey’s definition of the new conception of gender, what she calls a “fragmentation of sexual identity” (188), is thus nebulous at best. The new status is neither a perfect androgyny nor a “repud[iation] of sexuality itself”. Rather it is a mode of being which seeks “to define through the internalisation of difference a plurality of places, of possible beings, for each person in the margins of sexual difference, those margins which a metaphysical polarity obliterates”. (189) What the exact difference is between the “margins of sexual difference” and “metaphysical polarity” is unclear. Moreover, why a vision of sexual identity as bi-polar cannot also admit difference, a plurality of place, etc. is also vague.⁵

Belsey’s thesis is further undermined in her assumption that marriage demeans female power: “At the end of each story [of Shakespearean transvestism] the heroine abandons her disguise and dwindles into a wife ... But the plays are more than their endings, and the heroines become wives only after they have been shown to be something

altogether more singular - because more plural.” (187-88) As with Howard, Belsey’s perception of matrimony as a diminished status smacks of twentieth century feminism. The post-curtain weddings of the comedies are rather sought out and engineered by the heroines, and their chosen spouses are also advanced and “more plural” than before. To demean the plays’ conclusions as unworthy of the plays’ heroines or vice versa is to impose a schizophrenic identity upon them and to step out of the realm of sixteenth century literary and social convention. Thus in spite of evaluating Shakespeare’s transvestite female characters as radically empowered and profoundly developed, Belsey finally undermines both Shakespeare’s art by judging it according to inappropriate and incongruous parameters, and his heroine’s valorous femininity by construing it as a nebulous form of gender which exists for a fleeting moment in the brief and vague area of the “margins of difference”.

Paula S. Berggren perceives cross dressing as an avenue that permits women passage to power within mainstream culture rather than as a “radical criticism of society” (“Woman’s Part” 19). Such access does not render these characters disruptively different, as Belsey argues, but rather grants them the opportunity to

gain confidence in their assumed personae so rapidly that their costumes symbolise their control of the action; freed from society’s restrictions on young women they exhibit previously untapped strength. Divorced from their usual identities, they explore new truths about themselves and about their worlds ... the flexibility offered them by their disguises incorporate to an unprecedented

degree the human capacity simultaneously to be witty and good.

(“Prodigious” 384-85)

Berggren discerns Renaissance conceptions of gender as dually constituted; when a woman disguises herself she “activates the masculine resources within the normal feminine personality without negating her essential femininity” (“Woman’s Part” 20).⁶ Unlike Dusiinberre who locates in femininity all that an empowered woman may need, Berggren proffers a theory of gender which admits elements of both masculinity and femininity in each sex. She does so without documentation from early modern sources or twentieth century scholarship, however. Though such a rendition of sexual identity is encountered in the authorial witness of mediaeval clerical thought, it conforms less to Renaissance ideology.⁷ The horror at hermaphrodism evinced by the polemical writers would itself seem to argue against such a facile conception.

Berggren further entraps herself by hypothesising that

women in Shakespeare remain the Other; there are fewer of them, certainly, and they seem more regularly than the fuller array of male characters to bear heavy symbolic burdens.

Furthermore, I would suggest, they become more or less crucial to the dramatic proceedings by virtue of the one act of which women alone are capable. The comic world requires childbearers to perpetuate the race, to ensure community and continuity; the tragic world, which abhors such reassurance, consequently shrinks from a female protagonist. (18)

The perpetuation of the human race requires both men and women, however, and tragic female protagonists such as Cleopatra, Juliet, and Volumnia do exist. But even if Berggren's formulation of Shakespeare's comedic validation of female power over male were granted,⁸ her position remains conflicted. By holding femininity (in the form of childbearing) as solely sufficient to increase female opportunities she inconsistently locates the valuation of female ability in a solely female function as well as in a bi-gendered mode of being. She confuses the issue by positing increased female power on femininity alone and simultaneously on femininity tempered with masculinity.

The quandary in Berggren's analysis results in a perception of the transvestite heroines as being in a sense defeminised. She avers that the discovery of masculine ability denies the cross dressed woman that all-powerful female attribute of childbearing, at least while on stage. Thus in spite of proposing that transvestism endowed women with greater abilities than customarily accorded by society, Berggren is forced to determine that power as more masculine than feminine and to argue that a return to the feminine force of reproduction is deferred to a post-dramatic moment:

It is a paradox, therefore, that the romantic heroines so frequently disguise themselves as boys, thus denying the pro-creative function that makes them undisputed rulers of their terrain; but like all paradoxes, upon examination this one reveals more than it obscures. At first glance, the male disguise acknowledges the shortcomings of the female ... but while the wearing of pants allows expression of a talent otherwise dampened by convention, it does not, in Shakespeare, lead to a direct challenge of

masculine order. Portia does not take the bar exam and Viola does not organise a search party; they are content to reassume their womanly duties (but we must ask neither how their husbands coped with them nor how many children they had). (19)

Ultimately then, the masculine disguise does not so much advance a woman's ability as it offers her a glimpse of what it is not to be a woman and then revokes it. The post dramatic situation is assessed as restitution to a condition in which female power is limited to the [albeit crucially important] act of procreation. Manifestly for Berggren such restitution infers loss, for she aligns "womanly duties" with the "dampening of talents". Berggren's discussion appears to be antithetically multi-faceted: she argues that disguise emancipates female talent, yet she labels that talent masculine; she recuperates the new-found talent into patriarchal hierarchy via marriage, yet she undermines that self-same hierarchy by identifying childbearing as a signal of the superior power of woman. In the final count she hints at a continuation of a masculinity that enhances female power even while it problematises a woman's role as child bearer.

Berggren's disorientation over the significance of cross dressing on the stage extends to her discussion of the variations between plays. Unlike the critics discussed above, Berggren does attempt to establish some thematic similarities between the plays. Her distinctions, however, lead her to sever the Renaissance into two almost diametrically opposed periods, the Elizabethan and Jacobean. There certainly are oppositions between the plays of the latter sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. But Berggren's overly determined division regarding the attitude towards cross dressing does not coincide with

the uniformity evinced by the polemics of both periods. Stubbs' 1583 Anatomy of Abuses agrees wholly with the 1620's Hic Mulier, for example. Berggren observes that while

transvestite imposture, which titillates modern sensibilities, was originally conceived as a natural avenue to be pursued by a normal woman when events threaten her right to exist, on the Jacobean stage, however, in an era when confidence in the natural and the normal began to wane, the male-disguised female loses spontaneity and ease. Rather than free and illuminate those who adopt it, masculine dress increasingly limits and obscures.

("Prodigious" 385)

Berggren does not expound further on "natural and normal" and offers little evidence to enlighten her reader. If truly in the Elizabethan era "natural and normal" were adamant sources of comfort and stability, then works such as the Utopia and the writings of Stubbs and Harrison lie. Her comfortable division of Elizabethan versus Jacobean drama further ignores the reprehensible Joan la Pucelle (Shakespeare 1 Henry VI (1589-90)) from the early period and leads her to gloss over in one fleeting sentence the most legitimised transvestite heroine of the latter period, the title character of Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl (1608). Moreover, Berggren overlooks the role genre plays in informing the theme's context. Shakespeare's comedies have little to do with Jonson's city satires, and the two genres dictate that transvestism has to be construed differently in a play with an impetus towards marriage and continuation of society and in one which drives towards exposure of social perfidies. Madam Haughty's concern over contraceptive potions because "many births of a woman make her old, as

many crops make the earth barren" (*Epicoene* IV.iii.53-4), for example, are inconsonant in Shakespearean comedy. While Berggren's intent to locate themes is admirable, the paradigms she chooses are misconstrued. Her conclusion that "the emphasis in 'female page' thus moves from 'female' to 'page'", and that "by putting on men's clothes, female characters no longer experience alternate versions of themselves, but become convenient mirrors of the men they serve" (400), ignores the possibility that the Elizabethan audience may perceive that alternate self as a social pariah, and that Jacobean audiences may envision these mirrors not as reflections but rather as refractions of communal behaviour. To assign the discrepancy between plays to unexpounded historical formulations of "natural and normal" alone, without taking into consideration a host of other elements such as an expanded social context and a sensitivity to genre demands is to simplify a complex issue.

Berggren's division between Elizabethan and Jacobean attitudes towards cross dressing suffers most in the obscurity of terms such as "natural and normal" and in her failure to apply early modern definitions of these terms and the anxieties surrounding them to the plays. She is not alone, however, in throwing a hurried and uncritical glance at the play's cultural context. Like Berggren's, the other three lines of criticism delineated above are all instructive and contribute greatly to the debate on increased female autonomy. However, they all also suffer in their tendency to perceive the drama as being on the whole removed from the social context as articulated by the polemical debate.⁹ This chapter holds such a position to be unviable. The polemical controversy invests cross dressing with a set of Renaissance apprehensions that to some extent always inform the plays. The occasional and undeveloped references to the social context of the plays in the

writings of DusiBerre, Howard, Belsey and Berggren ironically demonstrate the inescapable centrality of the polemical debate.

DusiBerre briefly addresses *Hic Mulier* to conclude that “a woman in man’s clothes seemed to the Jacobean not simply eccentric in dress, but really in part a man, and thus monstrous and unnatural - half-man and half-woman, a horrible counterpart to the homosexual courtier” (*Shakespeare* 239). In spite of these echoes from the polemical debate DusiBerre also argues that the “despised Jacobean creation of new peers, the mushroom knights who had sprung up overnight” caused “the player [to] become[] the emblem of man’s equality beneath the distinction of his dress” (236-7). It is true that the new mercantile system was menacing the old, aristocratic regime, but it is categorically not true that the Renaissance unproblematically held all human beings as equal under the skin (except perhaps in death). Distinctions of dress were thus stringently enforced precisely to concretise the lines being blurred by the new order.¹⁰ This new order is often present as a point of consternation in Shakespearean comedy. The Duke is forced to uphold Shylock’s legal request for a pound of Antonio’s flesh because, in the victim’s own words,

the commodity that strangers have

With us in Venice, if it be denied,

Will much impeach the justice of the state,

Since that the trade and profit of the city

Consisteth of all nations. (*The Merchant of Venice* III.iii.27-31)

Money and trade create a new society where rights can be purchased and where immoral action can be protected by law. Further complicating matters, money and trade are not

just Shylock's livelihood, they are also Antonio's. Dusiherre's vision of a socialist status-less society is not upheld by the drama. It is rather the polemical anxiety over mercantile distortions of order that is at the heart of The Merchant of Venice (hereafter MV) and other Renaissance cross dressing plays.

Howard also diminishes the relationship between polemical and dramatic concern by privileging the boy actor's transvestism as more challenging than that of the female character (see above). She professes that it is "obvious" that "most Renaissance plays that depict cross dressing, with the exception of a few works such as The Roaring Girl, do not in any direct way constitute 'comments' on the cross dressing debates. The plays are not topical in that way, and in employing cross dressing motifs they are using a staple of comic tradition with a long dramatic lineage." ("Cross Dressing" 429) Dramatic cross dressing indubitably borrows from traditions such as romance and hagiography, but it just as indubitably also stems from its own cultural context. Viola perhaps echoes one of the most consistent metaphors of mediaeval hagiographic transvestism when she proposes that the Captain introduce her into the Duke's employ as "an eunuch" (I.ii.56). One wonders, however, if Renaissance spectators would not have found her latter reference to her cross dressed self as a "poor monster" (II.ii.34) to be more familiar. Viola is not a monster according to all significations of the word except for transvestism. Shakespeare does not expound the term further for the Elizabethan audience, but the Riverside glosses it as "i.e. being both a man and woman" for the modern reader. A playwright not somewhat conscious of the larger polemical debate would not have selected "monster" and coupled it with the pathos-invoking "poor" to describe a 'nice' young woman in love.

Howard's division thus discounts a relationship that appears to be accessible to both artist and spectator.

Belsey centres her discussion on increased female autonomy in the social context of a new conception of family. She begins to hint at the attendant influences of the anxieties articulated by the polemical debate, but she shirks from a full exploration of the subject. "In the intimate, affective realm which comes into being with the emergence of a set of differences between work and leisure, public and private, political and domestic, the place of both women and children is newly defined. The home comes to be seen as a self-contained unit, a little world of retreat from the conflicts of the market-place." (173) Belsey unfortunately does not substantiate this claim. She ignores the balance struck by the plays between the masculine market place of new-order anxieties and the feminine loving space of just rewards for the deserving. Orlando is denied his birth right as a gentleman by Oliver in the unstable and temperamental setting of the court. Oliver further keeps Orlando unlearned and so "mines [undermines] [Orlando's] gentility with [his] education" (1.i.21). Yet in the stable and natural setting of Arden Orlando's natural abilities admit him to the courtly presence of the Duke Senior, Rosalind's love rightfully restores him to his status, and her education of him renders him more sensible and understanding of the human spirit. The plot thus addresses and invokes elements from beyond the dramatic world.

The polemical controversy is hence an essential influence on the theme of cross dressing in Renaissance drama. The crucial questions for this dissertation remain whether the plays enhance or compromise the power of the transvestite heroine, and whether that power is masculine or feminine. The context for this question is the accompanying

polemical debate. This chapter wishes to establish a relationship between a literary debate that consciously defines itself as commentary on social mores and its contemporary drama. The common theme of transvestism subtextually contains a series of anxieties created by a changing world order. These anxieties position transition over permanence, WUD over harmony, and monstrosity over divine and natural order.

Into a world that is suffering from a societal crisis steps a young woman dressed in male clothing. This crisis may be limited, as in TN's surfeited and stagnant court; more extensive, as in AYL's usurped and corrupt government; or yet more serious, as in Epicoene's decrepit and unproductive London. The transvestite heroine is always integrally involved, however. Barring Haec Vir, the polemical debate represented the cross dressed woman in a singular and uniform fashion. The drama portrays the same figure in two major ways. In Shakespearean comedy the transvestite completely eradicates all visible signs of her gender under her doublet and hose and becomes one of the means by which the crisis is redressed and right order re-instituted. In Epicoene and The Roaring Girl the transvestite appears as simultaneously male and female and is a major but not sole cause of the crisis. Like the polemical transvestite, she is representative of problems that extend well beyond her. The early hagiographic deployment of the theme portrayed transvestism as almost always a device that ensured the continuity of the woman's pre-narrative life. In Renaissance drama, however, both themes highlight the heroine's transvestism as bearing in an integral fashion on the plot.

It is necessary to establish the conception of gender represented by the plays before discussing the relationship between polemical anxiety and dramatic transvestism. The discussion must perforce focus on Shakespeare's comedies because the remaining plays

assimilate the anti-antithetical notion of gender represented by the polemics. Men are anticipated to be strong, rational, and superior in all matters, while women are expected to be chaste, silent and obedient. The plays all function within this paradigm, whether it be to uphold or undermine it. Epicoene exposes the decadence that has erased it and The Roaring Girl reveals its strengths and limitations. The Shakespearean construction of gender in the cross dressed comedies has inspired a multi-faceted and complex debate, however. Clarity on the subject of gender ideology in these comedies is critical to an informed appreciation of the dramatic representation of societal crisis and its consequences.

The most profoundly developed manifestation of transvestism in Renaissance drama is found in Shakespearean comedy. Like the saints, Shakespeare's women assume disguise due to external circumstances beyond their control. Julia, Viola, Rosalind and Portia are forced to don male clothing by a world in which perilous and unwarranted things happen. Julia wishes to join her lover to re-direct his attentions, Viola is forced by her family-less state to seek refuge and employment, Rosalind is exiled by the threatening Duke Frederick, and Portia and Nerissa are impelled to save the life of their husbands' best friend. Once disguised the women are perceived as men except by the audience and those characters who partake in the secret. Their stage appearance is thus either wholly female or wholly male. They never appear as that threatening, blatantly bi-gendered hermaphrodite. The woman physically manifests herself as only one gender or the other, either as *hic vir* or *haec mulier*, and never as personified transgression.

The disguise also does not constitute behavioural gender infringement. Male attire grants a woman safety, but it does not inherently transform her. The definition of gender

and the characteristics of personality that are at the heart of these plays are not opposed between men and women. Rather, they are central to a basic humanity.¹¹ Shakespeare by no means perceives gender as hermaphroditic in nature. He posits rather that there are elements that are by nature common to people, regardless of gender, age or race, and that these elements define humanity over and against bestiality. Aside from physical and sexual difference and some external trappings,¹² the world is divided not between male and female, but between human and beast.

Traits such as physical strength and impatience may be defined respectively as typically masculine and typically feminine, but they are secondary to those that men and women hold in common. Belsey's assumption that fleeting instances within the plays allow the disintegration of conventional categories of masculinity and femininity is itself based on the understanding that for Shakespeare these categories in some way essentially differ one from the other: gender is not stable if it alters when alteration finds.¹³ What she fails to consider is that in these comedies Shakespeare presents a notion of gender that is only sometimes based on conventional and oppositional stereotypes, but which is more essentially and extensively founded on characteristics that are natural and common to both genders. Love, compassion, mutual respect, trust, honour, honesty, wit, love of life, cheerful disposition, perception of self, understanding of others, clarity of thought, ability to teach, capacity for mental action – in short, all the elements necessary for a healthy state, a prosperous nation, and a successful family – are traits that typify both men and women. Each character is measured against these standards. Sebastian and Viola's twinship underscores the fact that the traits that define men and women do not fundamentally vary, excepting important biological differences. Sebastian is not

effeminate and Viola is not mannish. Rather, both are “good” human beings and as such both a woman and a man fall naturally and validly in love with them. The untutored and much abused Orlando may have twice attempted to abandon the cruel Oliver to the mercy of a hungry beast, but “kindness, nobler ever than revenge, / And nature, stronger than his just occasion, / Made him give battle to the lioness” (IV.iii.128-30). Old Adam describes the “virtues” that make “people love [Orlando]”: he is “gentle, strong, and valiant”. Orlando likewise portrays his integrity when he claims that he would rather “subject” himself to the “malice of a diverted blood and bloody brother” than forge a living by violent and criminal means. (II.iii.5-37) Rosalind replays these self-same qualities of gentility, strength, bravery, honesty and trustworthiness and the “bloody” Oliver fails to uphold them. Celia is willing to leave a loving but misguided father to accompany Rosalind on her perilous banishment because she instinctively knows what is right action and because she truly loves her cousin:

Rosalind lacks then the love

Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one.

Shall we be sund’red? shall we part, sweet girl?

No, let my father seek another heir ...

And do not seek to take your change upon you,

To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out;

For by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,

Say what thou canst, I’ll go along with thee. (I.iii.96-105)

Unlike her father, Celia holds love and family bonds in higher regard than the trappings of status and wealth. Bassanio shares with Portia the affective ability for profound same-sex

friendships, and yet Portia is better able to analyse and solve the logical conundrum of Antonio's predicament with Shylock. Portia's rational liberation of Antonio is by no means represented as an example of gender reversal: no man is able to discern the legal loophole. Her astute reason is moreover comfortably and natively resonant with such other good qualities as love and respect. The plays all underscore that both men and women require a healthy balance of rational and emotional attributes.

The elements that cause opposition between the sexes are less descriptive of essential character than those held in common. Nevertheless, there are occasional references to conventionally gendered conduct. Their presence ironically creates opportunities for the validation of those other, gender inclusive traits. Shakespeare artfully exposes the superficiality often resident in conventions by their very use; he reveals that beneath the externalities of oppositional gender lies a more essential commonality. Rosalind, for example, acts in conventionally female ways when she faints at the sight of Orlando's blood and reacts with curiosity and impatience to Celia's information about him. Moreover, she insists that her feminine impatience does not disappear with her female clothing; just because she is "caparison'd like a man" does not indicate that her "disposition" also wears "a doublet and hose" (III.ii.195-96), and she urges Celia to answer a long series of questions without giving her occasion to do so. These superficial stereotypes are undermined, however, in a variety of ways. First, Orlando also faints. He faints not when attacked or hurt, but like Rosalind at the sight of his blood (IV.iii.148). Swooning, then, is not limited to the female gender. Second, Rosalind exhibits steadfastness rather than changeability of character, regardless of apparel. Third, neither squeamishness nor impatience genuinely define her personality.

Rather, her capacity for love is what truly signals her being. Significantly, she faints not at the sight of blood *per se* but only when she discovers that it is her beloved's. Finally, her so-called 'feminine' impatience in effect reveals that gender stereotypes can hold true only superficially. It is her patience that more authentically reflects her. Her forbearance is established as above reproach by the inconstant Frederick: "Her patience speak[s] to the people, and they pity her." (I.iii.78-79) Rosalind's patience, good humour and profound affection for Orlando are mutually returned by the latter, and thus they reflect the shared elements of human nature. Even the lovers' duplicate reaction to blood underscores the common over the oppositional. Rosalind's enactment of those shared characteristics while disguised as Ganymed underscores their value as well as the import of constancy and stability. The Ganymed disguise thus paradoxically serves to confirm her essential, undisguised being.¹⁴

The masculine disguise is sometimes further employed to undermine rather than validate an ontological masculine superiority or rationality. Transvestism in these plays rarely indicates masculinity. It serves rather to illustrate the failings of masculine conduct when it ignores the elements of common humanity described above. The fear of bodily harm that propels Julia, Viola and Rosalind to don male clothing is itself a critique of a world in which thievery, rape and violence prey on physical vulnerability. Thievery, rape and violence are the underbelly of conventional 'masculine' behaviour. Julia disguises herself to "prevent the loose encounters of lascivious men" (II.vii.41), and Rosalind's comment that "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (I.iii.110) reveals that the assault she most dreads is one in which she is perceived in a sexual manner. In her world thieves, like rapists, are of course male. Transvestism can thus be a critique of the bestial

nature of a certain male behaviours. The plays do not advance masculinity as more rational or ethically virile than femininity. Cross dressing protects the woman from male violence, but it neither renders her male nor fundamentally defines male behaviour.

Male disguise also does not function to recuperate women within a hierarchical gender system. Howard argues that Viola is tamed as a threat to male superiority and that she is furthermore employed to castigate and re-inscribe Olivia within the fold of that system:

[IN] records the traditional comic disciplining of a woman who lacks ... a properly gendered subjectivity. I am referring, of course, to Olivia, whom I regard as the real threat to the hierarchical gender system in this text, Viola being but an apparent threat ... Olivia is a woman of property, headstrong and initially intractable, and she lacks any discernible male relatives, except the disreputable Toby, to control her or her fortune ... At the beginning of the play she has decided to do without the world of men, and especially to do without Orsino. These are classic marks of unruliness. And in this play she is punished, comically but unmistakably, by being made to fall in love with the cross dressed Viola. The good woman, Viola, thus becomes the vehicle for humiliating the unruly woman in the eyes of the audience ("Cross Dressing" 432, original emphasis)

Howard's argument is perplexing. First, she overlooks the accompanying tradition of the virgin who also decides "to do without the world of men" and who is lauded rather than labelled "unruly". Second, she neglects the fact that Olivia's rejection of Orsino is

vindicated. Olivia is ultimately validated when she is spared wedlock to the man she has declined and later united to the spouse of her own choice. If her initial decision to spurn Orsino were misguided, and if the play were genuinely censorious of that rejection or of her autonomy, she would have been compelled to marry him. Phebe is after all forced into marrying Silvius. Third, of all the characters proffered by the play, who better than Olivia to control her wealth? Evidently so far she has not mismanaged it, unlike the male Aguecheek whose spendthrift ways are noted by Maria in I.iii.23-24. Other than Orsino who desires Olivia for reasons other than her wealth, and Sebastian who does not appear until later, there are no “reputable” men available to match her financial mastery.¹⁵ The playwright’s confidence in her is in fact underlined by the fact that she possesses no male relatives other than Toby.¹⁶ Toby is also drawn as disreputable for a reason, part of which is to emphasise the elevation of Olivia’s personality and abilities over his. Shakespeare highlights the deed not the gender of the doer.¹⁷

Finally and most importantly, the assumption that Olivia is “humiliated” is uncorroborated. It is precise but unsubtle to claim that she woos a woman. It is more accurate to perceive that Olivia ultimately marries the very qualities that she loved in that woman. Sebastian is like Viola both in terms of some of the physical externalities that happily divide men from women, and of those ethical, emotional, and behavioural internalities that conjoin them in a common humanity. Olivia is requited rather than penalised when the one obstacle in her route to the beloved is removed. Sebastian resembles Viola like “an apple cleft in two” (V.i.223), and thus he replaces her with remarkable ease in Olivia’s affections. The “little thing” that prevents Viola from telling Fabian and Toby “how much [she] lack[s] of a man” (III.iv.302-3) is present and

accounted for in Sebastian. The exchange of brother for sister must be discerned as a substitution of equivalents.¹⁸ Able and agile women are not threats to a hierarchical gender system but bolsters to a gender system that exalts shared emotional and rational elements.

Male disguise therefore does not recuperate women within a hierarchical system, nor does it symbolise masculine superiority. What is more, male disguise also does not capacitate the fulfilment of conventional and contemporary definitions of womanhood. Like the transvestite saints, the heroines do not replace femininity by masculinity. Rather, their disguised self represents a perpetuation of their undisguised persona. Unlike the saints, however, this persona does not reflect or enable societal expectations of successful femininity. The cross dressed women of the comedies superbly uphold Shakespeare's notion of successful 'humanhood', but they are by no means silent and obedient, and though chaste, they express a healthy interest in physical love. Julia is the most silent of the women and yet she is empowered by being solely capable of redirecting Proteus' affections. Significantly, she succeeds due to her eloquence. Neither Valentine's appeals to the bond of their male amity nor Silvia's abrupt rejections of his love are able to re-establish correct order in Proteus' life. Julia enables Valentine and Silvia, Valentine and Proteus, and Proteus and herself mutually to love each other when she finally speaks. Julia's initial silence in fact deletes all obstacles to the misdirected resolution proffered by Valentine: "That my love may appear plain and free, / All that was mine in Silvia I give thee." (V.iv.82-83) The conclusive and proper denouement is made possible only when Julia finally articulates her continuity and consistency in spite of apparel:

O Proteus, let this habit make thee blush!

Be thou asham'd that I have took upon me
 Such an immodest raiment - if shame live
 In a disguise of love!
 It is the lesser blot, modesty finds,
 Women to change their shapes than men their minds.

(V.iv.104-9)

Silence is not becoming to the lady of Shakespearean comedy (excepting perhaps for Kate).¹⁹

Obedience is similarly not an indicator of perfected femininity. Viola may unhappily obey Orsino's request to woo Olivia on his behalf but she ultimately undermines his authority by duping him, albeit lovingly. Portia is constrained in her choice of husband by her father, but she chafes against the dictate and disapproves of it: "I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?" (I.ii.23-26) Portia obeys, and the casket test proves to be fortuitous and covenant with her desires because MV is a comedy and her father truly loved her. However, in her next relationship with a man she maintains control and disseminates an independence that directs the lives of [male] others. Her father's dominion designs her future in Act I. In the remaining acts she profoundly influences the futures of Bassanio, Antonio, and most of all Shylock.

The quartet is also by no means sexually uninterested. All the women express admiration for the physical appearance of their beloved and the final scene of MV highlights the impending sexual relations between the couples. Rosalind's interest in

Orlando is comically but obviously expressed when she imagines that he speaks to her when he does no such thing (I.ii.252ff), and in her approbation of his "fresh looks" (III.ii.230), the colour of his hair, and his prowess in kissing (III.iv.7ff). The introduction of Hymen in the final scene, and the wedlock hymn s/he sings to join four pairs of lovers together, also emphasises that marriage is partly constituted by a natural sexual interest between men and women. Such interest is cause for celebration: "Wedding is great Juno's crown, / O blessed bond of board and bed! / 'Tis Hymen peoples every town, / High wedlock then be honoured." (V.iv.141-44)

The marriages that conclude each play indicate the natural sexual relationship between men and women - a relationship in which gender differences as well as commonality are critically essential. They also signal the propagation of right society. As early as Act I Rosalind describes Orlando as "my child's father" (I.iii.11). Matrimony is represented as desirable and an avenue for further bliss and reward. It does not represent loss or containment of the heroine's abilities, as Belsey and Howard propose. Portia and Nerissa are after all already married when they cross dress to save Antonio's life.

The only instance of marriage as punishment within the context of the four plays is Phebe's enforced union with Silvius. However, even here it is not marriage that is the penalty but rather the man she is coerced into wedding. Phebe does not perceive matrimony as an affliction. She in fact resolutely pursues Ganymed for a husband. In line with the comic plot, Phebe, one hazards, will be happy with Silvius. Nevertheless, Phebe is the most censured woman in these comedies. Her punishment is not meted out because of cross dressing or unruliness, however. She is castigated rather for her bonds to convention. In accord with her courtly love subplot she is disdainful, cruel to the man

who loves her, and desirous of the 'man' who rejects her. She is gently humiliated by being comically gulled into wedding a man she scorns. Shakespeare seems to suggest that courtly love values superficialities and conventions that circumscribe men and women in oppositional relationships. This form of love is diverting to the onlooker but it cannot offer the same prosperity to the lover as a love that celebrates the common attributes of men and women. Punishment is thus meted out to those who fail these attributes. The inconstant Frederick dissolves fraternal duty; the murderous Shylock craves the sacrifice of human life; and the uncompassionate Phebe promotes opposition rather than alignment between the sexes. They are therefore humiliated and finally reinscribed within right order. The pinnacle of conduct is thus not chastity, silence, or obedience. It is rather the perfection of the abilities and characteristics of a shared humanity.

Thus transvestism does not endow the woman with masculinity, as Berggren argues, nor does it fulfil contemporary expectations of Renaissance womanhood, as Howard advances. Transvestism also does not expose gender as a matter of custom, as Belsey claims. But Shakespeare does not reveal that gender is a matter of convention. He rather suggests that the conventions of gender currently in place many times overlook that which is essential. His gender system is certainly not hierarchical. But while he may explode the strictures of a tiered system, he also does not replace them with an anarchically delimited gender description. Rather, gender is regulated primarily by what makes us human and secondarily by what make us men or women.

It is true that Rosalind's "swashing and martial outside" will allow her to "outface" danger with "semblance" like "many other mannish cowards" do (I.iii.120-22). But it is false to conclude with Belsey that therefore all men look more brave (witness Old Adam), that all men are by nature more brave (witness Aguecheek), that strength is always and uncomplexly an indicator of positive masculinity (witness rapists), that strength of body infers strength of character (witness Oliver), or that physical strength in men is naturally opposed by the 'virtues' of silence and obedience in women (witness all the heroines). The woman dressed as a man articulates the objections to these assumptions. Her appearance overtly if ironically manifests that male and female differ in biology and certain physical qualities, yet it subtly but powerfully represents the importance of the common elements of humanity and the value of upholding them consistently. Viola is like a woman frightened of swordplay, but like a human being she represents equanimity, the pleasure of loving, and the joie de vivre that has as yet eluded Orsino and Olivia. Julia like a woman fears rape on a journey, but like a human being she demonstrates the importance of the stability of mind and love. Rosalind like a woman is loquacious and impatient, but like a human being she recognises that love means steadfastness, patience, and a daily subsistence that does not fluctuate like the seasons. Portia like a woman is forced to accept her father's choice for spouse, but like a human being she is able to love Bassanio passionately and to rescue Antonio rationally.

Transvestism thus represents the sameness of male and female interior attributes while simultaneously pointing to the biological contrasts between the sexes. It also signals the apex of perception and self-knowledge. Shakespeare portrays these cross dressed women as the most intellectually and emotionally developed characters. The

doublet and hose indicates a woman's privileged and profound comprehension of the essential qualities of humanity in much the same way as the motley sanctions the Fool's position in stating truths. While few other straight-dressed characters also possess that knowledge, for example Silvia and Celia,²⁰ it is the transvestite woman who is the most expansive and complete representation. Inasmuch as the disguise does not signal masculinity, it does signal an essential quality about the heroine that sets her apart from the others.

Transvestism illustrates the empowerment of humanity rather than of one or other gender. More critically, it is also a device that grants the woman access to her beloved in a way that is not coloured by the pull of his sexual attraction. The women know most and thus must educate the men on how to improve their abilities in love. The men are by no means stupid or lacking in many good qualities. As demonstrated above, Orlando instinctively evinces loyalty, love, and gentleness of spirit in spite of being unlearned, uncultured, and practically uncivilised. However, he lacks understanding of women in general, and Rosalind in particular. It is Rosalind/Ganymed's duty to amend that failure.

Viola aside, the initial necessity of the male disguise is mitigated by the plays' action. Viola initially offers her services to Orsino because she is informed that Olivia "will admit no kind of suit" (I.ii.45). To join Orsino's household Viola is indeed compelled to cross dress. Julia loses the pretext of ensuring safety on her voyage once she is safely in Milan, however. The play proffers no genuine reason why she should not petition for Proteus' affections as the Lady Julia rather than the page Sebastian. Her non cross dressed self is ultimately validated by the fact that Proteus' affection is rekindled only when she reveals her true gender. The urgency for disguise is more blatantly

mitigated by AYL and MV. Rosalind does not divulge her identity even when she encounters her father in Arden (III.iv.35-38), and Portia's rescue of Antonio does not fundamentally depend on her disguise. Bassanio or a lawyer could have resolved the dilemma once informed of the loophole. The disguise thus almost consistently abandons the pretext proffered by the play and reveals that it functions as more than protection or deception. In all the cases including Viola's the transvestism allows the heroine access to her lover in a manner that circumvents his perception of her as a woman. While she is supremely aware of him sexually, his relationship with her remains platonic.

The heroes of these comedies are all endowed with the characteristics that entail good same-sex friendships, but they all initially fail as lovers. All of them define their relationship with the beloved as turning fundamentally on erotic attraction and romantic passion. They thus need to assimilate the attributes of platonic friendship into sexuality and to accede to the knowledge that both are crucial to a healthy marriage. Acquaintance with the beloved and respect for her thoughts and abilities are essential qualities in a union of two beings equally endowed with mental and emotional characteristics. The heroine's mission is thus to instruct her mate on how to adjoin friendship to sexual love or how to prioritise his lover over his friend.

Such instruction is meted out by all the women. Viola and Julia achieve it in a covert and subconscious manner; Rosalind and Portia overtly and intentionally. Viola reorders Orsino's understanding of love and softens sexual obsession with compatibility. Julia as Sebastian befriends Proteus and teaches him about true friendship and true love, both of which he initially fails. The theme reaches its culmination in Rosalind and Portia, however. Rosalind becomes Orlando's comrade and gradually tempers his endearing but

foolishly romantic conception of love. She masks her lessons in flippancy but nevertheless manages to convey the essential tenet that a quotidian and yet profound affection must perforce follow the first flush of passion. As Nancy K. Hayles observes, "in effect, Rosalind is claiming the right to be herself rather than to be Orlando's idealised version of her, as female reality is playfully set against male fantasy". (65) Only Rosalind can tell Orlando what Rosalind requires in love. He must comprehend that love is maintained not by bad poetry but by immutability in affection, familiarity of the beloved, and participation in her life. Orlando finally tires of 'being in love with love' and begins to crave Rosalind the person. Then only does Ganymed reveal himself to be a woman. Hayles is wrong in locating the impulse for cross dressing in Rosalind's shrinking femininity, however. "In playing herself (which she can apparently do only if she first plays someone else) Rosalind is able to state her own needs in a way she could not if she were simply herself." (65) The failure is rather Orlando's inability to see beyond Rosalind's physical female appearance. Her disguise removes the impediment of his sexual attraction for her and grants him admittance to her interior characteristics. In disguise, Rosalind is able to gain access to Orlando's head as well as his heart, and vice versa. On the other hand, she is always able to balance her sexual desire for him with rational and emotional discernment.

Portia is likewise forced to sue for the attention owed to her by her husband. Bassanio's love for Antonio, and more especially Antonio's for Bassanio, sets limits on the love and loyalty due to Portia as Bassanio's wife. Portia patently does not begrudge Bassanio his friendships, nor does she resent Antonio. She faultlessly offers immediate and generous restitution for Antonio's debt to Shylock. However, she also senses that

Bassanio must learn how to function as her husband and lover first and Antonio's friend second. When Antonio believes he is about to die he requests Bassanio to speak of him to Portia: "Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death; / And when the tale is told, bid her be judge / Whether Bassanio had not once a love." (IV.i.275-77) Bassanio's response confirms the hint at loves in competition: "I am married to a wife / Which is as dear to me as life itself, / But life itself, my wife, and all the world, / Are not with me esteem'd above thy life. / I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all / Here to this devil, to deliver you." (282-87) The heat of fear and passion notwithstanding, these statements proffer a vision of Bassanio's disordered affection. As Portia observes, "your wife would give you little thanks for that / If she were by to hear you make the offer" (288-89).

Portia has further evidence of the essentially good but misguided bond between the men when as Balthazar she requests the ring that symbolises the endurance and perfection of her marriage. Bassanio resists until Balthazar desists, satisfied if not pleased. Antonio remains silent during the exchange (421-48) yet inexplicably elects this moment to add his voice to the request: "My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring. / Let his deservings and my love withal / Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment." (449-51) Bassanio gives the ring and thus grants that Antonio's love out-values Portia's. Bassanio does not truly love Antonio more than Portia, yet he does not know how to order the separate loves for friend and wife. Portia has heretofore been denied the right to woo her husband. She is now granted the occasion of appraising him of the significance of what he owes her even when she is not physically before him. Her natural and complete wisdom allows her the opportunity to involve her lover in a profound lesson about friendship and love and head and heart.

Portia taxes Bassanio with his inconstancy upon his return to Belmont. In his defence he equivocates that had she known “to whom... for whom ... [and] for what” he gave the ring she would “abate the strength of her displeasure” (V.i.193-98). Portia replies,

If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,
If you had pleas'd to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony. (199-206)

In this speech Portia enlightens Bassanio about the significance of the love between husband and wife, the character of the woman he has wed, his duty in marriage, and Antonio's disordered love. She impresses upon him that lack of trust or loyalty is akin to adultery, and that inconstancy of heart and mind mirrors inconstancy of body. Bassanio finally seizes on the import of the lesson and exclaims, “Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear / I never more will break an oath with thee” (247-48). Portia's advanced understanding redirects Bassanio's love and improves their marital future.

Portia teaches Bassanio but she neither seeks nor is granted a hierarchical superiority to him. She is thus not hermaphroditically monstrous in her ambition. However, she is not an androgynous eradicator of all sexual difference either. Robert Kimbrough has argued that “because a woman disguised as a man has both sexes in one”

(19) Shakespeare's heroines represent the ideal unity of the androgyne. He asserts that by cross dressing the women physically and mentally add masculinity to their femininity and re-emerge as new, androgynous beings. Rosalind's disguise, for example, enables her to escape the court but more significantly to elude "her Fortune-dealt restricted feminine self" (23). However, as the polemics point out, the addition of masculine to feminine engendered hermaphrodism rather than androgyny. The combination of gender was perceived as monstrous contamination rather than binary perfection. Kimbrough's definition of androgyny thus slips dangerously into hermaphrodism, and such slippage is essentially incongruous to the Renaissance.

Phyllis Rackin's definition of androgyny is more informed than Kimbrough's. It reveals the ambiguity that renders it so unpalatable when applied to the woman of the early modern period:

The androgyne could be an image of transcendence - or surpassing the bounds that limit the human condition in a fallen world, of breaking through constraints that material existence imposes on spiritual aspiration or the personal restrictions that define our roles in society. But the androgyne could also be an object of ridicule or an image of monstrous deformity, of social and physical abnormality ... Increasingly, however, the high Renaissance image of the androgyne as a symbol of prelapsarian or mystical perfection was replaced by the satirical portrait of the hermaphrodite, a medical monstrosity or social misfit, an image of perversion or abnormality. (29)

Shakespeare's comic transvestites are thus not androgynous for more than one reason. First, the difference between androgyne and hermaphrodite is practically non-existent during the Renaissance. The early modern abhorrence of hermaphroditic monstrosity therefore makes it anachronistic to read these attractive women as androgynous. Second, androgyny in its inherited mediaeval sense indicates the transcendence of physicality and gender altogether to a place where difference as a concept is irrelevant and inappropriate. Such a definition does not support Kimbrough's thesis, nor is it relevant to the cross dressed heroine. The plays celebrate sexual difference and physical attraction rather than seek to transcend them. Androgynous is therefore not a correct description of Shakespeare's cross dressed comic woman. Not both man and woman; nor neither man nor woman; not typical feminine woman; nor atypical masculine woman, the heroines elude a defining label because of their very complexity.

Transvestite disguise on the Shakespearean stage denotes enlightenment and the successful achievement of the demands of humanity rather than obscuration or transgression of gender. The change in dress ironically serves to emphasise the constancy of character. The transvestite's articulation of the common attributes of the sexes and the value of constancy is initially the most perfect, and the plays imply that humanity can only benefit from following her model. Transvestism does not validate one gender over the other. Sexual difference matters, and vive la difference! But transvestism does not bespeak a notion of gender that is other than sexually opposed or even variable between the sexes. It also does not deny gender a real and stable identity by revealing that all gendered conduct is convention. The transvestite figure is neither made more male nor more perfectly female, but she is representative of the pinnacle of human ability. The

cross dressed woman is more sagacious than other characters but not because she wears the clothes of a man. Male attire rather signifies, demonstrates, and enables her to share her wisdom. Shakespearean transvestism, then, is inclusive, healing, socially directed and celebratory of life.

While transvestism levels hierarchy and celebrates commonality, the plays are not wholly devoid of power structures nor of threats to them. The disruption of societal order is in fact at the heart of each play. The comedies emphasise mutuality in spite of gender, age or race, but there is nevertheless a hierarchical conception of birth, class and social status, all versions of one another. Class is a position that is designated by God, Nature and society, and it guarantees the continuation of Order in the micro- and macrocosm. All human beings regardless of class were expected to conduct themselves according to the requirements of humanity listed above. All human beings were also expected to abide by the rules of society and to remain in their ordered rank. Thus all people were expected to be compassionate, but only elder brothers could inherit the throne. Social crisis inevitably ensues when people abandon their allocated position and assume the powers and privileges of those above them. Social crisis thus always plays an important role in the comedies under question, and there is a significant relationship established between the cross dressed woman and the world in chaos.

The disruption of society is sometimes caused by the miscarriage of the attributes of humanity, such as Proteus' deception of Valentine's amity and Julia's love. Other times, the chaos is engendered by the disintegration of the structures of right rule or business practice, such as Frederick's usurpation of his brother's throne and Shylock's inhuman contract. The crisis is always resolved in the play's finale and order re-

established. The transvestite character is sometimes directly involved in part of this resolution: Portia is personally responsible for disempowering Shylock. More generally, however, the transvestite is but one of the components of a tradition that dresses up societal crisis in the various images of WUD.²¹ The transvestite is more directly embroiled and liable for societal crises in other plays (as will be demonstrated below).

The Shakespearean heroine's transvestism is usually partly forced on her by a disordered society. Julia fears the perils of the journey, and as it transpires rightly so, for bands of outlaws roam the countryside; Olivia's grief-ordered household bars admittance to Viola; Frederick's usurpation and jealousy occasion Rosalind's exile; and Shylock's 'un-Christian' request impels Portia to cross dress. Transvestism thus can have negative signification in these plays - not in what it implies about the woman but in what it symbolises about the circumstances that have partially engendered her condition. The polemics and the drama thus share an identical concern over the essentiality of class maintenance and the delinquency of the upwardly mobile. The polemics locate that anxiety directly in the hermaphrodite. A woman ensured the disintegration of her society by cross dressing. Shakespearean comedy on the other hand functions almost deliberately to distance the heroine from any culpability for the inverted society. The cross dressed heroine is thus associated with the conflicts in society but only in a highly ironic way.

In AYL the world is turned upside down when a brother usurps a throne and the true court is forced to flee. Senior is almost as guilty as Frederick for he fails his duty as governor. His rule is faulty like Prospero's and thus it permits the greedy Frederick to usurp it. Frederick's conduct, of course, also inverts natural order, and such inversion emerges in his relationship with others. Although Sir Rowland de Boys was "esteem'd" by

the world as "honourable", Frederick was his enemy. (I.ii.225-26). His own daughter moreover describes him as possessing a "rough and envious disposition" (241). Without order and rational rule society is thrown into a crisis. This crisis is noted and articulated consistently in the play. Orlando sympathises over Adam's plight and comments on the disintegrating manners of yore: "How well in thee appears, / The constant service of the antique world, / When service sweat for duty, not for meed! / Thou art not for the fashion of these times, / Where none will sweat but for promotion, / And having that do choke their service up / Even with the having." (II.iii.56-62) Orlando bewails the current quality of service and the driving motivation of a society in which financial gain has undermined all notion of authentic social standing. The new economy has made "promotion", with every connotation of monetary and hierarchical advancement, worthy in and of itself rather than as a reflection of true worth. Sign is divorced from signifier as social position relinquishes fundamental meaning.

The inverted world is far reaching. The polemics charged transvestism with infectious destruction. AYL borrows the image to illustrate the prevalence of the destabilised laws of conduct. Jaques illustrates the epidemic proportions of social discontent:

I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these: but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of

many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry
contemplation of my travels. (IV.i.10-19)

Everybody in every profession everywhere is infected by self interest and "promotion". Jaques as malcontent voices disgust at this putrid carbuncle in the hopes that exposure may affect a cure, or at least the beginnings of purgation: "Invest me in my motley; give me leave / To speak my mind, and I will through and through / Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world, / If they will patiently receive my medicine." (II.vii.59-61) Jaques is not a Fool but the reference to motley confirms his favoured position vis a vis articulating truths. His language of plagues and diseases furthermore associates him with the polemical goal of exposing social ills.

The polemical language reappears briefly in Jaques' tirade against sumptuary finery: "What woman in the city do I name, / When that I say the city-woman bears / The cost of princes on unworthy shoulders? / Who can come in and say that I mean her, / When such a one as she, such is her neighbour? / Or what is he of basest function, / That says his bravery is not on my cost, / Thinking I mean him, but therein suits / His folly to the mettle of my speech." (74-82) The polemical concern over the devaluation of social standing by presumptuous apparel is manifest here. Costliness, female vanity, epidemic proportion, class usurpation, social disintegration - all the polemical elements are apparent.

What divides Shakespeare's complaint from the polemics is first that men and women alike are named, and second the transvestite is not mentioned. Moreover, monstrosity appears in this play in the shape not of the cross dresser but rather the class- or order-inverter. Celia defines true monstrosity early on when she contrasts her

intentions with her father's to Rosalind: "What he hath taken away from thy father perforce, I will render thee again in affection. By mine honour, I will, and when I break that oath, let me turn monster." (I.ii.19-22) Celia's relationship with Rosalind is contrasted to that between Frederick and Senior and Oliver and Orlando. Le Beau describes the women's "loves [as] dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (I.ii.275-76) in order to emphasise the deficiency in the relationship of those who do share the "natural bond" of brothers. Frederick and Oliver are truly monstrous in the hatred and harm they direct against Senior and Orlando. They thus disrupt the order of Nature, society and God. The men loathe their brothers and so undermine fraternal duty and Natural law. They wrest from their brothers that which is legally theirs and so invert social law. But most abhorrent of all, they seek death against their brothers and so transgress Divine law. Fratricide is the first murder after creation and it is one of the most monstrous crimes. Criminality is thus reserved not for the transvestite woman but the murderous man. Unlike the polemics, the transvestite is innocent. Like the polemics, class transgression and monstrosity are related and central to the crisis in society.

The final scene of AYL re-establishes the class structure by restoring everybody to his/her social status, and uniting him/her with his/her social equal. Even Oliver and Celia are socially balanced, in spite of Celia's Aliena disguise. The essential nature of social order is here revealed. It is natural and good for Oliver and Celia to love one another for though they appear to be of disparate classes they are in truth of the same estate. In contrast, it is unnatural and presumptuous of Phebe to hope for Ganymed for though they appear to be of the same estate they are in truth of disparate classes. Phebe thus inverts

natural order when she woos Ganymed. Her transgression is mocked throughout the play and ultimately contained when she is forced to marry her fellow shepherd.

TN and MV²² also function to distance the transvestite from the social crisis. Violations of Order remain insidiously present, however, and likewise described in the language of the polemics. Monstrosity and unnaturalness are again emphatically defined as breaches of the traits of humanity rather than in terms of transvestism. The true threat to social order is Malvolio, not Viola. Malvolio seeks to unite himself to his mistress and thus to raise his social standing. His presumptuousness is visibly borne out in sumptuary violations. Malvolio is ripe for trickery because he is “sick of self-love” (I.v.90), because he forgets that he is no more than a steward (II.iii.114), and because he is a ‘nouveau intellectual’, “an affection’d ass, that cons state without book, and utters it by great swarths; the best persuaded of himself, so cramm’d (as he thinks) with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him” (148-52). Malvolio’s self-perception is so feeble that he accuses Toby of the very fault he commits: “Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?” (91) He himself has no recognition of his status. As Stubbs feared, the social climber undermines the position he seeks even as he searches to lord it over another. Malvolio later tells Toby, Fabian and Maria, “I am not of your element” (III.iv.125) The line is glossed by the Riverside as “I do not belong to your earthy level”. Thus Malvolio’s presumptions attain divine order.

Malvolio envisions his future in terms of social elevation even before he reads the letter and has cause to hope. He wistfully anticipates the day he can order Toby to his presence, have “seven of [his] people, with an obedient start, make out for him”, while he plays with “some rich jewel”, have Toby curtsy to him upon his arrival, while he

"extend[s] [his] arm thus, quenching [his] familiar smile with an austere regard of control". (II.v.58-66) His pretence at social position is mocked first by his pompous day-dreaming, second by the aside commentary provided by Toby, Andrew, Fabian and Maria, and third in his clothing. Fabian jeers at the "advanc'd plumes" that resemble him to the "turkey-cock" (II.v.31) and Malvolio describes his suit to Olivia in terms of 'advanced clothing': "the Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe" (39-40). It is telling that Malvolio chooses as example the servant in charge of clothing to argue that women of high position have married below them previously. His cross-gartered yellow stockings serve to ridicule him and his aspirations even further, and Maria describes him as a Christian "turn'd heathen" (III.ii.70) to emphasise his inversion.

The contagious and monstrous inversion of social order due to the lack of stable economic and sumptuary laws is thus at the heart of AYL and TN (and MV and TGV). These polemical concerns are moreover expressed in metaphors and themes that are directly borrowed from the polemical debate. What divides polemic from drama is the attitude towards the cross dresser. According to the pamphlets, the transvestite's infractions invert the world and increase confusion. According to Shakespearean comedy, the transvestite's abilities function to heighten and develop the understanding of the characteristics that define humanity over and against the bestial, to instruct others for their betterment, and to order as much of the disorder as possible. Rosalind restores a daughter to her father, Aliena to Celia, Phebe to Silvius, and Oliver, Orlando, and Phebe to their rightful estates.

The transvestite of the Shakespearean comedies is thus related to the crisis in society. She is associated with all its attendant anxieties of monstrosity, WUD and the

eradication of boundaries of class and clothing. She is not its origin, however. The crisis in part forces the woman to cross dress, yet her masculine clothing is lessened in transgressive impact in comparison to other characters who trespass on status. Transvestism and social malaise are related but only distantly, and with the cross dressed figure absolved of all criminality. The two concerns conjoin forcefully, however, in the second category of the dramatic representation of the transvestite.

The second type of stage transvestism associates the woman with transgression and the societal crisis it incurs. The crisis is once more caused by infractions that far outreach the transvestite figure. She is nevertheless related to it in a causal as well as emblematic manner. Her doublet and host contribute to the social distortions as well as represent them. This transvestite figure is visibly a hermaphrodite. Unlike the Shakespearean woman she appears on stage as both woman and man, as *hic mulier* not as *haec mulier*. Thus the characters who engage with her are forever obliged to assimilate the contradictions she manifests, both in terms of her physical appearance and her actions. As Michael Shapiro observes,

whereas most plays present female pages and other completely disguised heroines in sympathetic terms, there is considerable division in the presentation of the woman warrior ... On the domestic front, women like the collegiate ladies, Mistress Otter, and Morose's "bride" of Jonson's Epicoene ... women who adopt man-nish behaviour if not actual clothing, are satirised for their impudence in usurping male prerogatives and authority. (26)

As a walking paradox, the hermaphrodite constantly and consistently articulates the disjunctions in society, religion, class, etc. She is the living and walking emblem of every transgression in spite of being only partly responsible. She is integrally associated with the crumbling of social, natural and divine order because she blurs sexual distinctions. That integral association is represented in various ways, however, some of which validate the woman while others revile her.

Gender definitions in this second category are less of a quandary. They are conceived of as almost unproblematically opposed between masculine superior rationality and feminine submissive silence and obedience. The plays deploy this gender description as the context for exploring first the role of woman in society, and second other sites of the arbitration of power. The drama thus operates within a hierarchical conception of gender but each differs in its response to it. In Epicoene the indomitable Lady Epicoene and the Collegiates are satirised along with practically every other character for affecting a world so upside down that neither silence nor communication reflect the truth. In The Roaring Girl Moll aids in the cleansing of corruption, the re-establishment of order, and the mediation of a society in flux. Together the two plays reflect each locus of anxiety represented by the pamphlet controversy.

The polemics identified the crimes of untrammelled sexuality, gender chaos, and class infraction as being invested in the transvestite. These very crimes are attributed to practically every member of Epicoene's society. Ben Jonson's satiric *exposé* of London's comprehensive disintegration removes the 'holiday space' aspect of charivari and reveals the whole populace as permanently located in WUD. Everybody, from aristocrat to barber, wit to fool, and male to female, fails his/her civic duty and is consequently

castigated for it. The play enacts practically every aspect of charivari: there are noisy celebrations within and without Morose's house; every principle of life is inverted; and each and every citizen merits humiliation. The play's relationship with charivari has been noted by Ian Donaldson and Bruce Thomas Boehrer, amongst others. Donaldson asserts that all Jonson's plays for the public stage and especially Epicoene "present[] a picture of a farcical and Saturnalian society in which normal social roles are inverted, and normal social functions flouted" (20). Boehrer fully substantiates the charivari-likeness by aligning it with the disciplining of Morose: "Morose is punished in stages that clearly parallel the organisation of the charivari." (21) He demonstrates how first the rough music, second the ride on an ass, and third the mock trial are contained within Morose's humiliation. (21-23) Indeed, Epicoene comprises many of the typical inversions of carnival. To name but a few, the old Morose seeks a much younger wife (see Boehrer 21), Morose in actuality marries a man, women dress and act like men, and Mistress Otter dominates her husband and rules over him financially. The indiscriminate and comprehensive disorder is more disturbing than any one facet of disruption, however. Epicoene's whole world is sick and thus it is not incongruous to find in it masculine women and transvestites.

Epicoene's decrepitude results in an entirely unproductive life. Immoral, perverse, and diseased, London life is self-destructive rather than reproductive. The various plots deployed by the characters against one another all work, but the final result is cyclical, static, and self defeating. As Donaldson notes, "the play ends not as comedy traditionally does, in marriage, but in divorce". (42) Excepting Dauphine's five hundred pounds a year from Morose, no character advances in terms of love, joy, self-knowledge, or amelioration

of condition. Epicoene's post dramatic tomorrow promises or even threatens to be similar to today. There is no hope of alteration. The male bride Epicoene symbolises this infertile society. This 'wife' engenders nothing but humiliation for Morose, Daw, La Foole, the Collegiates, and others. Even the authentic women are deliberately without progeny or future. When she is invited to join the Collegiates, Epicoene seeks to confirm that they have "those excellent receipts ... to keep ... from bearing of children". Haughty assures her that indeed they do for "how should we maintain our youth and beauty else? Many births of a woman make her old, as many crops make the earth barren." (IV.iii.50-53) Haughty's perversion of natural biology is demonstrated in her unwittingly ironic simile to the barren earth. While fallow fields increase the earth's fertility, Haughty's birth control rather decreases her fecundity. A woman's natural progeny according to the Collegiates is lustful enjoyment not children.

The play's barrenness is ironically emphasised by the names of the characters. As Steve Brown has demonstrated, Epicoene denotes various sexual ambiguities: "'partaking of the characteristics of both sexes', 'adapted to both sexes', 'worn or inhabited by both sexes', 'effeminate'" (257). Dauphine Eugenie is also a (doubly) effeminised name, as are Sir Amorous La Foole and Otter. The note to the Oxford edition points out that the otter is "an amphibious animal... hence sexually ambivalent" (463n). Madam Centaure's name also denotes sexual ambiguity: ambiguity because centaurs were neither animal nor human, sexual because they were traditionally always male and lustful. Many of the names thus point to a debilitated form of sexuality - a sexuality that is inordinate and yet unproductive.

The disintegration of society and its future is compounded in Mistress Otter and the Collegiate Ladies. The former financially controls her husband, occasionally beats him, and obliges him to call her “princess”, an ironic sign of her unfeminine supremacy. Clerimont points out that she emasculates her husband: “She is Captain Otter.” (I.iv.27) Otter’s impotence is further underscored in the inversion that he is a landlocked sea-faring man. It is precisely such domination that Morose fears at the hands of Epicoene. It is exactly what he receives, along with feminine garrulity: “She is my regent already! I have married a Penthesilea, a Semiramis, sold my liberty to a distaff.” (III.iv.51-52)²³ As Truewit chuckles, “her masculine and loud commanding and urging the whole family, makes him think he has married a Fury” (IV.i.7-8). Mistress Otter is a similar fury with her husband.

Although she is undisguised, Mistress Otter’s unfeminine subjection of her spouse is significantly allied with the appropriation of the attire and status of society’s upper echelons. As demonstrated, the polemics discern a relationship between cross dressing, female domination, and the anxiety over a fluctuating class structure. Women who cross dressed were reprimanded in the same breath as those men and women who “ape the nobility”. Mistress Otter’s social presumptions are thus confirmed in her supremacy over her spouse and vice versa:

Is this according to the instrument, when I married you? That I
would be princess, and reign in mine own house, and you would
be my subject, and obey me? ... Do I allow you your half-crown
a day to spend where you will among your gamesters, to vex
and torment me at such times as these? Who gives you your

maintenance, I pray you? Who allows you your horse meat, and
 man's meat? Your three suits of apparel a year? Your four pair of
 stockings, one silk, three worsted? Your clean linen, your bands
 and cuffs when I can get you to wear'em? 'Tis mar'l you ha' 'em
 on now. Who graces you with courtiers or great personages to
 speak to you out of their coaches and come home to your house?
 Were you ever so much as looked upon by a lord or a lady before I
 married you, but on the Easter or Whitsun holidays, and then out at
 the Banqueting House window, when Ned Whiting or George Stone
 were at the stake? ... And did not I take you up from thence in an old
 greasy buff-doublet, with points and green velvet sleeves out at the
 elbows? (III.i.27-46)

Clothing 'elevates' Otter into a society that values appearance over reality, a society that is ironically comprised of people like the Otters themselves. It seems that Stubbs' fear that the socially presumptuous will empty status of all signification has been substantiated.²⁴ The Otters display all the typically nouveau riche assumptions of the look but not the matter of the upper classes.

Mistress Otter's masculinity is perceived by Morose as monstrosity for he refers to her as a "Gorgon" and a "Medusa" (III.vii.19). Otter also confers a form of vain monstrosity on his wife when he describes the process of her self-ornamentation: "A most vile face! And yet she spends me forty pound a year in mercury and hogs'-bones. All her teeth were made i' the Blackfriars, both her eyebrows i' the Strand, and her hair in Silver Street. Every part o' the town owns a piece of her ... She takes herself asunder still when

she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes, and about next day noon is put together again, like a great German clock.” (IV.ii.81-89) Otter epitomises his wife as a “*mala bestia*” (an evil beast), emphasising her grotesque deconstruction of her genuine self into various artificial and separate pieces.

The Collegiate ladies are also unnatural. Their pursuit of infertile lust is confirmed in their apparel in much the same way the Otters’ class presumptions are confirmed in theirs. These ladies appear to wear male items of clothing but they never attempt to dissemble their true gender. Thus they are visible expressions of greater societal transgressions. Truewit describes them as “an order between courtiers and country madams, that live from their husbands and give entertainment to all the Wits and Braveries o’ the time, ... cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority, and every day gain to their college some new probationer.” (I.i.69-74) The polemical concerns over the infectious element of female transvestism and the subsequent devolvement of appropriate female conduct are manifest here. They are corroborated even further when the Collegiates conscript Epicoene to their number as soon as she is married.

Authority in a woman makes her not wholly masculine but rather hermaphroditic, a monstrous conflation of things which are naturally opposed. The Ladies thus enjoy an urbanised form of independence that includes pursuing innumerable sexual partners, driving in their coaches, “a powerful emblem of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century urban life and status” (Newman 187), and plotting against each other and against the men. In all of these aspects they resemble the men of the play. Karen Newman notes that in “Epicoene the talking woman represents the city and what in large part motivated

the growth of the city - mercantilism and colonial expansion. Consumption, like female talk, is presented as at once stereotypical (women all do it) and as unnatural (women who do it are masculine, hermaphroditic, monstrous).” (187, original emphasis) While the play certainly comments on the new merchant society, it does not limit its attention to women. Truewit and Dauphine occasionally express a Juvenalian misogyny regarding the vanity, verbosity and irrationality of women²⁵, but the play does not identify female deficiencies as solely responsible for the destruction of society. The female appropriation of the masculine is balanced out in, or rather compounded by, the male appropriation of the feminine. Such effeminisation is manifest in the names of the men mentioned above, in Morose’s ironic garrulity, in Daw and La Foole’s emasculated cowardice, and in their unsubstantiated claims of sexual prowess. Clerimont punningly exposes their effeminacy when he tells them “you two govern the ladies; where’er you come, you carry the feminine gender afore you” (V.i.26-27). Like Mistress Otter and the Collegiates, Daw and La Foole physically trade in the mannerisms if not the clothing of the other gender.

Gender unity is under siege in Epicoene, and thus the play expresses a fundamental definition of sexual identity. As with every aspect of WUD, what is not already determined cannot be so consistently undetermined. The question then arises as to where a play that portrays the consistent failure of standards locates these definitions. Newman argues that

the play’s satire depends on shared, if unrepresented, assumptions about behaviour appropriate to women that position the audience to perceive the Collegiates’ activities as reprehensible. Such readings [i.e. by modern critics] join Jonson in his censure by assuming the

implicit norm as positive and “natural” rather than culturally produced.

In Jonson, woman is the focus of cultural ambivalence toward social mobility, urbanisation, and colonialism; she is the site of systems of exchange that constituted capitalism, the absolutist state and English colonial power. Mrs. Otter after all, owes to the China trade the fortune that enables her both to rule Captain Otter as his “Princess” (III.i), and to aspire to a more prestigious class position. (187)

Jonson is able to define Epicoene's women as the site of cultural ambivalence precisely because of the Jacobean assumption about ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ female comportment. The critics’ reading of positive female behaviour as a chaste, silent and obedient may join Jonson in his “censure”, but it nevertheless reflects the conception of gender behaviour that is at the heart of this play. The play also proposes a subtext that emphasises the order being inverted. Truewit’s perceptions of the Collegiates as hermaphroditic and La Foole as effeminate corroborate the audience’s probable expectation that there are traits and conducts that typify each gender. Daw’s silly rhyme in II.iii. also serves to interject a notion of the norm that is being perverted by the play’s constituents:

Silence in woman is like speech in man,

Deny’t who can.’ ...

‘Nor is’t a tale,

That female vice should be a virtue male,

Or masculine vice, a female virtue be:

You shall it see

Proved with increase,

I know to speak, and she to hold her peace. (111-19)

The normative conventions of Renaissance gender are evident here. Yet ironically Daw's next utterances undermine their validity. Dauphine slyly requests clarification and Daw's exegesis proves that though he may know "how to speak" he does not know how to understand. He assumes the poem to be about procreation. It is characteristic of Jonson's genius that while order is defined obliquely by the play, the very character who defines it reveals his profound ignorance and inversion of it. Daw demonstrates that speech is not existentially a virtue in men.

Some critics have pondered whether Jonson's dismantling of the very structure he is constructing signalled his own suspicion of such norms. Donaldson, for example, observes that "this comedy does not simply add strength to a common belief that women ought to be silent, but at points surprisingly sabotages that belief, generating a feeling of paradox, and allowing us to see the monstrosity not only of a shrew but also of the kind of wife demanded by Morose, a speechless one. Yet it is a paradox which does not finally destroy the premise on which the play rests, that wives really ought to stay quietly in their places." (11) As Donaldson notes, the fact that Jonson slides a questioning glance at the validity of oppositional gender does not destroy or undermine the play's primary drive of exposing the perfidies of London society. We disagree on the "premise on which the play rests", however, for Jonson's premise is not simply that "wives ought to stay quietly in their place" but that men and women have so far veered from the right path that the turning back would be more tedious than the going forward. Jonson is not satirising women alone. Rather he is exposing men, women, and their perversion of truth and social order.

Epicoene's cyclically unproductive life lacks any fundamental moral foundation and hence values the financial and the sexual over the ethical and emotional. Like the pamphlets, the play furnishes an implicit bond between gender erasure, inordinate sexuality, and the anxieties engendered by a novel merchant culture. Power, sex, and money are inherently allied, in fact, and everybody becomes whorish at some level. Familial bonds are replaced by market relations when Morose wishes to marry and produce an heir only to disinherit Dauphine. The Otter's marriage is likewise a business transaction in which Mistress Otter alternately purchases empty status for her husband or holds him in sexual thralldom with her money. Female sexuality in particular becomes what William Slights terms a "prime economic commodity" (78). The Collegiates barter their bodies for social enjoyment, and according to Truewit women trade their virginity and their bodies as if they were currency. He warns Morose against a hasty marriage because the bride "may have made a conveyance of her virginity aforehand, as your wise widows do of their states before they marry, in trust to some friend" (II.ii.123-25).

Every character in Epicoene thus iterates a threat to a healthy and stable society. The play advances the polemical concern that the woman who appropriates male attire or behaviour is but one of the many causes and effects of the failed society. The unfeminine woman is associated with WUD, pretension in clothing and status, wantonness and monstrosity.

The Roaring Girl by Middleton and Dekker provides yet another version of the society in crisis. This play is more subtle than Epicoene in its critique of every member and facet of society, and yet it is as relevant in its representation of the malaise raised by female transvestism and the momentum of an altering culture. Like the Collegiates, the

eponymous Moll²⁶ never attempts to conceal her gender even as she appropriates clothing and conduct that is male by convention. Moll is contrasted by the play's other women, Mary and the shopwives. Mary enacts Shakespeare's heroines by camouflaging her gender under the disguise of a page in order to have access to her beloved. She is a sympathetic and courageous character who is finally rewarded in the conventional love marriage of romantic-comedy. She is nevertheless less dynamic, intriguing, and ultimately less validated by the play than Moll. The shopwives participate in the financial politics of the community, but they are also less forceful, moral, and legitimated by the play than Moll. The men likewise fare badly in comparison to Moll. Sebastian aside, the aristocrats are unethical and shallow, the gallants are impotent and parasitic, and the merchants are unperceptive and sexually lacking. The Roaring Girl's society is thus composed of decadent nobles, half-witted merchants, and unsuccessful criminals; of effeminate men and treacherous women; and of interfering fathers and deceiving sons. Into this environment steps the chameleon figure of Moll. Moll is a woman who wears male clothing. She fences, smokes, and speaks the pickpocket's slang. She castigates the lecher, exposes the social conditions that drive women into prostitution, defends the lady at the mercy of patriarchal control and aids young lovers' in their quest for union.

Moll is thus a mass of contradictions. As Howard observes, her characterisation is so "thoroughly ... enmeshed in contradictions [that it is] a sure sign it is doing the work of mediating complex social tensions". ("Social Conflict" 183) Howard concludes that Moll is both a "reformer and a radical" (182). While this is true, that fact that Moll is a combination of these two functions is more significant than the functions themselves. Mistress Otter and Collegiates are satirised yet depicted as manifestly within their

element. They are not incongruous in a world of extensive social perfidy. Unlike them, at the play's finale Moll remains a social outsider who can neither establish a family nor belong natively to any one class.

Moll is paradoxically alien to every social structure yet symbolic of the prerequisites of success in the contemporary world. She triumphs at every level of the play's action yet remains divorced from the world in which she excels. The Roaring Girl's London is so upside down and monstrous that in order to be able to conform to its demands and to negotiate one's future one must embody its contradictions. To succeed one must be violent and peaceful, irascible and tolerant, single and married, innocent and sexually knowing, a conformer and a reformer, a divider and a uniter, a gallant and a rogue, an honest person and a thief, a swordsman and a matchmaker, a brawler and a music maker, a prude and a lewd punster, and ultimately, male and female. The cultural crisis is located in the chasm between the changes forged by the new mercantile system and the legal and social constructs that have not yet adapted. The subsequent conflict engenders contradictory requirements for success and congruity. To belong to the monstrous contemporary world one is likewise obliged to be prodigious by nature. Ironically, such grotesquerie marginalises one from each gender and every class. Moll's success in the world is thus paradoxically tragic. The greatest inversion of The Roaring Girl is that all the characters except Moll fail in one way or another to be native to a contradictory world. Moll, on the other hand, belongs to the world because she embodies its contradictions, but she cannot be autochthonous to one gender, group, or class of people. Moll in fact becomes a microcosm of WUD, or indeed a personification of it. Middleton and Dekker aver that the world is such that one cannot simultaneously be in

sync with its constituents and with its societal, legal and financial requirements. Moll can therefore successfully vanquish and/or relate to aristocrat, gallant, merchant, cutpurse, and male and female alike, yet she remains the most strange, unnatural, and paradoxical creature of all. Moll is the mutant who has adjusted to the new world while her colleagues struggle in the primordial slime. She is best fitted to the world but only because it is upside down like her.

Moll functions to confer a perverse form of legitimation on the shortcomings of the new order as well as to expose them. She sanctions the contradictions invested in her because she is the most moral, successful and dynamic character. She also reveals their absurdities by concentrating them all in one person. Without Moll, the conflictual requirements of the new world would be distributed amongst the other characters and thus appear less extensive and overwhelming. The disparate elements are dangerous regardless of location, but when summarised in one figure their dramatic representation becomes more evident and emphatic.

Over the past twenty years or so The Roaring Girl has become a favourite play with every kind of scholar of Renaissance drama. The criticism almost always discerns a compensatory game being played out between Moll's contradictions and those of her colleagues and environment. Howard analyses the play in the context of early modern sexual and societal constructs. She demonstrates convincingly that the play validates male homosocial bonds over heterosexual marriage, and that it represents female participation in a market economy as dangerous and unnaturally masculine. Moll functions to return the two genders to their proper space -- men to their natural virility and women to their natural docility -- while simultaneously erasing such binary constructions

to argue for her and other women's female autonomy. In addition, Moll is paradoxically perceived by men as simultaneously an erotic female object and a male companion. Laxton, for example,

explicitly stresses when he fantasises "nibbling" with Moll ... her prodigious female reproductive capacity (able to provide a captain with a whole regiment of soldiers), and her enormous spirit (capturing the energies of four parishes), and her enormous voice (able to drown out all the city). He may in part wish to mate with her to produce a homosocial world of soldiers, but to achieve that end he has to acknowledge Moll's special reproductive capacities.

("Social Conflict" 181)

Moll is thus both heteroerotic and homosocial, and she negotiates the contradictions of society both to confirm oppositional gender and to redefine it.

Stephen Orgel likewise believes that Moll is represented as both man and woman, even sexually. Laxton thrills in the "polymorphous quality" of Moll's hermaphroditism and "clearly admires most of all the double model it provides for his fantasy life" ("Subtexts" 23). Orgel perceives Moll as defending womankind and overturning gender roles. Yet in the final count he perceives her as "at heart a good bourgeoisie. Her function is to facilitate Sebastian's marriage, to defeat the patriarchal menace in favour of the patriarchal virtues. These she also exemplifies: though she is committed to a single life, it is, she assures us, a life of chastity." (24) Orgel's ultimate reading of Moll's function and character as bourgeois unfortunately neglects her hermaphroditic representation of a world that is fundamentally mutating. Her single status also cannot be dismissed so

comfortably in a comic play with a conventional impetus toward marriage. As will be argued below, Moll's rejection of marriage confirms her societal marginalisation and hints at imminent extinction.

Patrick Cheney fully recognises Moll's hermaphroditism but only within the romance tradition of the neoplatonic ideal. He ignores the monstrous and sexual aspects of hermaphroditism as proffered by the Renaissance polemic when he bases his argument solely on the notion that for the early modern period "the hermaphrodite is a supreme symbol of two souls becoming one - particularly, within the context of married love" (124). He also somewhat simplistically concludes that the play's "most serious central theme [is] love as the power that unites contraries" (121). Cheney thus entraps himself. He is unsure what to make of a play that affirms that love is the primary uniter and yet presents a leading character who categorically rejects romantic love and marriage. He is forced to explain Moll's lack of interest in wedlock as asexuality (130). However, though herself asexual, "strange as it may sound, Moll Cutpurse becomes a figure of love representing the complete human identity, the union of male and female, and the corresponding principle of *concordia discors*" (131). Thus Cheney recognises Moll's conflation of contradictions but he perceives it as a triumphant symbol of union and love rather than as an expression of the confused and struggling world.

Marjorie Garber chooses instead a Lacanian psycho-sexual approach to the play. She argues that Moll appropriates the attributes of masculinity to demonstrate the effeminacy of most of the male characters, even to the point of having a metaphorical penis fashioned for her by a tailor (223). Thus the play is not so much about "women's emancipatory strategies [as it is about] the sexual inadequacies of men" (221). Moreover,

the play is concerned as much with the fashioning of clothes as it is with the “circulation of parts, ... women with penises and testicles and men who lack them” (223). Thus while Garber recognises the contradictions that propel this play, she distils them all into the crisis of gender and sexuality:

“Normalised” or tamed by a dramatic genre which seems reassuringly realistic and socio-economic (the emergent middle class, the male and female shopkeepers of the City, the moneyed urban aristocracy with their conservative mores, the tavern under-class, and, in this context, the woman who rebels against social and economic constraints) this play, looked at hard, discloses a dangerous, carnivalised fantasia of dislocation, in which the fetishisation of commodities is the cover for the fetishisation of body parts. It is a play that theorises the constructedness of gender in a disconcertingly literal way through the construction of bodies - and of clothes. (224)

Mary Beth Rose is one of the few critics who perceives a direct association between the polemical controversy and The Roaring Girl. Rose bases her argument on Hic Mulier and especially Haec Vir and she demonstrates that the play engages the issues and sometimes even the structure of the polemical tracts. Rose’s primary focus is the defence of cross dressing in Haec Vir and she argues that “the figure of the female in male attire is portrayed in both dramatic and social contexts with simultaneous admiration, desire, abhorrence, and fear ... Taken together, artistic representation and social commentary suggest a deep cultural ambivalence in the British Renaissance about female

independence and equality between the sexes.” (368) Rose also illustrates that the anxiety over transvestism and the resulting female sexuality contained the greater malaise of a society in flux:

The unleashing of Eros, and the breakdown of sexual polarisation do not preoccupy the author as much as do questions of social status and hierarchy. The implied norm behind the satire in the pamphlet [*Hic Mulier*] is a stable society which derives its coherence from the strict preservation of such essential distinctions as class, fortune, and rank. Not only do women in men’s clothing come from various classes in society, they also have the unfortunate habit of dressing alike, obscuring not only the clarity of their gender, but the badge of their social status as well, and thereby endangering critically the predictable orderliness of social relations. (374)

Rose’s understanding of the polemical debate leads her to perceive Moll as more than a simple defence or critique of cross dressing. “In fact the playwrights maintain an ambivalent attitude toward the outlaw status of the central character, in whom courageous moral and sexual principles combine with a marginal social identity, both of which are symbolised in the play by her male attire” (379). The doubleness of Moll’s representation is thus itself as much a comment on society as Moll is herself. Rose postulates that Moll is “attractive and virtuous ... the voice of reason and common sense” and that she also “possesses imagination, insight and courage ... [and] embodies the promise of freedom and even of happiness”. However, Moll can never gain “full social acceptance, not only is she excluded by others, but she herself acquiesces in her own defeat”. (390)

It is this exclusion, this final sense of alienation, that distinguishes The Roaring Girl from Epicoene. As previously mentioned, contemporary society demands a hybrid animal -- an animal that is as conflicted as society itself -- and that animal is Moll. The various elements pointed out by the critics are therefore all at the heart of The Roaring Girl. The most significant characteristic of the play, however, is that all these conflicting readings coexist simultaneously. As Rose so rightly illustrates, The Roaring Girl employs the language and issues of the polemical controversy to articulate a new and abiding form of the virus of infectious monstrosity.

Middleton and Dekker admit to the polemical conventions of the "roaring girl"²⁷ as early as the Prologue. They agree that cross dressing is contagious, "for of that tribe are many" (16); that it normally indicates a woman's inordinate sexuality, causing her to "sell[] her soul to the lust of fools and slaves" (20); and that it turns civil laws upside down even while it impoverishes a husband: "A civil, city-roaring girl'[s] ... pride, / Feasting, and riding, shakes her husband's state, / And leaves him roaring through an iron gate" (22-24). As prologues go, however, this is perhaps one of the most ironic: this roaring girl will rather prove to be unique, chaste, unmarried, and the denouncer of the perversion of every kind of civil law.

Moll's infectiousness is contained by the very fact that women have little to do with her. Unlike in Epicoene where every woman could and did belong to a flourishing anti-society, Moll is distrusted and rejected by the middle class shopwives and barely tolerated by Mary Fitzallard. Moll disguises Mary as a page to facilitate her access to Sebastian, but Mary, though not unkind, cannot fathom the conundrum that is Moll. The women are diametrically opposed in spite of their shared transvestism. Mary is completely

concealed under her disguise while Moll never attempts to dissemble her gender. Her visible conflation of both sexes is perceived as unnatural, a challenge and an affront by the other characters, even Mary. Mary does not address Moll in the one major scene they share, IV.i., nor Moll Mary. When Sebastian confirms that Moll will help them dupe his father, Mary replies, “No poison, sir, but serves us for some use, / Which is confirmed in her” (148-49). Mary’s reply reaffirms both her sense of Moll’s unnaturalness and the WUD inversion that good things come from bad.

The shopwives similarly rebuff Moll and are thus in no danger of contracting her contagious transvestism. In the one lengthy scene Moll shares with them, Mistress Openwork refuses her entry to her shop. Moll proves her ability to pay and with it her right to function within the commercial society to which Openwork belongs. Nevertheless, she is snubbed by the lady, “I’ll sell ye nothing; I warn ye my house and shop” (II.i.235). Mistress Openwork suspects her husband of infidelity and Moll of being “one of [his] haunts” (226). Moll’s economic viability is negated by her hermaphrodism: her appearance confirms her lustfulness to a suspicious woman. Moll is not infectious because she is rejected by women as monstrous and lascivious.

Moll is discerned as wanton by Laxton (II.i.187ff), Trapdoor (III.i.184-85), Wengrave, (II.ii.154-55), and other men. She nevertheless consistently emphasises her own chastity. Her greatest defence of her and all of womankind’s morality occurs when she trounces Laxton at swordplay. Located in the crucial third Act, Moll’s apology is long but deserves full citation:

Thou’rt one of those

That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore:

If she but cast a liberal eye upon thee,
 Turn back her head, she's thine ...nay, for a need,
 Wilt swear unto thy credulous fellow lechers
 That thou'rt more in favour with a lady
 At first sight than her monkey all her lifetime. (III.i.72-80)

Moll denounces Laxton and his class of gallants as arrogant, conceited, and constantly misinformed. The reference to the monkey further ridicules him. Moll next directs her attention to that most ambiguous of Renaissance indicators of worth: Reputation.

How many of our sex by such as thou
 Have their good thoughts paid with a blasted name
 That never deserved loosely or did trip
 In path of whoredom beyond cup and lip?
 But for the stain of conscience and of soul,
 Better had women fall into the hands
 Of an act silent than a bragging nothing:
 There's no mercy in't. (81-88)

Although the female community refuses Moll, she nevertheless defines herself as being an integral member of "our sex". She speaks for all womankind when she critiques the social practice of evaluating reputation above the true worth of a person. Female reputation hinges in a large part upon chastity, and hence it especially is sullied not by a female act but by an empty braggart's word. Only in a world turned upside down would infidelity be better in deed than in rumour. Moll denounces a world that looks anywhere but at the actual woman when assessing her value.

Moll next addresses the fluctuation of fortune that has become commonplace in a disintegrating society:

In thee I defy all men, their worst hates
 And their best flatteries, all their golden witchcrafts
 With which they entangle the poor spirits of fools:
 Distressed needlewomen and trade-fallen wives -
 Fish that must needs bite, or themselves be bitten -
 Such hungry things as these may soon be took
 With a worm fastened on a golden hook. (92-98)

Moll's words emphasise the immorality of preying on the vulnerable and the pathos of those who are forced by pecuniary circumstance to sell their bodies. She likens the penis to the worm, a lowly thing of disgust, to underscore the [male] culture's perverse commodification of the female body. Ironically, Moll achieves her ends by objectifying the male body. Moll finally draws Laxton's notice to her own personal situation:

But why, good fisherman,
 Am I thought meat for you, that never yet
 Had angling rod cast towards me? - 'Cause you'll say
 I'm given to sport, I'm often merry, jest;
 Hath mirth no kindred in the world but lust?
 O shame take all her friends then! But howe'er
 Thou and the baser world censure my life,
 I'll send 'em word by thee, and write so much
 Upon thy breast, 'cause thou shalt bear't in mind:

Tell them 'twere base to yield where I have conquered.

I scorn to prostitute myself to a man,

I that can prostitute a man to me! (101-12)

Female mirth, then, is not a sign of lust. This is a simple and logical assertion, and yet it is a resoundingly significant one. It echoes *Hic Mulier's* defence of her rational and ethical right to choice of apparel (*Haec Vir* 284). Moll's declaration is a necessary response to the conclusions reached by Laxton and the polemical writers (the baser world?) alike. Lightness of spirit does not indicate lightness of morals. Moll's strength is borne out physically too, for she threatens to write her innocence in Laxton's own blood and upon his own body. The objectification of Laxton's body as a page upon which Moll may publish her innocence repays his objectification of her female body earlier. She emphasises this balancing act in the concluding lines. She has indeed reduced Laxton to a prostitute's level by making him physically, intellectually, ethically, and socially vulnerable to her. Laxton "confess[es]" that he has wronged her, but for Moll confession is like reputation, nothing but words: "Confession is but poor amends for wrong, / Unless a rope would follow." (118-19) Moll spares Laxton's life, however, even as she wishes that she could have extended her lesson to every man who has perceived her as a sexual object. Moll thus proves herself to be chaste and strong, everything that is not commonly adduced to the transvestite woman. The play moreover supports her self valuation.

In line with her conflicted self, Moll's virile defence of femininity and her rejection of the objectification of the female body is suddenly and inexplicably undermined. Femininity abruptly becomes valued not as autonomously empowered but as hierarchically inferior to masculinity. Moll declares that she "scorns" to sell "her body

for meat / Or for apparel, like your common dame / That makes shame get her clothes to cover shame. / Base is that mind that kneels unto her body / As if a husband stood in awe on's wife; / my spirit shall be mistress of this house." (134-40) Moll has heretofore evinced a compassionate and perceptive understanding of female vulnerability in a market economy run primarily by men. Now, however, she exhibits repulsion for the "common dame" who sells her body to clothe herself, and she chooses to align the mind / body duality with that of man / woman. Even though she has just impressed upon Laxton her superiority to him and others like him, she now articulates a vision of the world in which men are naturally superior to women. Submitting the mind to the body is as unnatural as a husband being in awe of his wife. The valuation of the individual that she has insisted be extended to her now cedes to stereotyping. Moll complicates the issue by asserting that her spirit will rule her "house" as naturally as a husband rules his wife. Is Moll's spirit thus masculine by inference? Or is it feminine since she refers to it as "mistress"? Are genders naturally opposed with the male intellectually superior to the female? Or are gender roles designed and imposed by a patriarchal society that feeds on those it has designated and victimised as vulnerable? Are the soul and mind male like a husband, or are they "mistress"? And which is Moll?²⁸ These questions and confusions all stem from Moll's combined being, and they are ultimately not resolved. The sustained contradictions paradoxically clarify Moll's symbolic personation of a conflicted world.

Moll thus simultaneously exposes societal injustices and affirms the structures that cause them. Her complex disjunction of elements is often interpreted by the other characters in terms of hermaphroditism and monstrosity, while she insists that her lifestyle and life-choices are rational and logical. Her hermaphroditism is the central issue of the

play, however, even as the drama seeks to redefine monstrosity from a fault of nature to a mutation within it. The very language used to designate monsters in the polemical tradition is relegated to the chaste and austere Moll. Sir Alexander Wengrave, for example, defines Moll as “a thing one knows not how to name ... ’Tis woman more than man, / Man more than woman, and ... the sun gives her two shadows to one shape.” Davy Dapper immediately deduces her to be “a monster! ’Tis some monster!” (I.ii.129-34), and Wengrave agrees that she “strays so from her kind, [that] nature repents she made her” (213-14). Mistress Gallipot sums up Moll’s reputation (as ambiguous a concept as reputation is in this play) as “some will not stick to say she’s a man, and some, both man and woman” (I.ii.209). Moll’s triumph over Laxton leads him to perceive her as a “familiar, or the ghost of a fencer” (III.i.125), and Mary holds Moll’s help to be “poison”.

Moll is declared to be hermaphroditically monstrous and alien by both aristocracy and middle class, man and woman. Her unnaturalness is further described in WUD terms. Laxton’s dismay over an other-worldly swordswoman emphasises the major WUD element of a woman exchanging her distaff for a sword. Wengrave’s opinion that she turns the world upside down in her clothing underlines the inversion. Watching Moll being fitted for a new pair of breeches he exclaims in an aside, “Heyday, breeches! What, will [Sebastian] marry a monster with two trinkets [testicles]? What age is this? If the wife go in breeches, the man must wear long coats like a fool.” (II.ii.76-78). The exchange of the needle for a sword and the gown for breeches are two of the most prominent images of the female / male inversion in charivari, WUD illustrations and literature. Only in a world turned upside down does a woman apparel herself in the signs of superiority and thus emasculates her husband.

Moll's association with WUD in actuality serves another, more ironic purpose: the references emphasise the speaker's own monstrosity rather than Moll's deformity. Mistress Gallipot exhibits more reprehensible behaviour than Moll in her mendacity and the financial deceit of her husband in order to support Laxton. Laxton is himself also unnatural as a man because he leeches off a woman, is defeated in a duel by another woman, and moreover lacks "stones", as his name suggests. The pun on his name doubly underscores his effeminacy for stone means testicle and land.²⁹ Laxton is more unnatural than Moll in his lack of physical and financial virility.

Wengrave is the most appalled by Moll's attire and thus the most guilty of perversion. He replaces the attributes of noble birth and established social pre-eminence with pecuniary value. He commits a far graver inversion than Moll's wearing of breeches when he sacrifices the ancient laws that stabilise and propagate society to the new laws that elevate money above all. Sebastian has been contracted to marry Mary. Her father's waning fortune leads Wengrave to rupture the engagement:

He reckoned up what gold

This marriage should draw from him - at which he swore,

To lose so much blood could not grieve him more.

He then dissuades me from thee, called thee [Mary] not fair,

And asked, "What is she but a beggar's heir?"

He scorned thy dowry of five thousand marks. (I.i.82-88)

Wengrave prioritises his money bags over his son's happiness and a socially correct and desirable match.

Sir Davy Dapper likewise acts unnaturally towards his son when he arranges to have Jack arrested in order to tame his gaming and roaring ways. The upside-downness of organising one's own son's lynching and of enjoying the prospect of a brawl in which he will be wounded is again far more immoral than Moll's sporting of a doublet and hose. Davy's greater offence is made manifest when Moll assists Jack in escaping the "bears" sent to apprehend him even though she and Jack are strangers to each other. Moll behaves in a more civilised manner without familial ties than the boy's own father. Thus the unnaturalness of her transvestism is equivocated by the other characters' more deeply perverse monstrosity.

Moll is moreover the only one in this extensively conflicted society to maintain her dignity and her integrity. Everybody else is tainted by the discord and forced to deceive, lie, cheat or abuse somebody in order to survive. To list every example of societal crisis would indeed be tedious. A few examples in addition to what has already been demonstrated will suffice to portray its magnitude. Jails replace universities, lawyers cheat their clients, and fathers entrap their sons. Most of all, femininity and masculinity are in crisis. Openwork reveals the familiar four part structure of the unnatural masculine woman when he describes his wife to Laxton: "I am of such a nature, sir, I cannot endure the house when she scolds; sh'has a tongue will be heard further in a still morning than St. Antholin's bell. She rails upon me for foreign wenching, that I, being a freeman, must needs keep a whore i'th' suburbs, and seek to impoverish the liberties." (II.i.300-5) The echoes of proverbs resuscitates an ancient image of female insubordination. Moll accuses women of inordinate lust: "'Tis impossible to know what woman is thoroughly honest, because she's ne'er thoroughly tried. I am of that certain belief that there are more queans

in this town of their own making than of any man's provoking: where lies the slackness then?" (318-22). She ironically also devalues male virility. Women make themselves whores [queans] because "the gallants of these times are shallow lechers: they put not their courtship home enough to a wench ... Many a poor [female] soul would down, and there's nobody will push 'em! Women are courted but ne'er soundly tried, / As many walk in spurs that never ride." (316-18, 322-25) Thus though women are willing and able to be seduced, few men have the "stones" to do it! This is a perverse society indeed, in which sexuality itself is in crisis. Mistress Gallipot complains that spouses now are "apron husbands: such cotqueans ['men who meddle with woman's affairs' (145 n.)]. Men are gradually becoming more effeminised. Male amity is also wholly absent in this play. The gallants seem to profess a liking for each other and for the shopkeepers but Goshawk makes clear that he values the "gift of treachery that [he has] in [him] to betray [his] friend when he puts most trust in [him]" (II.i.29-30). Treachery can be counted as a talent only in a world upside down. Later Goshawk's perfidy is confirmed in Openwork's opinion of him: "The world can hardly yield a perfect friend." (IV.ii.228) Unruly, adulterous, masculine women and effeminate, emasculated, treacherous men - such is the world upside down.

Clothing also plays a major role in compounding the distortions of this society. As in the polemics, references to attire in actuality expresses a truth about social conditions. Gallipot objectifies his wife as apparel: "Pray, sir, wear not her, for she's a garment / So fitting for my body, I'm loath / Another should put it on." (III.ii.250-52) Gallipot truly loves his wife. Yet his knowledge of love is so embroiled in his profession as merchant that he cannot but perceive all his relationships in terms that turn on ownership and

object. Gallipot's idealism of clothes is truly perverse. Moll's doublet and hose only look strange. Goshawk's dandyism also reveals him as a figure of mockery, not admiration. Mistress Openwork asks in reference to his hosiery, "have not many handsome legs in silk stockings villainous splay feet for all their great roses" (IV.ii.6-7). She here confirms the fact that clothing is often abused for the crime of re-inventing the truth. Goshawk furthermore attires himself in an enormous ruff to be fashionable but he unwittingly emphasises his very small head. His fashion sense is less perverse than Gallipot's understanding of the purpose of garments, but it nevertheless reveals a world in which clothing has ceased to be protection for the body or reflection of true status and become a manneristically distorted indication of the wearer's vanity. Even the cutpurses who themselves dress as gallants know that a "satin outside" does not necessarily indicate "there be any silver shells" (V.i.271-72) in the purse. Legitimate and illegitimate have had their meanings blurred in clothing, and the disintegration of truth and value reinforces the crumbling social structure.

In this precarious and dissembling world Moll often has knowledge that eludes others. Her very hermaphroditism endows her with a wider spectrum of perceptions. She effortlessly and simultaneously recognises the adulterous woman, the effeminate man, the dissembling beggar and the entrapped victim. She likewise detects that the gallant in V.i. is in truth a cutpurse and immediately warns her companions to "look to [their] purses" (277). She explains that "this brave fellow is no better than a foist ... a diver with two fingers: a pickpocket ... I took him once i' the two penny gallery at the Fortune." (279-84), and she presents in detailed manner how he approaches his victims. Moll can distinguish a foist from a gallant because she knows what a cutpurse is, how he proceeds, and because

she has already caught one in the act. Her knowledge of the pickpockets and her familiarity with the gallants prevents the cutpurses from victimising another person. As the second one exclaims, "Zounds, we are smoked!" (294), and indeed Moll has smoked them.

Moll has a foot in every part of the world and thus can perceive and accomplish what others cannot. She has never herself been a foist, but she proudly admits that her special and privileged position grants her access to all levels of London life. She is even able to speak the canting language with the pickpockets. Such position enables her to "smoke" the cutpurses and defend the gallants when it comes to theft, "smoke" the gallants and defend the honour of the ladies when it comes to adultery, and "smoke" the ladies but defend her own innocence when it comes to chastity. No other character is able to belong with such ease to all levels of the city, and by the same token, no other character is as alien to each and every one of these levels.

The final scene of The Roaring Girl confirms Moll's simultaneously integral yet external function within the community. Sir Alexander now joys in having his son safely back in the fold of proper aristocratic conduct, and he endows him with "the keys of wealth [and] possession of those lands / Which my first care provided"(V.ii.200-1). Sir Alexander moreover now comprehends that "ancient goodness, grace, and worthiness" (179) are the elements that render people deserving or not. Money is no longer the criterion by which he judges people. As such he begs Mary's forgiveness, calling her a "worthy gentlewoman" (191) and admitting that when he rejected her he "saw [her] not; Sorrow and wilful rashness grew like films / Over the eyes of judgements" (192-94). Sebastian, nobility, and the true standards for judging people are now restored to their

right order. Sebastian and Mary's relationship is also re-instituted and confirmed as an avenue to a prosperous future of love and propagation. The resolution of the love plot is accompanied by the disentanglement of the shopkeeper's lives in which the wives abandon the gallants and return to their deserving husbands. In spite of the final denouements, however, the world is ultimately not returned to the comic space of harmonious order. London is still London, foists still dupe the innocent, gallants still seduce the chaste, gigolos still impoverish men via their wives, and fortune and ambiguous reputation still remain the primary methods by which people are assessed.

Moll is a fine, honest, and brave woman. Tragically, however, she represents as a symbolic level all these societal failures. Her perceptions are the best and the most extensive, and thus they ironically banish her from the concept of community. When Lord Noland asks her when she will marry, she replies:

When you shall hear
Gallants void from sergeants' fear,
Honesty and truth unslandered,
Woman manned but never pandered,
Cheaters booted but not coached,
Vessels older ere they're broached;
If my mind be then not varied
Next day following, I'll be married. (217-24)

This prophecy echoes that of Lear's Fool, and it confirms in a comic way the tragic contradictions of London life. Life is not fearless, fair, honest, respectful, truly reflective of inner value, or considerate. Rather, it is all of these occasionally and yet none of these

simultaneously. Only Moll's privileged yet hermaphroditic knowledge and ability can always expose, negotiate, and fit into a world that is always some or all of these things. Everything affective, intellectual, personal, and social has been and is being perverted everyday. Moll's hermaphrodism is a sign of a nature that is constituted to deal with all these conflicting and disparate elements. She is the one who can and does speak to all the social stratas, even canting with the cutpurses. She herself is a woman who is most comfortable with the men. She is able to represent and yet expose the new society's perfidies in a way no other character does or can because she is involved in its every facet. Tragically, however, Moll can belong to the world entirely but to society only marginally. Moll has mutated to meet the requirements of New-London and she can no longer be wholly and uncontradictorily native to any one body of people.

Moll fits the world best but she cannot propagate, a further tragic irony. Moll has rejected marriage before (II.ii.36-45), and here again she demonstrates that her hermaphrodism -- her partaking not just of male and female but of every oppositional kind -- ultimately and ironically condemns her to a sterile solitude. Moll has mutated. She is the fittest and she has survived the best. But most perverse of all, it seems that she is already headed for extinction. Moll indeed appears to be the most monstrous and paradoxically the most human of the cross dressed heroines.

*

Renaissance drama and polemic thus share the same images and metaphors to speak of female masculinity and transvestism. Anxiety over clothing, WUD, class infractions, and monstrosity are all associated with the female transvestite and all appear with a telling consistency in both pamphlet and comic play. The conclusions drawn by

these two genres are radically at odds, however. The polemics almost uniformly identify the female transvestite as the root of all the other infractions. The comedy is less willing to dismiss the guilt of men and non cross dressed women. Society is indeed in crisis, more so in the Jacobean satires than in the Elizabethan comedies, but transvestism is as much the cause of this malaise as it is the result of it. At one end, Shakespeare's plays distance the transvestite from any guilt for the disordered society and portray her as directly responsible for its re-instituted order or emblematically associated with the forces that achieve this restitution. At the other end, the Collegiates and Mistress Otter can only add to the infertile and all encompassing confusion that they have sown in conjunction with everybody else. Shakespeare delights in the *joie de vivre* of his heroines and in their victorious achievement of all the positive attributes of human beings. Jonson deplores the failures and pretensions of London society and the resulting degradation of all the tenets of good human relations.

The character who most completely enacts a disordered society is Moll, however. Moll's embodiment of things in conflict render her a walking image of WUD. She is relevant to her society in many ways and yet incongruous to it in others. She is the monster who can simultaneously belong to all classes and genders, she is the social critic who can expose the perfidies of all classes and genders, and she is the cross dresser who belongs to neither class nor gender. The paradox of the transvestite saint is here repeated but in an almost completely inverted manner. The saint's dissemblance of her gender protects her fundamental membership in Christian womanhood. Moll's blatant hybridisation of gender signals her fundamental membership in everything generally and

therefore in nothing specifically. While she is fundamentally a good person, she is also just as fundamentally not the stuff futures are made on.

Stage transvestism in the Renaissance is a complex and fascinating topic. What has emerged from this study is the insight that transvestism is not so much about women wearing male clothing, nor only about women seeking empowerment, but rather about a variety of social encroachments, appropriations, presumptions, and ills in an exciting but selfish, not so brave new world.

Endnotes

¹ Parry cites Catherine Belsey as an example of the 'curiously reluctant' critic. Belsey states that "even in the most illusionist of modern theatre, members of the audience live perfectly comfortably with the knowledge that the actor is not really the character, that they have seen the actor in other roles and the character played by other actors. The convention that female parts are played by male actors is presumably equally taken for granted on the Renaissance stage." (Belsey 181, original emphasis)

² A further reason why female character cross dressing can be interpreted as separate from male actor transvestism is Paula S. Berggren's intriguing argument that "the [male actor] convention did not cease to thrive when women took the stage (and in sixteenth-century Italian comedy, an important source of disguise plots for the Elizabethans, cross dressing proliferated precisely at the point when actresses emerged on the scene)" ("Prodigious" 383-4). In Italy, she states, "women seem to have taken women's roles by the 1550s". (400 n. 2)

³ I have left out two Shakespearean transvestites: Imogen from the romance Cymbeline and Joan La Pucelle from the history 1Henry VI. Both these women (a) appear in plays that are not comedies and (b) originate in traditions that are not under consideration in the paper: Imogen is a figure out of mediaeval and continental romance and Joan is from the classical and mediaeval amazon tradition. The circumstances of Joan's history and the historic conditions under which Shakespeare represented her also serve to make her a wholly different issue. For example, Joan of Arc may in part be historically related to the topos of hagiographic transvestism while La Pucelle rather belongs to a demonic form of Catholic "perversion".

⁴ I originally intended to focus only on the Shakespearean comedies for this chapter. It soon became apparent that a discussion of other plays was necessary for a variety of reasons. 1. The Shakespeare plays come into sharper focus when compared with other Renaissance comedies on transvestism. I thus chose two of the major comedies written by two of the most prominent playwrights of the period, Epicoene by Jonson and the Roaring Girl by Middleton and Dekker. 2. The consternation over the crisis of change is present but muted in Shakespeare's comedies. These plays tend to celebrate humanity. The issues from the polemics

thus remain secondary. Jonson's city satire and Middleton and Dekker's Jacobean satire-comedy counter balance Shakespeare's Elizabethan comedies and they also articulate and represent in a more clear and primary way the polemical concerns. They aid in substantiating the dissertation's thesis that transvestism in the drama and the polemics addresses identical issues if with different outcomes. 3. The two non-Shakespearean plays tend to appear consistently in the criticism. The Roaring Girl especially is central to the current critical scholarship on the subject of transvestism on the Renaissance stage. The chapter thus addresses Shakespeare as the primary author and Jonson and Middleton and Dekker as secondary yet critical authors for the above three reasons. Moreover, Epicoene and The Roaring Girl are excellent, enjoyable, and important plays.

⁵ Belsey's theory becomes less obscure but unfortunately more untenable in the example she offers from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Theseus and Hippolyta share a relationship in which their responses and their personalities are dictated by conventions of masculinity and femininity. Theseus enacts his masculinity through his aggressive wooing technique (I.i.16-17), his cynicism regarding the moon ((I.i.4-11), and his "co[ldly] reason[able]" interpretation of the lover's delusion in the forest (V.i.2-27), while Hippolyta enacts her femininity by being poetic about the moon and reacting with "wonder" to the lovers' experiences. However, Hippolyta dismisses the Mechanicals' play as "silly" while Theseus "invokes imagination: 'The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them' (V.i.207-9)." (189) Belsey concludes that the reaction to the Homespun's play presents a reversal in gendered behaviour, and she asserts that "a criticism in quest of character, of fixed identities, might have difficulty here, since the stereotypes of masculine rationality and feminine imagination are now preserved, now reversed. As a kind of chorus on the edges of a play about love, which in many ways relies on stereotypes, Theseus and Hippolyta present a 'musical discord' which undermines fixity without blurring distinctions. Difference coexists with multiplicity and with love." (189)

Belsey's example presents some difficulties. First, the stereotyping she points out is critically and essentially necessary to the reversal of masculinity and femininity. That is, there can be no "discord" if there were no concord. The final reversal in behaviour between Theseus and his wife can thus be read as serving to

confirm differences rather than radically to disrupt them. Second, Belsey has chosen to make her point using a play in which cross dressing does not occur. As such she does not substantiate the argument that "the tradition of female transvestism challenges [patriarchy] precisely by unsettling the categories which legitimate it" (180). Hippolyta is indeed an Amazon but she is a secondary character and moreover one who has been recuperated into the folds of such legitimising institutions as 'civilisation' and marriage. Third, Hippolyta's lack of humour or sympathy is better interpreted as a signal of her alien status than of an unwarranted masculinity. She is unlike all the others because she is not an Athenian, and her singular behaviour subtly underscores that in these marriage festivities, she is a captured queen. Hippolyta moreover is a living symbol of the play's theme of the balance between the subordination and empowerment of women. Hermia's father is the converse symbol of unbending patriarchal power and he is here notably absent. Fourth, Theseus' defence of imagination does not signify femininity. Shakespeare is male and yet perhaps the best maker of "shadows" and the best provoker of imagination. He does not limit so called "feminine" reactions to his female characters and "masculine" reactions to his male characters, nor does he do so in tragedy, romance or history. Helena may be "femininely" frightened by the dark wood but she pursues her beloved there to woo him, a masculine behaviour. To prescribe imagination as stereotypically "feminine" in a play in which the character requiring most imagination (Puck) is male, and which argues clearly that men and women alike require both the reason of the court and the fantasy of the wood, is false. If Belsey's point is that Shakespeare endows his characters with a profundity that exceeds stereotypical conventions of gender identity, it is doubtful whether she would meet with much equivocation. Similarly however, it is doubtful that such a point would be regarded as "radical" or "disruptive". But if her point is that Shakespeare offers a notion of gender identity that exists "on the margins of sexual difference" (189), then it remains intriguing but ultimately not proved.

⁶ I am basing my critique of Berggren's position on two articles, "The Woman's Part: Female Sexuality as Power in Shakespeare's plays" and "'A Prodigious thing', the Jacobean Heroine in Male Disguise". Such a vacillation may seem improper but it is relevant in this situation first because both articles were written (or at least published) in the same year, and second because the articles are in complete agreement.

⁷ See the discussion over Greenblatt's "Fiction and Friction" in the preceding chapter for the problems resident in the belief that men and women are bi-gendered at some level. Taken to an extreme, the theory of a double-gendered being leads to such analysis as that of Peter Sallibrass in "Transvestism and the 'body beneath', Speculating on the Boy Actor". Sallibrass so unfixes the biological nature of gender that he is led to make such statements as "all attempts to fix gender are necessarily prosthetic: that is, they suggest the attempt to supply an imagined deficiency by the exchange of male clothes for female clothes or of female clothes for male clothes; by displacement from male to female space or from female to male space; by the replacement of male with female tasks or of female with male tasks. But all elaborations of the prosthesis which will supply the 'deficiency' can secure no essence. On the contrary, they suggest that gender itself is a fetish, the production of an identity through the fixation upon specific 'parts'." (77, original emphasis) Sallibrass here is discussing the issues raised by male-actor as well as female-character transvestism. He thus falls into the trap distinguished by the first section of this chapter: he regards as inseparable two issues that are similar but which stem from different traditions and exist as different concerns for the early modern period. If for the Renaissance gender were truly held to be a matter of fetishisation, then the monstrosity appended by the polemical writers to the women who appropriate male clothing and behaviour would have no justification. Cross dressing would be the exchange of fetishes, and the new sexual identity would be regarded as a new person rather than as the original person with inappropriate accoutrements. For Sallibrass however, the conception of sexual identity as biologically fixed does not come into being until after the Renaissance: "The imagined 'truth' of gender which a post-Renaissance culture would later construct is dependent upon the disavowal of the fetishism of gender, the disavowal of gender as fetish. In its place, it would put a fantasised biology of the 'real'." (77) Berggren does not argue for this extreme position, but her belief in a Renaissance theory of a bi-gendered being takes the first step on the route to it.

⁸ One cannot help but wonder where plays such as The Taming of the Shrew and A Midsummer Night's Dream fit into Berggren's scheme.

⁹ Belsey deserves to be noted for being the only one of the four critics discussed who establishes in an extensive and scholarly way a relationship between social context and drama. Her study, however, does not

deal with other essential contextual considerations that I believe to be at the heart of the dramatic transvestite question. Howard should also be mentioned here, for even though "Cross Dressing" aims to divorce the drama from its polemical setting, first it does not completely do so, and second Howard's other work is most sensitive to the extra-theatrical setting of the plays. See for example "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of The Roaring Girl" which will be discussed below.

¹⁰ As observed earlier, Dusinger was writing about twenty years ago and thus the misinterpretation of the historical contexts that she does offer must itself be contextualised within the state of scholarship then. When in 1983 she wrote "As Who Liked It?" she demonstrated a more historically sensitive approach. She analyses AYL within the setting of "the complex relationship which existed for more than a quarter of a century between [Sir John] Harington and the Queen, an interaction captured in the play in the relation between Rosalind and ... Touchstone and Jaques". Harington translated Orlando Furioso into English, and he was a "courtier, translator, wit, ladies' man" (as well as the inventor of the water closet) and thus a "central part of the play's frame of reference". (10) Shakespeare, after all, took the name of Orlando for his hero in AYL. Dusinger perceives Rosalind as re-writing the script imposed upon her by male characters as her own fiction, and thus "she becomes, more than any other heroine, the author of her own drama". (9)

¹¹ This is not to argue by any means that Shakespeare held men and women to be identical. Sexual or biological difference is absolutely essential and celebrated in terms of sexual attraction, as will be demonstrated later. Moreover, there are some superficial differences in behaviour that can be discerned as belonging to one gender or the other: physical strength, for example, is normally masculine, and there is a difference between a masculine public life and a feminine private life (see following endnote). But the most important difference of all behaviour is not the one between genders, but rather the one between individuals. Each person is unique and constituted of elements that are common to both genders as well as elements that are aligned to only one gender or the other. That this depiction of gender is complex is granted. It demonstrates however the profundity of Shakespeare's genius, and how a balance may harmoniously and consistently be struck between seemingly disparate notions.

¹² "External trappings" is a here admittedly a loaded and vague term. My meaning can be made more precise in the context of the representation of the Renaissance convention of male / public / merchant world versus female / private / domestic world. These plays do not present the conventional division between these two worlds except for in a superficial manner. Men and women belong to both worlds, and the domestic is described as being essentially important to the success of the public world and vice versa. Viola moves easily in the court world of Orsino, and Sir Toby Belch belongs comfortably to the domestic world of Olivia's household. The healthy and protective Belmont holds Portia in seclusion from the perfidies of a merchant society, yet only she can bring the solution and the cure to the ills incurred by it. Arden is posited as a feminine green space against the masculine corrupt world of the court, yet clearly Celia and Rosalind belong to the court as much as they do to Arden. Thus external signs designate some things as feminine and some as masculine, but there is a more important and consistent commonality between these things.

¹³ See especially her concluding illustration from MSND and my critique of it in endnote 5.

¹⁴ Viola is indeed less brave than Rosalind. However, her cowardice signals her personal undisguised nature. Viola wishes to conduct her affairs in a more retiring and less aggressive way than Rosalind. That hesitation does not, however, make her more feminine and Rosalind less so. Rather, it demonstrates that the women are all different characters and developed in a singular manner. They are not all interchangeable nor are they types of one character. Although they share many similarities, they also have idiosyncratic differences. Viola's "feminine" fear of a swordfight with Aguecheek is mimicked in his similarly "feminine" or even "effeminate" fear of a swordfight with Cesario. Elements of bravery and courage are perhaps more conventionally assigned in TN than in AYL. However, the essential components of successful humanity -- compassion, love, wit, love of life etc. -- remain ungendered. Maria's contribution and leadership within the secondary plot demonstrates that mental and emotional ability far exceed in importance physical ones in the definition of successful personality.

¹⁵ The validation of the woman with no male relatives and a lot of money is moreover repeated in the other plays. Portia has no male relatives until she marries, and she is more wealthy than Bassanio. After her

marriage she maintains a shared and generous control over her wealth with her husband. Rosalind is also wealthy, and her male relatives are also limited to a disreputable uncle and a father who is practically missing. Julia likewise seems to be independent. The Riverside note to I.ii.128 observes, "after one other reference to her father (I.iii.4-8), Shakespeare seems to treat Julia as a wealthy orphan (see II.viii.86-7)". Viola is also, for all intents and purposes, relationless. The issue of her wealth is more questionable. The figure of the wealthy woman with few or no male relatives is then a recurring theme in these comedies, and it cannot be used here as a reason for the taming of Olivia by Viola. The lack of worthy male relatives is a condition shared by both women.

¹⁶ Olivia is moreover mourning a dead brother whom she loved dearly. Her grief is perhaps obsessive but it nevertheless emphasises that she possesses all the elements of a woman who recognises and upholds her familial relationships. Olivia is thus presented by the play as a woman who values male relatives, not as one who rejects all forms of relationships with men.

¹⁷ Furthermore, Howard's scheme is itself also illogical for Orsino is also "punished" when he is not granted the future he insisted upon. He does not win Olivia and he also finally marries not the woman he desired but the one he thought to be a boy. Even in Howard's reading then, both genders are punished equally. Olivia's so called disciplining cannot be assigned as a re-establishment of the "hierarchical gender system".

¹⁸ This substitution does not argue for the substitution between all men and all women. As previously stated, there are differences between men and women. Biological differences can be overcome only rarely and via fictional sleights of hand. Differences between personalities and individualities however make substitution between person and person, not just man and woman, impossible. In the case of TN the trick is made possible because brother and sister are alike physically and in personality. None of the other plays deploy this same trick.

¹⁹ AYL also plays with the notion of the female virtue of silence but once more only to mitigate it. Rosalind is eager to know more about Orlando. She so frequently interrupts Celia's account until she

implores her to "cry 'holla' to [her] tongue" because it "curvets unseasonably" (III.ii.244-45). Rosalind replies, "Do you not know I am a woman? when I think, I must speak." (249-50). Yet by no means is this exchange more than a gentle joke about the overwhelming love that Rosalind is experiencing for Orlando. Perhaps Rosalind speaks too much here, yet she does so not because she is a woman but because she is in love and young. Orlando is just as in love and just as young, and he is also gently mocked in the fact that he writes a lot of rather bad poetry. Rosalind makes fun of her own enthusiasm. It is however left up to the fool Touchstone to expose the "very false gallop of [Orlando's] verses": "If the cat will after kind, / So be sure will Rosalind. / Winter garments must be lin'd / So must slender Rosalind ... Sweetest nut hath sourest rind, / Such a nut is Rosalind." (III.ii. 103-10) Touchstone's very funny satirical nonsense serves to reveal the folly of young romantic love, and yet to endear both the untalented poet and the object of his affections to the audience.

²⁰ Notably these characters are both women. In these plays Shakespeare represents women as wiser and more instinctively knowledgeable than men. Men may and do learn, but the women are all already in possession of the knowledge that ensures a healthy and good life. All except Phebe.

²¹ Certainly not all Shakespearean comedies that deal with societal crisis include a transvestite woman. All comedy illustrates to a certain extent the re-ordering of disorder and the resolution of a crisis. My argument is not that the transvestism itself signals disorder. As already established, transvestism in these plays is often about maintenance of order. My argument rather is that the elements depicted by the polemical debate as central to social crisis reappear in these comedies as part of a language of an established metaphor.

²² It would be repetitive to point out the crisis in social order in MV but a brief comment is nevertheless necessary. The beast-like Shylock is the monster here. His confusion of ducats and daughters portrays the extent to which his mercantile mentality has invaded his whole life. Shylock indeed seems initially quite fond of Jessica. Later however he wishes for her humiliated death. He seeks revenge against his own child not for her marriage to Lorenzo but for the money that she stole from him in her escape. MV underlines the importance of joining business technique with such humane notions as mercy. Arguably it is

merciful to have allowed Shylock to live after his attempt at murder. But the fact that none of the Christians are able to show much compassion for him when it comes to his livelihood and his religion portrays the ills of the merchant world. The quality of mercy ought not be strained, and yet in a society that functions in economic terms it cannot help but be so.

²³ Penthesilea is an Amazon, and Semiramis is an Assyrian woman who killed her lovers, went to war, and wore male clothing.

²⁴ Morose also has a speech which associates clothing with assumption of status. In his case, however, he demonstrates his abhorrence of the fripperies of female finery and questions the silent Epicoene as to how she shall give instructions to assure for herself these kinds of clothes. Epicoene replies, "I'll leave it to you, sir". Her response is so soft that it elicits a request from the noise sensitive Morose to raise her voice. Comedy aside, Epicoene's submission of choice of clothing to her husband ironically emphasises the Collegiates' monstrosity as well as her own. After her 'marriage' she chooses her own, gender transgressive clothing.

²⁵ Truewit plays up to Morose's misogyny and releases a flood of traditional charges against womankind: "If she be fair, young and beauteous, no sweetmeats ever drew more flies; all the yellow doublets and great roses i' the town will be there. If foul and crooked, she'll be with them and buy those doublets and roses, sir. If rich, and that you marry her dowry, not her, she'll reign in your house as imperious as a widow. If noble, all her kindred will be your tyrants etc. etc." (II.ii.57-61) This speech continues over one hundred lines and it rehearses all the typical weaknesses of women. Truewit's motive is to terrify the already horrified Morose. Nevertheless, the play here and in other instances defines an extensive misogyny that was not apparent in the polemics on transvestism or the other plays under discussion in this chapter.

²⁶ Moll is fashioned on a real life London figure by the name of Mary Frith. Mary was also known as Long Meg of Westminster, the Roaring Girl, and Moll Cutpurse. She cross dressed in public and was a popular figure of almost legendary proportions. She had her own biographies (Anon, "The Life of Long Meg of Westminster" (1620) and Anon, "The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal

Cutpurse" (1662)). Other plays also mention her. She appears in Field's Amends for Ladies (1611), for example. The Epilogue of The Roaring Girl indeed provides a 'trailer' for Mary's forthcoming performance on the very same stage: "If what both [i.e. the playwrights] have done / Cannot full pay your expectation, / The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence, / Shall on this stage give larger recompense." (33-36) This real-life roaring girl was perceived as a nuisance. She was brought before the ecclesiastical court to answer charges of public misconduct, including cross dressing, attending rough places in London, going to Alehouses, patronising tobacco shops and play houses (the play-Moll commits the same acts) and to drinking and singing in public, and prostitution. "She confessed in addition to blasphemy, drunkenness, and consorting with bad company, but 'being pressed to declare whether she had not been dishonest of her body and hath not also drawn other women to lewdness by her persuasions and by carrying herself as a bawd, she absolutely denied that she was chargeable with these imputations'." ("Consistory of London Correction Book"; qtd. in Orgel, "Subtexts" 12) For more about the real-life Moll Cutpurse see Orgel 12-22 and Simon Shepherd 67-92.

²⁷ Orgel elucidates this label. "As the term was initially used, roaring boys were characteristically upper class or gentry, their riotous behaviour an assertion of aristocratic privilege. It was behaviour that, though uncivil, was also conceived to be natural in men." (13) Boys may be boys, but when girls are boys "roaring" becomes invested with connotations of hermaphroditism.

²⁸ Further complicating matters, Moll refuses marriage: "I love to lie o' both sides o'th' bed myself; and again, o' th'other side, a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore I'll ne'er go about it ... I have the head now of myself and am man enough for a woman; marriage is but a chopping and changing place where a maiden loses one head, and has a worse i'the' place." (II.ii.36-45) Again, is Moll a woman or a man or does she slip between the two? She refuses to submit as a wife even as she insists that women must obey men. Is it natural for her to be the head of herself? Does she confirm a gender hierarchy, or does she critique it?

²⁹ See the note to his name in The Revels Plays edition of The Roaring Girl.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The study of female transvestism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance has yielded two startling similarities. First, literature always disagrees with authority on the valuation of femininity and generally upholds female ability. Second, the more comprehensive the woman's disguise, the more the narrative esteems her. Despite the contradictions between mediaeval and Renaissance conceptions of femininity, and the authoritative position on female masculinity, the literature of both periods portrays thematic similarities that are comparably more generous to the female.

As the thesis demonstrates, there is discord in both periods between the authoritative position, i.e. the stance expressed by writers who are avowedly commenting on "reality",¹ and the attitude evinced by the literature. Mediaeval and Renaissance social authority denotes female masculinity in terms that turn primarily on the assessment of the female gender. For the patristic writers womanhood is by nature rationally deficient, and thus masculinity enhances it; for the Renaissance polemicists womanhood is signified by such decorum as chastity, silence and obedience, and thus masculinity debases and destroys it. The literature of both periods rejects these conceptions of femininity to portray the empowered woman as either in herself valuable or, at the very least, not in herself without value. The saints and Shakespeare's heroines are admirable because they promote an intellectual and efficacious femininity. Similarly, the cross dressed women of other Renaissance drama are censurable not simply because they wear breeches, or because they are corrupt women, but because they represent the extensive derelictions of society as a whole.

Although it is frequently unfeasible to insulate fact from fiction, particularly in mediaeval hagiography, there remains a perceptible distinction between that which is official commentary on contemporary reality and that which is encoded in literature. While early mediaeval theologians elevated the female from her classical and Judaic subjugation, she was nevertheless discerned as less able by nature than the male. Women's roles remained chiefly in the domestic sphere of wife, mother and housekeeper. Because the most influential authority of the era held domesticity to be first inferior to asceticism, second indicative of humanity's post-lapsarian condition, and third anachronistic as a life-style now that from "out all nations [there is] an overflowing fullness of spiritual kindred" (Augustine, On the Good of Marriage IX), women and their affective quotidian roles became less immediately deserving of praise than men and their rational abilities.

Hagiography straddles the disjunction between authority and fiction to depict, in a covert manner, the exaltation of the temporal woman as a woman. Repudiating the patristic determination of female asceticism as first the divestment of feminine affectivity and second the assumption of the armour of masculine intellectuality, the nine saints don masculine clothing in order to enact roles that were typical of women in the Middle Ages. Hagiographic transvestism becomes a way of expressing that which is negated by contemporary authority: the feminine gender, with all its attendant temporal restrictions, is nevertheless special to God. The legends contend that women serve and venerate God not by rejecting their inherent aptitudes, but rather by fulfilling them.

The almost uniform attitude of the Renaissance authoritative position is likewise negotiated by the drama. Historical survey, sermon, and social commentary postulate

female transvestism as a monstrous alliance of elements that reside in binary opposition according to natural, divine and social law. Women, the pamphlets concur, ought to be “the complements of men’s excellences, ... the Seminaries of propagation ... [and] armed with the infinite power of Virtue [like] ... Castles impregnable”. They must “maintain the world, support mankind, and give life to society” (*Hic Mulier* 265-66). A woman in doublet and hose failed to be feminine and was determined as wanton, garrulous and wilful. Cross dressing further indicated a woman’s appropriation of attributes and behaviours that were diametrically opposed to her gender. A transvestite woman was thus a monstrous confusion of deteriorated femininity and arrogated masculinity. Beyond the anxieties over gender dissolution, the woman in man’s clothing came to be the symbol and scapegoat of a culture that was swiftly transforming itself out of previous sureties and into new and unregulated ways.

While the drama accedes that transvestism and the new culture are associated, it mediates the polemical interpretation in two manners. First, Shakespeare’s comedies absolve female transvestism from being *per se* culpable for a fallen society. Second, other plays illustrate that albeit reprehensible, female transvestism is but the tip of an iceberg of ills that reaches to the very depths of society. Shakespearean comedy defines the new culture’s predicaments in paradigms that portray power and commerce as prioritised over mutual respect, the bonds of affection and the achievement of the self’s full potential. While the initial comic crisis is engendered by said inverted prioritisation, the transvestite woman rather represents correct order. The heroine in breeches is the most perceptive, loving and joyful person on stage precisely because she has fulfilled the interior abilities that typify both men and women. Shakespearean comedy accepts the polemical vision of a

world in crisis, but categorically rejects its delineation of the cross dressed woman as causally to blame.

Other Renaissance plays depict an association between female transvestism and the world in crisis, but not in a systemically direct way. While the cross dressed woman remains one of the causes of an unordered society, she is but one of many roots to the tree. She is also simultaneously one of the effects of societal inversions: a victim as much as a victimiser. Other infractions, committed by males and females alike, are as liable for the crisis.

In both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, then, authority and fiction share a relationship that is manifest in mutual concepts and metaphors. Literature, however, consistently declines authority's formulaic equations and portrays the transvestite in ways that at best support the woman and at worst locate her culpability in crimes that are not limited to gender infractions. While authoritative transvestism signals female masculinity, literary cross dressing indicates, to coin a phrase, female femininity.

More curious than the authority / literature fissure is the fact that the more complete the transvestite disguise, the more lauded, justifiable and endearing the woman. Such validation of the hoax is evident in both eras. The saints and Shakespearean heroines obliterate any visible referents to their female gender, and yet they are legitimated by their narratives as worthy women. The Renaissance's other cross dressers do not attempt to dissemble their gender, and yet they are designated by their texts as monstrosities of nature. The most censured cross dressers are those who adulterate the unity of things to appear physically as two genders simultaneously. Deception thus seems to be secondary in importance to cohesion.

Hagiography and Shakespearean comedy assert that beneath the disguise beats the heart of a woman. While both are excellent, women are women and men are men and never the twain shall biologically commingle in one person. The saints' delusion is wholly successful for they deceive various fathers and abbots. More significantly, the ultimate deception is played out against the adherent or reader. In the final analysis, the male costume is a sleight of hand that temporarily dazzles the devotee before revealing the mystery of the paradox. Because the process of unveiling mysteries bestows a more profound comprehension, the saints' fraudulence becomes an avenue rather than a barrier to spiritual understanding. The Shakespearean heroine's physical appearance likewise does not combine female and male attributes. She is discerned by other characters and audience members alike as *hic vir* or *haec mulier* but never as a hermaphrodite. She is thus excellent, estimable, and worthy of emulation in a way that women who are visibly both sexes never are.

The polemical cross dressers and the Collegiates and Moll do not annihilate the physical appearance of one gender beneath another. By visually representing two genders simultaneously they disregard Order to integrate elements that are segregate by law. Even Moll, the most valorous of the visibly hermaphroditic transvestites, is for better or worse a mutant who remains inimitable in her very singularity. Defrauding the male is therefore more legitimate and justifiable than expressing visibly a conflation of contradictory elements. Consistency and harmony in physical appearance seem in fact to symbolise, perhaps even to warrant, macrocosmic Order.

Transvestism therefore emerges as always being about more than gender definitions. More accurately, it is a metaphor that concretises the abstract notion of

Order. The woman who disguises herself as a man is vindicated precisely because she expresses, contributes to and ensures a harmony of gender that in turn engenders natural, divine and social congruence. The woman who dresses like a man yet remains visibly a woman is rebuffed, for she blatantly expresses, contributes to and ensures a disharmony that in turn engenders natural, divine and social perversion. Moreover, the saints and Shakespeare's heroines differ from the other cross dressers in their glorification of their femininity. Their disguise is but a superficial shell beneath which they portray actions and abilities that are feminine. Contradictorily, the other transvestites are dissatisfied with what society offers them and so assume prerogatives that are not theirs by nature. Deploying masculine appearance to shield the feminine is thus legitimate and valuable motivation. Deploying masculine appearance for reasons other than the complete obfuscation of one gender beneath the other is perceived as a hermaphroditic and monstrous challenge to structures of power and authority.

In conclusion, while I hoped to decipher what already seemed complex at the planning stages of this dissertation, I in fact discovered more enigmas and deceptions. Like Chaucer's dreamers, however, I have learned from paradoxical revelations through obscurity. I leave the final word to *Hic Mulier*, for the ambiguities that reside in her defence of transvestism seem to mirror those that have emerged in this study:

You condemn me of Unnaturalness in forsaking my
creation and contemning custom. How do I forsake
my creation, that do all the rights and offices due to
my Creation? I was created free, born free, and live
free; what lets me then so to spin out my time that I may

die free? ... I walk with a face erect, with a body
clothed, with a mind busied, and with a heart full of
reasonable and devout cogitations, only offensive in
attire, inasmuch as it is a Stranger to the curiosity of pre-
sent times and an enemy to Custom? Oh miserable
servitude, chained only to Baseness and Folly, for than
custom, nothing is more absurd, nothing more foolish.

(Haec Vir 282)

Endnotes

¹ For further elucidation on what is meant by terms such as “authority” and “authoritative” see n. 2 of Chapter I.

Bibliography

Mediaeval and Renaissance Texts

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL ENTRIES THAT CITE "STC" COME FROM A SHORT-TITLE CATALOGUE OF BOOKS, WHICH IS ITSELF LISTED UNDER THE EDITOR "POLLARD".

Acta Sanctorum. Curante: Joanne Camandet. Parisiis: V. Palme, 1664-19--.

Adams, Thomas. "Meditations upon the Creed." 1629. Renaissance Woman. Ed. Kate Aughterson. London: Routledge, 1995. 29-31.

---. Mysticall Bedlam, or The World of Mad-Men. Sermon 2. 1615. STC 124.

Ambrose, St. Traité sur L'Évangile de S. Luc. Trans. Dom Gabriel Tissot. Paris: Cerf, 1958.

---. "Concerning Virgins." Select Works and Letters. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Vol. X. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1979.

Andreas, Capellanus. On Love. Trans. P.G. Walsh. London: Duckworth, 1982.

Anger, Jane. Her Protection for Women. 1589. Half Humankind. Ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1985. 172-88.

Aughterson, Kate, ed. Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England. London: Routledge, 1995.

Augustine, St. Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans. Trans. Henry Bettensen. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972.

---. On the Good of Marriage. Works.

---. On the Good of Widowhood. Works

---. Of Holy Virginitiy. Works.

---. "Letter 262." Letters. Vol. 5. Trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc. 1956.

---. The Literal Meaning of Genesis. Trans. John Hammond Taylor. Ancient Christian Writers no. 42. New York: Newman Press, 1982.

---. Works. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. First Series. Vol. III. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1983.

Averell, William. A Marvellous Combat of Contrarieties. 1588. STC 981.

B. Ste. Counsel to the husband: To the wife instruction. 1608. STC 1069.

Beaumont, Francis and John Fletcher. Love's Cure. The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon. Vol. III. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1966.

The New English Bible. Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1970.

Bibliotheca Sanctorum. Roma: Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Universita Lateranese, 1969?-.

Blamires, Alcuin, ed. Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Mediaeval Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Baines, Barbara J., ed. Three Pamphlets on the Jacobean Antifeminist Controversy. Facsimile Reproductions. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1978.

Bansley, Charles. The Pryde and abuse of women now a dayes. London: Thomas Raynalde, 1550. STC 1374.

Bornstein, Diane. Distaves and Dames: Renaissance Treatises for and about Women. Facsimile Reproductions. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1978.

Butler, Alban. Lives of the Saints. Eds. Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater. New York: Kennedy, 1963.

Chamberlain, John. The Letters of John Chamberlain. Ed. Elizabeth McClure Thomson. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987.

Chrysostom, John. "On Virginity" and "Against Remarriage". Trans. Sally Rieger Shore. Lewiston, New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983.

Da Voragine. Jacobus. The Golden Legend. Trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

Elyot, Thomas. Defence of Good Women. Ed. Edwin Johnston Howard. Oxford, Ohio: Anchor Press, 1940.

Gainsford, Thomas. The Rich Cabinet Furnished with varietie of Excellent discriptions, exquisite Characters. 1616. STC 11522.

Gibson, Anthony. A Woman's Woorth, defended against all the men in the world. London: John Wolfe, 1599.

The Gospel of Distaves. Distaves and Dames: Renaissance Treatises for and about Women. Facsimile Reproductions. Ed. Diane Bornstein. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1978.

The Gospel of St. Thomas. Nag Hammadi Codex II 2-7: Together with XIII. Vol. I. New York: E.J. Brill, 1989.

Harrison, William. The Description of England. 1587. Ed. Georges Edelen. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1968.

Heywood, Thomas. An Apology For Actors. 1612. Ed. Richard H. Perkinson. New York: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1941.

Huac Vir, or, The Womanish-Man: Being an Answer to a late Book entitled "Hic Mulier", Expressed in a brief Dialogue between Huac Vir, the Womanish Man, and Hic Mulier, the Man-Woman. 1620. Half Humankind. Ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1985. 278-89

Hic Mulier, or the Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to cure the Coltish Disease of the Staggers in the Masculine-feminines of our Times, Expressed in a brief Declamation. 1620. Half Humankind. Ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1985. 265-76.

Jerome, St. Letters and Select Works. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Vol. VI. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.

Jonson, Ben. Epicoene or The Silent Woman. The Alchemist and Other Plays. Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1995.

Juvenal. Satire 6. The Satires. Trans. Niall Rudd. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Knox, John. The First Blast of the Trumpet Against The Monstrous Regiment of Women. Ed. Edward Arben. London: <The Editor>, 1878.

Lanier, Amelia. Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum. Ed. A. L. Rowse. London: Cape, 1978.

Leigh, Dorothy. "The Northern Mother's Blessing." Distaves and Dames: Renaissance Treatises for and about Women. Facsimile Reproductions. Ed. Diane Bornstein. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1978.

Map, Walter. De nugis curialium. Ed. and Trans. M.R. James. Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1983.

Middleton, Thomas and Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girl. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester U. Press, 1987.

Millet, Bella and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds. Mediaeval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and the "Ancrene Wisse". Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

More, Thomas. The Utopia. Trans. Ralph Robynson. 1551. Ed. J.H. Lupton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.

Otten, Charlotte F., ed. English Women's Voices 1540-1700. Miami: Florida International U. Press, 1992.

Perkins, William. The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience. Ed. Thomas F. Merrill. The Netherlands: B. De Graaf, 1966.

Pollard, A.W. and G.R. Redgrave. A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640. 2 Vols. 1926. 2nd Vol. Revised by W.A. Jackson et al. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976.

Salisbury, John Of. Polycraticus: Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers. Trans. J.B. Pike. Minneapolis: U. of Minneapolis Press, 1938.

---. The Statesman's Book. Trans. U.J. Dickinson, New York: Knopf, 1927.

Salter, Thomas. The Mirrhor of Modestie. Ed. Janis Butler Holm. New York: Garland, 1987.

Shakespeare, William. The Plays. The Riverside Shakespeare. Eds. Herschel Baker, Anne Barton et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.

"Sum Wifes of the Borrouftoun." The Maitland Quarto Manuscript. 1586. Ed. W.A. Craigie. London: Wm. Blackwood and Sons, 1920.

Spenser, Edmund. The Faerie Queene. Ed. A.C. Hamilton. London: Longman, 1977.

Stubbs, Thomas. The Anatomy of Abuses. 1587. New York: Johnson Reprint Company Ltd., 1972.

Swetnam, Joseph. The Arraignement of Lewd, Idle, Forward, and inconstant women: Or the vanities of them, choose you whether. With a Commendation of wise, virtuous and honest Women. Pleasant for married Men, profitable for young Men, and hurtful to none.

1615. Half Humankind. Ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1985. 190-216.

Tertullian. La Toilette des Femmes. Trans. and ed. Marie Turcan. Paris: Cerf, 1971.

Vives, Juan Luis. Instruction of a Christian Woman. 1529. Renaissance Woman. Ed. Kate Aughterson. London: Routledge, 1995. 69-74.

---. Instruction of a Christian Woman. Distaves and Dames: Renaissance Treatises for and about Women. Facsimile Reproductions. Ed. Diane Bornstein. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1978.

Williams, John. "A Sermon of Apparel." 1619. Renaissance Woman. Ed. Kate Aughterson. London: Routledge, 1995. 77-79.

Wroth, Mary, Lady. The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts. Baton Rouge: Louisiana U. Press, 1983.

Secondary Sources

Allen, Prudence. "Sex Unity, Sex Polarity, and Sex Complementarity Combined in Early Christian Philosophy." The Concept of Woman. The Aristotelian Revolution 750B.C. - AD 1250. Montreal: Eden Press, 1985. 213-50.

---. "Two Mediaeval Views on Woman's Identity: Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Aquinas." Studies in Religion: A Canadian Journal 16 (1987): 21-63.

Anson, John. "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif." Viator 5 (1974): 1-32.

Arthur, Marilyn. "Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Towards Women." Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers. Eds. John Peradotto and J.P. Sullivan. Albany: State U. of New York Press, 1984. 7-58.

Ashton, John. Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century. London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1882.

Bandel, Betty. "The English Chroniclers' Attitude towards Women." Journal of the History of Ideas 16 (1955): 113-18.

Barber, C.L. Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian, 1967.

Bean, John C. "Making the Daimonic Personal: Britomart and Love's Assault in The Faerie Queene." Modern Language Quarterly 40 (1979): 237-55.

- Beecher, D.A. "Intriguers and Tricksters: The Manifestations of an Archetype in Elizabethan Drama." Revue de la Littérature Comparée 61 (1987): 5-29.
- Belsey, Catherine. "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies." Alternative Shakespeare. Ed. John Drakakis. London: Methuen, 1985. 166-90
- Berggren, Paula S. "'A Prodigious Thing': The Jacobean Heroine in Male Disguise." Philological Quarterly 62 (1983): 383-402.
- . "The Woman's Part. Female Sexuality as Power in Shakespeare's Plays." The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare. Eds. Carolyn Ruth Swift-Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely. Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1983. 17-34.
- Bloch, Howard. "Mediaeval Misogyny." Representations 20 (1987):1-24.
- Bohrer, Bruce Thomas. "Epicoene, Charivari, Skimmington." English Studies 75 (1994): 17-33
- Boose, Lynda E. "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member." Materialist Shakespeare: A History. Ed. Ivo Kamps. London: Verso, 1995. 239-79.
- Bradley, A.C. Shakespearean Tragedy. Greenwich, CT.: Fawcett, 1965.
- Bristol, Michael D. Carnival and the Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Brown, Peter R. The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1988.
- Brown, Steve. "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines: Notes on Gender Ambiguity in the Sixteenth Century." Studies in English Literature 30 (1990): 243-63.
- Bullough, Vern L. "Mediaeval Medical and Scientific Views of Women." Viator 4 (1973): 487-503.
- . The Subordinate Sex. Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1973.
- . "Transvestites in the Middle Ages." American Journal of Sociology 79 (1974): 1381-394.
- Butler Holm, Janis. "The Myth of a Feminist Humanism: Thomas Salter's The Mirrhor of Modestie. Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 197-218.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Mediaeval Women. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1987.

—. Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages. California: U. of California Press, 1982.

—. "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality." Anthropology and the Study of Religion. Eds. Robert L. Moore and Frank E. Reynolds. Chicago: Centre for the Study of Religion, 1984.105-25.

Bzdyl, Donald G. "Juliana: Cynewulf's Dispeller of Delusion." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 86 (1985): 165-75.

Camden, Carroll. The Elizabethan Woman. Mamroneck, New York: Paul J. Appel, 1975.

Chance, Jane. "The Anglo Saxon Woman as Hero: The Chaste Queen and the Masculine Woman Saint." Allegorica 5:2 (1980): 139-48.

Charney, Maurice. "Comic Villainy in Shakespeare and Middleton." Shakespearean Comedy. Ed. Maurice Charney. New York: New York Literary Forum 5-6, 1980. 165-73.

Cheney, Patrick. "Moll Cutpurse as Hermaphrodite in Dekker and Middleton's The Roaring Girl." Renaissance and Reformation 7 (1983):120-34.

Clark, Sandra. "Hic Mulier, Haec Vir, and the Controversy over Masculine Women." Studies in Philology 82:2 (1985): 157-83.

Colie, Rosalie L. Paradoxica Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1966.

Coon, Raymond Huntingdon. "The Reversal of Nature as a Rhetorical Figure." Indiana University Studies 15 (1928): 3-20.

Crandall, Coryl. "The Cultural Implications of the Swetnam Anti-Feminist Controversy in the 17th Century." Journal of Popular Culture 2 (1968): 136-48.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. Trans. Willard A. Trask. Bollingen Series XXXVI. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1973. 79-105.

Damrosch, David. "Non Alia Sed Aliter: The Hermeneutics of Gender in Bernard of Clairvaux." Images of Sainthood in Mediaeval Europe. Eds. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1991. 181-95.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. "Women on Top: Symbolic Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe." The Reversible World. Ed. Barbara A. Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1978. 147-90.

Delcourt, Marie. "Le Complexe de Diane dans L'Hagiographie Chretienne." Revue de L'Histoire des Religions 153 (1958): 1-33.

---. Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity. Trans. Jennifer Nicholson. London: Studio Books, 1961.

Delehay, Hippolyte. The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography. Indiana: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1961.

Delehay, Phillipe. "Le Dossier Anti-Matrimonial de *l'Adversus Jovinianum* et son Influence sur Quelques Ecrits Latins du XIIe Siecle." Mediaeval Studies 13 (1951): 65-86.

Diamond, Arlyn. "Chaucer's Women and Women's Chaucer." The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism. Eds. Arlyn Diamond et al. Amherst: U. of Massachusetts Press, 1977.

Dollimore, Jonathan. "Early Modern: Cross dressing in Early Modern England." Sexual Dissidence Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. 284-306.

---. Radical Tragedy. London: Harvester Press, 1984.

---. "Subjectivity, Sexuality, and Transgression: The Jacobean Connection." Renaissance Drama 17 (1986): 53-81.

Donaldson, Ian. The World Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Du Bois, Page Ann. "'The Devil's Gateway': Women's Bodies and the Earthly Paradise." Women's Studies 7 (1980): 43-58.

Dunn, Catherine M. "The Changing Image of Woman in Renaissance Society and Literature." What Manner of Woman: Essays in English and American Life and Literature. Ed. Marlene Springer. New York: New York U. Press, 1977. 15-38.

Dusinberre, Juliet. "As Who Liked It?" Shakespeare Survey 46 (1983): 9-21.

---. Shakespeare and the Nature of Women. London: Macmillan, 1975.

Eaton, Sara J. "Presentations of Women in the English Popular Press." Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 165-83.

Eckhardt, Caroline D. "Woman as Mediator." Popular Culture in the Middle Ages. Ed. Josie P. Campbell. Bowling Green, OH.: Bowling Green State U. Popular Press, 1986. 63-76.

Eliade, Mercea. The Two and The One. Trans. J.M. Cohen. London: Harvill Press, 1965.

Ellis, Deborah. "Domestic Treachery in The Clerk's Tale." Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 99-113.

Elm, Susanna. "Virgins of God". The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Farnham, Willard. The Shakespearean Grotesque: Its Genesis and Transformations. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Ferguson, Margaret W. "A Room not their Own: Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers." The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice. Eds. Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1988.

Ferrante, Joan. Woman as Image in Mediaeval Literature. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1975.

Fitz, Linda T. "'What Says the Married Woman?': Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance." Mosaic 13 (1980):1-22.

Flint, Valerie I. J. "Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment." Viator 15 (1984): 65-80.

Foss, David A. "From God as Mother to Priest as Mother: Julian of Norwich and the Movement for the Ordination of Women." Downside Review 104 (1986): 214-26.

Fowler, D.C. The Bible in Early English Literature. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976.

Frank, Robert. Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1972.

Frantzen, Allen. "When Women Aren't Enough." Speculum 68 (1993): 445-71.

Garber, Marjorie. "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl." Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretation of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama. Eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. New York: Routledge, 1991. 221-34.

—. Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Fiction and Friction." Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1988. 66-93.

---. Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1980.

Grudin, Robert. Mighty Opposites: Shakespeare and Renaissance Contrariety. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1979. 1-50.

Harding, D.W. "Women's Fantasy of Manhood." Shakespeare Quarterly 20 (1969): 245-53.

Hargreaves, H.A. "Visual Contradiction in King Lear." Shakespeare Quarterly 21 (1970): 491-95.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. "Women in Early Byzantine Hagiography: Reversing the Story." That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity. Eds. Lynda J. Coon, Katherine Haldane and Elizabeth W. Sommers. Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1990. 36-59.

Hayles, Nancy K. "Sexual Disguise in 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night'." Shakespeare Survey 32 (1979): 63-72.

Heise, Ursula K. "Transvestism and the Stage Controversy in Spain and England, 1580-1680." Theatre Journal 44 (1992): 357-74.

Henderson, Katherine Usher and Barbara F. McManus. Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1985.

Hentsch, A. A. De La Littérature Didactique du Moyen Age S'Addressant Specialement aux Femmes. Paris: Cahors, 1903.

Herlihy, David. "Did Women Have a Renaissance? A Reconsideration." Medievalia et Humanistica 13 (1984): 1-22.

Hill, Thomas D. "Androgyny and Conversion in the Middle English Lyric, 'In the Vaile of Restles Mynd'." ELH 53 (1986): 459-70.

Hoover, Claudette. "Goneril and Regan: 'So Horrid as in Woman'." San Jose Studies. 10:3 (1984): 49-65.

Howard, Jean. "Cross Dressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." Shakespeare Quarterly 39 (1988): 418-40.

- . "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of The Roaring Girl." Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 170-90.
- . The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Paying Customers." Staging the Renaissance. Eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Sallibrass. London: Routledge, 1991. 68-74.
- Hull, Suzanne. Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English books for Women 1457-1640. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982.
- Hunter, D.G. "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian." Theological Studies 48 (1987): 45-64.
- Jackson, Gabriele Bernhard. "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc." English Literary Renaissance 18 (1988): 40-65.
- Jacoff, Rachel. "God as Mother: Julian of Norwich's Theology of Love." Denver Quarterly 18 (1984): 134-39.
- Jardine, Lisa. "Boy Actors, Female Roles, and Elizabethan Eroticism." Staging the Renaissance. Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Sallibrass. London: Routledge, 1991. 57-67.
- . Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare. Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983.
- . "Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency and Sexual Availability in Twelfth Night." Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 27-38.
- Jones, Malcolm. "Folklore Motifs in Late Mediaeval Art I: Proverbial Follies and Impossibilities." Folklore 100 (1989): 201-13.
- Jordan, Constance. "Feminism and the Humanists: The Caste of Sir Thomas Elyot's Defence of Good Women." Renaissance Quarterly 36 (1983): 181-202.
- Kelly, Joan. "Early Feminist Theory and the Querelle des Femmes, 1400-1789." Signs 8 (1982): 4-28.
- Kelly, Katherine E. "The Queen's Two Bodies: Shakespeare's Boy Actress in Breeches." Theatre Journal 42 (1990): 82-93.
- Kelly-Gadol, Joan. "Did Women have a Renaissance?" Becoming Visible: Women in European History. Eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz. Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1977. 137-64.

Kimbrough, Robert. "Androgyny Seen Through Shakespeare's Disguise." Shakespeare Quarterly 33 (1982):17-33.

Kirshner, Julia and Suzanne F. Wemple, eds. Women of the Mediaeval World: Essays in Honour of John M. Mundy. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985.

Klawitter, George. "John Donne and Woman: Against the Middle Ages." Allegorica 9 (1987-88): 270-78.

Klein, Joan Larsen, ed. Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640. Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1992.

Klene, Jean. "Chaucer's Contributions to a Popular Topos: The World Upside-Down." Viator 11 (1980): 321-34.

Kunzle, David. "World Upside-Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type." The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society. Ed. Barbara A. Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1978. 29-94.

Lamb, Mary. Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle. Madison, Wisconsin: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1990.

Leslie, Michael. Spenser's 'Fierce Warres and Faithful Loves': Marital and Chivalric Symbolism in "The Faerie Queene". Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983.

Levine, Laura. "Men in Woman's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminisation from 1579-1642." Criticism 28 (1986):121-43.

Livius, Thomas Stiverd. The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries. London: Burns and Oates, Ltd., 1983.

Lucas, Angela M. Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1983.

Lucas, Valerie R. "Hic Mulier: The Female Transvestite in Early Modern England." Renaissance and Reformation 24 (1988): 65-84.

Maclean, Ian. The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1983.

Marcus, Leah S. "Shakespeare's Comic Heroine's, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny." Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives. Ed. Mary Beth Rose. New York: Syracuse U. Press, 1986. 135-53.

Martines, L. and J. O'Faolain, eds. Not in God's Image: Women in History. London: Temple Smith, 1973.

McLaughlin, Elianor C. "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Mediaeval Theology." Religion and Sexism. Ed. Rosemary Ruether. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

McLeod, Glenda. Virtue and Venom: Catalogues of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1991.

McLuskie, Kathleen. "The Act, the Role, and the Actor: Boy Actresses on the Elizabethan Stage." New Theatre Quarterly 3 (1987): 120-30.

McNamara, Jo Ann. "Sexual Equality and the Cult of Virginity in Early Christian Thought." Feminist Studies 3.3/4 (1977): 145-58.

Miller, Robert P. "Chaucer's Pardoner, The Scriptural Eunuch, and 'The Pardoner's Tale'." Chaucer Criticism. Vol. 1. Eds. Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor. Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1960. 221-44.

Montrose, Louis A. "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form." Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe. Eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1986. 65-87.

Moxey, Kieth. "The Battle of the Sexes and the World Upside Down." That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity. Eds. Lynda J. Coon, Katherine Haldane and Elizabeth W. Sommers. Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1990. 8-59.

Nederman, Cary J. and N. Elaine Lawson. "The Frivolities of Courtiers follow the Footprints of Women: Public Women and the Crisis of Virility in John of Salisbury." Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 82-96.

Newman, Karen. "City Talk: Women and Commodification in Epicoene." Staging the Renaissance. Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. London: Routledge, 1991. 181-95.

Oppel, John. "Saint Jerome and the History of Sex." Viator 24 (1993): 1-22.

Orgel, Stephen. "The Subtexts of The Roaring Girl." Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 12-26.

Overbeck, Pat Trefzgar. "Chaucer's Good Women." Chaucer Review 2 (1967-68): 75-94.

Pare, Ambroise. Des Monstres et des Prodiges. Ed. John Ceard. Geneve: Droz, 1971.

Park, Katherine and Lorraine J. Daston. "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England." Past and Present 92 (1981): 20-54.

Parry, P. H. "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines." Shakespeare Survey 42 (1990): 99-109.

Patlagean, Evelyne. "L'Histoire de la Femme Deguisée en Moine et L'Évolution de la Sainteté Feminine a Byzance." Studi Medievali 17 (1976): 597-623.

Patton, Brian. "The Women are Revolting? Women's Activism and Popular Satire in the English Revolution." Journal of Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies 23:1 (1990): 69-87.

Perret, Michele. "Travesties et Transsexuelles: Yde, Silence, Grisandole, Blanchadine." Romance Notes 25:3 (1985): 328-40.

Rackin, Phyllis. "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage." PMLA 102 (1987): 29-41.

Rhodes, Neil. The Elizabethan Grotesque. London: Routledge and Paul, 1980.

Robertson, D.W. Jr. "Some Principles of Mediaeval Aesthetics." A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Mediaeval Perspectives. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1963. 52-137.

Robertson, Elizabeth. "The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in 'The Life of Saint Margaret'." Images of Sainthood in Mediaeval Europe. Eds. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1991. 268-87.

Rose, Mark. "Sidney's Womanish Man." Review of English Studies n.s. 15 (1964): 353-365.

Rose, Mary Beth. "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in The Roaring Girl." English Literary Renaissance 14 (1984): 367-91.

Ruether, Rosemary. "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church." Religion and Sexism. Ed Rosemary Ruether. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974. 150-83.

Sawyer, Corinne Hold. "Men in Skirts and Women in Trousers, from Achilles to Victoria Grant: One Explanation of a Comedic Paradox." Journal of Popular Culture 21 (1987): 1-16.

Schleiner, Winfried. "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances." The Sixteenth Century Journal 19:4 (1988): 605-19.

Schulenberg, Jane Tibbetts. "Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles, ca. 500-1100." Women and Power in the Middle Ages. Eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski. Athens: U. of Georgia Press, 1988. 102-25.

—. "The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation." Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives. Ed. Mary B. Rose. New York: Syracuse U. Press, 1986. 29-72.

Scribner, Bob. "Reformation, Carnival and the World Turned Upside-Down." Social History 3 (1978): 303-29.

Shahar, Shulamith. The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages. Trans. Chaya Galai. London: Methuen, 1983.

Shapiro, Michael. Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1994.

Shapiro, Susan C. "A Seventeenth-Century Hermaphrodite." Seventeenth Century News 45 (1987): 1-12.

Shepherd, Simon. Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth Century Drama. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

Sherwin Bailey, Derrick. "The Patristic Age" The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1959. 19-102.

Silberman, Lauren. "Mythographic Transformations of Ovid's Hermaphrodite." The Sixteenth-Century Journal 19 (1988): 643-52.

Slights, William W. E. "Private Lies, Public Notice: Epicoene and Theatrical Deception." Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy. Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1984. 78-104.

Snyder, Susan. The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1979.

Stallybrass, Peter. "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed." Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe. Eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1986. 123-42.

—. "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath'. Speculating on the Boy Actor." Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 64-83.

—. "The World Turned Upside Down: Inversion, Gender and the State." The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare. Ed. Valerie Wayne. Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1991. 201-20.

Stanton, Shirley F. "Female Transvestism in Renaissance Comedy: 'A Natural Perspective, That Is and Is Not'." Iowa State Journal of Research 56 (1981): 79-89.

—. "Reading Spenser's Faerie Queene in a Different Voice." Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 145-62.

Stone, Lawrence. The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Thompson, Ann. "Shakespeare and Sexuality." Shakespeare Survey 46 (1983):1-8.

Thompson, C.J.S. Mysteries of Sex: Women Who Posed as Men and Men Who Posed as Women. New York: Causeway Books, 1974.

Underdown, D.E. "The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England." Order and Disorder in Early Modern England. Eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985. 116-36.

Waage, Frederick O. "Meg and Moll: Two Renaissance Heroines." Journal of Popular Culture 20 (1986): 105-17.

Wadell, Helen. The Desert Fathers. London: Constable, 1936.

Warner, Marina. Alone of all her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976.

Watson, Forester. Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women. London: Edward Arnold, 1912.

Wayne, Valerie. "Zenobia in Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature." Ambiguous Realities. Women in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1987. 48-65.

Williams, David. "Wilgefortis, Patron Saint of Monsters, and the Sacred Language of the Grotesque." The Scope of the Fantastic: Culture, Biography, Themes, Children's Literature. Eds. Robert A. Collins and Howard D. Pierce III. Westport, CT.: Greenwood, 1985. 171-77.

Woodbridge, Linda. Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620. Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1984.

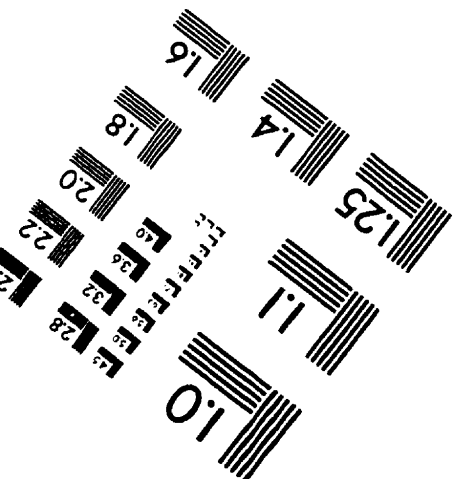
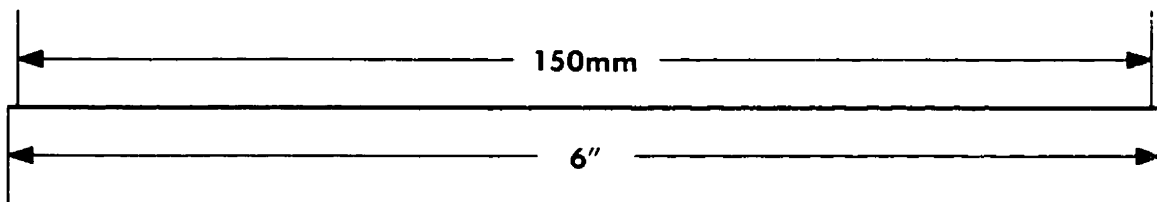
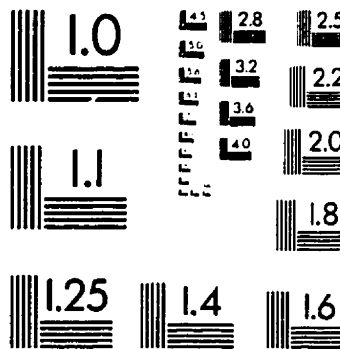
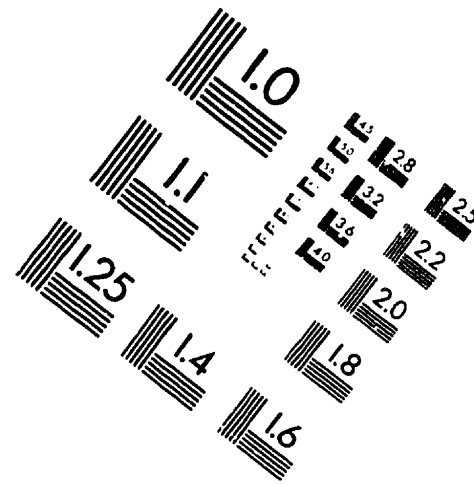
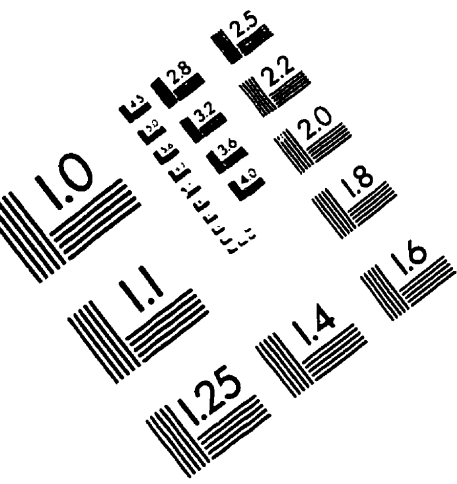
Wright, Celeste Turner. "The Amazon in Elizabethan Literature." Studies in Philology 37 (1940): 433-56.

Wright, Louis B. "The Popular Controversy over Women." Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1935. 465-507.

Wynne-Davies, Marion. "The Queen's Masque: Renaissance Women and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque." Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance. Ed. Marion Wynne-Davies. Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1992.

Zink, Michel. "Bel-accueil le Travesti: Du 'Roman de la Rose' de Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun à 'Lucidor' de Hugo von Hofmannsthal." Littérature 47 (1982): 31-40.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc.
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

