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Love, Rape, and Godly Metamorphosis:
Gender Mutability in Ancient Roman and Early Modern English Literature

Helen Cattan-Prugl

Class of 2018

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Introduction:

Constructing Gender from the Classical Period Onwards

Transgender issues and gender non-conformity are not just modern issues, but have been subjects of study since antiquity. In Ancient Rome in particular, gender deviance was a source of fascination. Classical storytellers used myth and godly magic in their tales to talk about natural beings that defied patriarchal categorization. In the Metamorphoses, a pseudo-epic collection of miscellaneous tales of love, desire, and often deadly transformation, Ovid presents gender deviance through godly magic and human folly. Written in 8 CE, during the reign of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, Ovid tells various origin stories, culminating in the founding of Rome. The stories of Caenis/Caeneus, a virgin transformed into a failed epic hero, and Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, a couple twisted into one being, stand out in particular. Early modern English writers drawing inspiration from these stories continued to challenge fixed categories of gender identity. Over a millennium and a half later, John Lyly draws on the same themes in his comedic court play *Gallathea*. While magic features heavily throughout and Venus, the goddess of desire, facilitates the happy ending, human devotion and constancy in love allow gender transformations to happen. Though both cultures, Ancient Roman and English Renaissance, were rooted in binary systems of categorization, the artists and thinkers of their respective eras were interested in queering what it meant to be human.

Both Ancient Rome and early modern England structured their societies around a strictly gendered hierarchy. The male/female binary mirrored the divide between the *civitas* and *domus* (public/private sphere), and *nomos* and *physis* (culture/nature) (Kirk 152, Kahn 77.) These divides were highly gendered, with masculinity being associated with the political, hegemonic, and social world, and women being linked with the home, family, and domesticity. Thus, womanhood is constructed in opposition to masculinity, and vice versa (Matterson 32.) Modern feminist scholars analyze the notion of woman being an ideal against which men construct their superiority (Butler 13.) Stemming from Simone de Beauvoir's notion of a feminine "Other," feminist scholars generally theorize masculinity to be constructed by its negative, femininity. Essentially, man depends on the concept of "woman" and her associated femininity in order to create his own identity (Breitenberg "Introduction" 10.) This idea is also alive and well in both ancient and modern cultures with regards to civility. The citizen/savage binary determines who is part of society and who is wrong, deviant, and does not fit in; where woman is man's Other, the barbarous is civilization's Other. Ovid and Lyly's works play with this categorization. Both the stories of the Metamorphoses and *Gallathea* are set in the woods, outside the bounds of society, allowing them to toy with uncivilized ideas. While gender mutability and transformation was regarded as natural during their respective epochs, it did not have a place within civilized society. Thus, Ovid and Lyly take to the frontier outside of patriarchal domain to explore gender mutation.

The Ancient Roman world and the English Renaissance were especially fixated on categorizing identities. Both these civilizations were budding empires and the great world power during their times. Maintaining the status quo and social order was a great concern to their leaders, Augustus and Elizabeth I. However, the Metamorphoses is much more explicit than the later *Gallathea*, and Ovid heightens the horror and deformity resulting from transgression. *Gallathea*, on the other hand, uses gender and sexual identity as a disguise, one that generates humor and confusion rather than pain. At the turn of the 1st century, it became imperative for Ancient Romans to conform to the demands of civility. The new emperor Augustus even imposed what became known as “morality legislation,” a series of laws intended to limit adultery and other deviant sexual activity. While largely disregarded and disliked by the upper classes, Augustus took his goal to embed his citizens with newfound “Roman morality” seriously. Ovid’s literature challenging this legislation even resulted in the poet’s banishment from Rome. By contrast, when Renaissance writers drew on these Ancient Roman themes, they interpreted the strict morality code more loosely. Thus, *Gallathea* reads less like a warning to not practice immoral sexuality, and more like a playful romp through the murky world of gender identity.

Gender and identity in classical thought was viewed as fluid, and this did not come without its perils. Masculinity implies a position of inherent superiority. But, if a man can be made, could a woman turn into a man? Could a man turn into a woman? Man’s patriarchal position of authority relies on keeping woman below him in the social hierarchy. Ovid and Lyly play with the anxiety surrounding gender

fluidity in their works. By using godly magic and love, and by situating their fantastical tales in the feminine world of nature, they ask us to open our minds and conceptualize gender differently. Ovid's poems of Caenis/Caeneus and Salmacis and Hermaphroditus center masculine anxieties with his graphic and frightening depictions of rape, while John Lyly's play Gallathea messes with conventional notions of identity and categorization, rape and power, and hybridity and perfect union in a more playful manner.

Chapter I:

Ancient Roman Transgender Myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

Caenis/Caeneus' Impenetrable Masculinity and Hermaphroditus' New Gender

The stories of love, desire, and conquest that Ovid tells in his classic epic Metamorphoses depict couplings both hetero- and homosexual, enacted via force and fueled by mutual passion. While much scholarship has been done on Ovid's stories of rape, the myth of Caenis/Caeneus is one of the least discussed. Told by Nestor in Book XII, this tale begins with Neptune's rape of the "loveliest of the virgins of Thessaly," Caenis (XII.189-190.) Caenis then wishes to become a man, which Neptune grants, transforming Caenis into Caeneus and rendering him magically impenetrable. Nestor then tells of how Caeneus dies doing battle with the centaurs. This racy myth plays with gender and transformation to portray the instability of gender and sense of self. Meanwhile, the story of Hermaphroditus is perhaps one of the most well known tales of gender transformation in the Metamorphoses. The origin of the word "hermaphrodite," this myth provides a veritable image of classical androgyny. The daughters of Minyas tell Hermaphroditus' story to explain the origin of pool of Salmacis, a body of water with effeminizing powers. Like the other tales they tell while weaving, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is the story of a perfect union gone wrong (Romano 559.) The Naiad Salmacis, a lecherously masculine woman, rapes Hermaphroditus, a feminine man. Her sexual desire prompts her to call on the gods to fuse the two into one body. Thus, Caenis/Caeneus' and Hermaphroditus' metamorphoses are both incomplete.

Neither is quite male nor female, but a third, abject gender. The tragic fates of the main characters queer boundaries and fixed notions of identity to showcase themes of female penetrability, male impenetrability, and barbaric hybridity.

Part I: Rape

In his stories about rape, Ovid highlights Roman anxieties about lack of control over individual boundaries. In Ancient Roman society around the turn of the first century CE, boundaries and proper behavior in the private sphere became a highly discussed topic. Rape features prominently in the Metamorphoses, with over fifty stories involving rape. The violent act serves as a regulator for woman's wild spirit, enforcing patriarchal laws. In the Ancient Greek and Roman literature Ovid drew from, subduing, taming, and yoking were all common metaphors for sex and marriage (Irving 65.) Contemporary rulers drew on these notions of control to reinstate morality into the Ancient Roman household. The emperor Augustus considered the state of affairs in the *domus* to be in crisis. With fears of female autonomy and a perceived lack of respect for the traditional institutions of marriage and family, Augustus instituted the first laws regulating the private sphere in 23 BC (Boatwright 281-282.) In the end, while Ovid's tales of boundary transgression allow for some twisting of the gender hierarchy, it upholds the masculine order with the notion that boundary transgression results in chaos and unhappiness (Sharrock 103.)

While not all the rape victims in the Metamorphoses are women (with the boyish Hermaphroditus being a notable exception) most of them are. There were

several justifications for woman's rapableness. The first was that medically, women's bodies were designed for penetration. According to Galenic medicine and the Hippocratic corpus, women's bodies were soft, porous, and oozing. To be feminine was to be "open, permeable, effluent, and leaky" (Paster 92.) Feminine bodies were thought to be incontinent with regard to menstruation, urination, and other liquid bodily functions (Paster 83.) Unlike the uncontrollable woman, however, male bodies were considered processed, firm, and stoic. Manhood in Ancient Rome implied entitlement and privilege. His *virtus*, "manliness," was in congruence with the will of the state, and unlike women, he was immune from social violation (Matterson 22.) Physically, men were considered impenetrable as well. Hippocratic medicine characterized the female body being more vulnerable, fleshy, and sexually penetrable than the male one (Segal 10). The normative man, the *vir*, on the other hand, was the penetrator, unmarked physically and socially (Skinner 14.) To be a Roman citizen was to be unmarked; the prize of citizenship was protection from the pain and humiliation of servile beating (Matterson 37.) The woman's body on the other hand, penetrable and out of control, was not granted the same status. An upper class Roman woman, *femina*, might have more respect granted to her. However, lower class *puella* (slaves, and freedwomen/men) were considered "all fissure, all flesh, promiscuous by nature, open to any *vir*" (Skinner 16.)

Furthermore, in Roman culture, loss of virginity (via marriage or rape) was a rite of passage. It was a way to induct male youths or female virgins into their position in society. Pederastic sex was a part of a youth's training in manhood. For

women, it was a manner of leaving girlhood (Richlin 177.) Woman's sexuality was associated with wildness and animalism (Irving 64.) A virgin was a temptation and susceptible to degeneration, and to counteract this, needed to have some masculine steadfastness embedded in her character. In epic narratives, a woman encountering a man causes her to lose an element of her femininity (Keith 239.) In this way, rape is a form of assimilation into society, like hunting or taming an animal. Therefore, Ovid's myths about rape transgress boundaries and "tame" the wild virgin to adhere to social norms. A female subject like Caenis is the typical victim due to her physical and societal penetrability, while Hermaphroditus' rape is the only instance in the Metamorphoses where these gender roles are reversed.

Caenis' story begins when nature and danger meet, Neptune steals her virginity, and she is forced across the border of adulthood. The rape is framed within another form of penetration—the wounds of battle. Nestor tells Caenis/Caeneus' story as the Greeks celebrate their victory over Troy. He describes the beautiful shore where the beautiful Caenis is walking. Her girlhood and virginity set her apart from the battle scene, implicitly linking her with the naturalness surrounding her. Pure maidens were associated with wildness and likened to animals (Westerhold 11.) The natural location of the landscape is what Ernst Robert Curtius calls a *locus amoenus* (Westerhold 7.) The "lonely beach" is a beautiful, idyllic site (XII.196) Situated outside the bounds of society, it is free from the confinement and structure of patriarchal civilization. The natural landscape mirrors Caenis' virginity, hinting at the existence of feminine natural locations unreachable to men (Irving 84.) Caenis retains her virginity by choice, further suggesting the

possibility and danger of feminine inaccessibility. Nestor notes that Caenis refused to wed any suitor, implying that Caenis was an *innuptae*, a woman refusing to take on her role as wife and mother and prolonging her maidenhood (XII.195, Westerhold 8.) This was not considered natural in Roman society. Rather, drawing out the cusp of maidenhood longer than social convention was dangerous. This “pathological virginity,” the unnatural desire to prolong youth instead of assuming the duties of a Roman woman, could provide ideological justification for why Caenis has to be raped. Intercourse, via marriage or otherwise, was considered a “coming of age” for young women in Ancient Rome. Thus, natural danger offsets her virginal serenity when Neptune rapes her, engulfing her like a wave. Thus, beginning with Caenis’ rape in a beautiful, natural location sets the scene for the transformative story that follows.

Hermaphroditus’s rape also takes place in the seclusion of nature. In fact, Salmacis literally personifies the natural setting through which Hermaphroditus wanders; she *is* the spring (Keith 217.) She is a Naiad, a water nymph, associated with nature and femininity. Like Caenis, Salmacis’ femininity is enhanced by the forested space. Her wild, non-conforming womanhood renders the pool and grassy area dangerous, another *locus amoenus*. The secluded setting outside the bounds of patriarchal society, rules, and norms is more dangerous than comforting. It gives leeway for Salmacis’ gender deviancy. Her abnormality becomes clear in comparison to Diana’s nymphs. She does not hunt like they do, but sits idly and lounges, grooming and gazing at herself (IV.310-312.) Women feature heavily in Ovid’s myths as virgins, brides, or other passive subjects. However, Salmacis’

femininity is dangerous, having the potential to literally corrupt vulnerable men like Hermaphroditus.

Salmacis' abundance of negative, feminine characteristics exists in sharp contrast with her masculine sexual assertiveness. Diana's nymphs are virgins, but Salmacis is a sexual being, hunting down Hermaphroditus like a predator stalking her prey. First, she approaches him, and when rejected, tricks Hermaphroditus into thinking she surrenders. Then, when he is vulnerable, she attacks (IV.317-355.) Her assertiveness twists Ancient Roman conceptions of heterosexuality. Her dominance is pathological, simultaneously hyperfeminine and hypermasculine. The physician Galen's one-sex body theory posited that men and women were not two separate species of humans, but stemmed from the same basic body. This medical model stated that woman was an inverted man, and vice versa. However, though according to the one-sex body model, women were thought to stem from the same body as men, their identities were constructed as the exact opposite. Their softness, leakiness, and coldness rendered female bodies the antithesis of the masculine ideal (King 28, Matterson 11.) Mythologically, too, the story of Pandora describes woman being created in opposition to man, specifically to punish him. Salmacis' dangerous merging two opposite genders manifest themselves most clearly in the line, "Often, she gathered flowers" (IV.315.) The picking of flowers, a leisurely, girly activity, nevertheless implies dangerous, male-dominated rape ("deflowering") (Keith 217.) Thereby, her lack of moderation threatens to feminize those around her, and indeed, ends up literally feminizing Hermaphroditus (Keith 236.) Where Caenis is too

chaste, Salmacis is too lecherous. Her sexual aggression is not just an abnormality in Ancient Roman culture, but also a threat to patriarchal manhood.

The fear surrounding penetration and boundary dissolution in Ancient Rome was not unique to women, however. In fact, Ancient Roman medicine characterized all bodies as being semi-permeable, porous, and fluid. The Hippocratic corpus centers its medical theory on the four humors: black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood (King 34.) In a normal, healthy body, these humors were balanced, moved around, and concocted into other bodily fluids like sweat, semen, and urine that entered and exited the body (Paster 8.) As such, the human body was not thought of as isolated from the outside world. Ancient physicians compared the body to a sponge, or wool, which was leaky and susceptible to being influenced by outside forces (King 29.) Galen further posited that all human bodies could be reduced down to blood. This meant that all bodily fluids could turn into one another depending on temperature and other internal and external circumstances. There was no boundary between the philosophical and the physical, either (Martin 20.) While a divide between these two spheres of knowledge would emerge in the modern period, in Ancient Rome, they were conceptualized as one and the same. The ancient mind worked in the same way as the body, with a combination of internal and external workings composing the self. These medical ideas existed at odds with hierchal social roles in Ancient Rome. Although men and women held extremely different roles and positions in Ancient Rome, there was perilously little distinguishing them physically. If a male was not able to produce enough heat, or

live up to the other patriarchal qualifiers of being a man, then theoretically, he could easily fall from his position of superiority and become a woman.

By inverting the typical male rapist/female victim narrative, Ovid portrays an effeminate man corrupted by dominating femininity. The reader looks through the rapist's penetrative and voyeuristic gaze and delights as Salmacis does in seeing Hermaphroditus' body on display. In part, this effect is achieved through recurring bathing scenes (Richlin 165.)

“She looked back, and hid herself among bushes
in the secluded woods, on her bended knees. But
he, obviously at leisure, as if unobserved (...)
dips his feet and ankles in the pool. Then (...) he
stripped the soft clothes from his slender body”
(IV.342-344.)

In this quote, the Ovidian narrator uses Salmacis' stare to eroticize Hermaphroditus' body and characterizes it as boyish and effeminate. Mirroring this gaze, the reader delights as Salmacis does in seeing Hermaphroditus' body on display. Rape stories in the Metamorphoses use gazes, usually that of a hierarchically superior man on a targeted female, to objectify women and render them vulnerable. In particular, Salzman-Mitchell's reading of Ovid as “an interplay of intrusive and fixing glares” illuminates the character of the narrative's eroticism (Lovatt 7.) Ovid's depiction of the horror and distress associated with rape also focuses on the victim's desirability (Richlin 170.) Embarrassment, discomfort, and fear work as aphrodisiacs in the lines anticipating the rape (Curran 227.) Watching, knowing that something terrible

will happen in this *locus amoenus*, the reader and Salmacis both watch Hermaphroditus with anticipatory erotic pleasure.

Salmacis' penetrative and voyeuristic gaze attempts to imitate the male subject. Women who did not adhere to the characteristics of their sex—notably, ones who were sexual penetrators or promiscuous—were viewed as parodying men (Brisson 69.) In this sense, Salmacis could be read as a caricature of the male rapists featuring so heavily in the Metamorphoses. Her eyes “burn like the sun” and are compared to Phoebus (Jupiter), a divine patriarchal rapist (Richlin 165-166.) A female adopting the male gaze, let alone that of the most supreme god, is a terrifying threat to the Ancient Roman status quo. After all, to quote Amy Richlin, “when a female acts male, the result is the unmanning of all men” (166.) Even one woman behaving in a deviant manner could pose a threat to all of society. Ovid's contemporaries certainly believed this, with powerful women often being the subject of moralizing attacks. The Catiline Conspiracy, for example, a group of *vir* plotting to overthrow the consulship in 64 BC, offers an image of feminine immorality. The historian Sallust in particular blames the female co-conspirator Sempronia for the moral failure. He notes her promiscuity, wantonness, and immodesty to be improper “masculine boldness” that corrupted the men associated with her (Sallust 25.) Similarly, Salmacis' deviant masculine assertiveness has a negative influence on the man she comes in contact with. Indeed, she is one of the most forceful rapists in the poem, besides perhaps Tereus (Richlin 166.) Hermaphroditus' rape also stands out in how it is the only one in the Metamorphosis with explicit physical contact (Richlin 165.) The story is sexy; yet,

this sexual gaze is assaultive, and the rape scene that follows only enhances the violence of this gaze.

In Ancient Rome, sexuality was based on power dynamics. While a male of high status, a *vir*, could penetrate as he pleased, for a woman, youth, or slave to do the same would be unnatural and deviant (Parker 48.) Social status distinctions were more important than conforming to heterosexuality (Mattersen 35.) In Holt N. Parker's Teratogenic Grid explaining how Roman notions of gender are linked with sexuality, the *vir* is defined as the penetrator. He is superior to other genders and emblematic of unmarked sexuality. Not all men can be *vir*; men from the working classes or other "disreputable" men would be classified as *homo*. Young men were called *adulescentes* or *pueri* (youths/slaves) rather than *vir* (Mattersen 31.) Nor did men who were on the receiving end of penetration (*pathicus* or *cinaedus*) hold the social status of the *vir* (Parker 56.) While many scholars read the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis as the classical explanation for this unnatural passive male homosexuality, this reading does not quite make sense. Hermaphroditus is penetrated only in how his identity is robbed; it has less to do with his compromised heterosexuality than with his male body (Zajko.).

A more accurate story would be as an origin myth for the active homosexual woman. Salmacis' domination and aggression is unnatural for her gender (Brisson 69.) The lines where Salmacis penetrates Hermaphroditus exhibit her powerful sexuality:

“She held him to her (...) touching his unwilling
breast, overwhelming the youth from this side
and that.” (IV.358-360.)

In these lines, Salmacis “overwhelms” the vulnerable youth. She is dominant, and queerly aggressive while her partner is effeminately passive. But rather than Salmacis entering the youth sexually, the rape is more a penetration of identity. Salmacis fuses with Hermaphroditus; after the rape, she disappears from the myth (Zajko.) Only Hermaphroditus’ consciousness remains, though he is greatly changed (Richlin 166.) In the same way that he “had penetrated the waters [of Salmacis] as a man” Salmacis has now penetrated him (IV.380). In Ancient Roman culture, to be penetrated was considered “a staining of the body” (Richlin 174.) It was not only to lose one’s sense of self, but also to lose one’s *vir* status. While Caenis only loses her gender and identity, Hermaphroditus’ masculine boundaries and sense of self-containment dissolve with his rape, and so does his patriarchal superiority.

Ovid’s stories of rape depict a taboo transgression of personal boundaries that result in a loss of identity. Under the emperor Augustus (27 BC-CE 14), social categories like class, ethnicity, and gender were rigid (Richlin 176.) However, these classifications were also “perilously permeable,” with any individual deviation from the status quo posing an immense threat to the patriarchal state (Skinner 20.) When Ovid writes about crossing over an individual’s boundaries—whether metaphorical or physical—he emphasizes the cultural taboo involved. Literary culture, especially the Greek myths Ovid and his epic predecessors drew from, spoke heavily to the culture’s boundary anxiety, the fear that individual identity and integrity of the self

is breachable. This point of view focused more on nature and identity construction, and was in direct opposition to Augustan ideals of control and separation. Tales of rape, then, depicted a fear of loss of agency, and an inability to separate the self from the surrounding world (Westerhold 8.) When Caenis is raped, she loses her identity as a virgin. This is a form of death. According to Amy Richlin, the Ancient Romans viewed rape “as a passport to death or dissolution of the body” (177.) At the moment she finally “becomes a woman”, she only desires to lose her femininity. In an emotional line, Caenis says:

“I ask that I may never suffer such an injury again. Grant
I may be no longer woman, and I’ll ask no more”
(XII.201-203.)

Notably, removing her gender does not leave her without one; Caenis dies and the male Caeneus, woman’s inverse, is born. He is constructed in opposition to Caenis’ femininity, and comes about as a direct result of this feminine vulnerability to rape (Keith 234.) While some scholars maintain that Caenis’ story is an anomaly because she is rewarded rather than punished for her rape, her transformation is still a punishment (Adams.) Though Caeneus is temporarily “happy with his gifts,” Caenis loses her identity and sense of self, and is left to roam the Thessalian fields and spend his time in “manly pastimes” (XII.207-209.) While her purity and youth kept her from achieving womanhood at the beginning of her story, the transgression of her personal boundaries results in the death of her femininity.

With this death, however, comes reward; Neptune grants Caenis the gift of manhood. When asking for her wish, Caenis equates femininity with penetrability.

Thus, the only way for her to avoid rape is to become a man, physically and socially superior to woman. Caenis' use of the word "injury" when requesting her reward harkens back to the manly battle tales preceding Nestor's story. Indeed, Neptune corroborates the link between sexual penetration and battle wounds by also making "the new man proof against all wounds of spear or sword" (XII.206-207.) Caeneus' new impenetrable skin exists in opposition to humoral medicine's focus on fluid and penetrable bodies. This is especially visible in his battle with the centaurs. After all, while a woman is defined by her martial status and role within the *domus*, the domestic, masculinity can be demonstrated in warfare (Brisson 63.) Furthermore, while penetration is typically viewed as emasculating, the only exception to this rule is during battle (Skinner 14.) Battle wounds enhanced masculinity; this was especially true in Augustus' militaristic Rome. Caeneus taking on the *vir*'s heroic stance in battle seems ironic considering he was born a woman. However, in doing so, Ovid highlights the fluidity of gender and how the binary tropes of impenetrable/penetrable, warfare/homemaking are situational and susceptible to change.

Hermaphroditus' story, on the other hand, plays on Ancient Roman medical notions of gender fluidity. In Ancient Roman society, women and men's bodies were conceptualized very differently. Though stemming from the same one-sex body, their differences in temperature distinguished the sexes. Considered hotter and firmer, men's bodies were able to concoct blood into semen, while women's bodies were colder and could not (Paster 9; Shepard 48-49.) This "cooking" of male blood even led to the idea that men were more perfected; they were "manufactured" while

women were regarded as “raw material” (King 29.) Thus, women and men were characterized as simultaneously one-sex and two-sex in Ancient Roman society; they stemmed from one body, yet were inherently different.

This notion of gender fluidity allows Hermaphroditus to have an abundance of feminine characteristics even before his godly fusion with Salmacis. He is marked as an anomaly from the beginning of the myth, in which the Ovidian narrator gives him both feminine and masculine characteristics. This is even evident in his name, a combination of his parents Hermes and Aphrodite (IV.290.) The narrator also states that “both mother and father could be seen” in his features; however, as the story elapses, only his effeminacy is emphasized (IV.289.) He is compared to an ivory statue three times, for example, and the narrator notes his “very becoming” blush (IV.329-330.) This whiteness and flushed face genders Hermaphroditus effeminate from the beginning. His red face implies youthfulness and a lack of adult masculine self-control—he is, after all, only fifteen. His youth is also accompanied by innocence: he is unfamiliar with love, and has never experienced overwhelming desire such as Salmacis’ before. The myth’s focus on the victim’s youth is comparable to how other rape narratives emphasize the female victim’s virginity, though the erotic value is not quite as exaggerated (Curran 227.) Ancient Roman medicine associated youths and women with uncontrolled bloodiness. Young men were considered hotter than fully mature men, and this added to their vulnerability. Similarly, while generally women were considered the colder sex, the Hippocratic corpus also suggested that the presence of hot menstrual blood embedded women with extra warmth (King 32.) Women and boys were thus characterized by an

abundance of blood and the heat associated with it. Ovid draws on these ideas to paint a picture of Hermaphroditus as effeminate and vulnerable to Salmacis' grasp.

Part II: Transformation

Transformation as a result of rape is one of the most prominent themes of Ovid's Metamorphoses. For the many rape victims in the epic, metamorphosis is a punishment. They lose their humanity and their ability to communicate. This transformation adds to the horror and violence of the rape. Tales of godly transformation across gender or species posed deliberate disruptions to the status quo. In Augustus' Rome, increased control over domestic and social issues resulted in a more peaceful and stable society after the previous fourteen years of civil war. However, the abundance of new laws bothered upper class *viri* and artists like Ovid in particular (Boatwright 305, 307.) Rape and transformation tales from the first century therefore stand out in how they disrupt the conventions of categorization. Their lack of conforming to social laws results in miserable endings for the deviant characters. Caenis and Hermaphroditus are particular noteworthy characters in the Metamorphoses because they remain human post-metamorphosis. However, in many ways their stories mirror those of Io, Philomela, and other raped women transformed into animals as punishment (Richlin 165.) These animals retain human consciousness and feeling. Similarly, while the Ovidian narrators valorize Caenis/Caeneus' and Hermaphroditus' transformations into another gender, by the end of their respective tales, it is clear that these transformations are incomplete. Caeneus, though fully transformed, eludes full masculinity; while Salmacis' attempt

and failure to perfect the masculine role results in Hermaphroditus' own unmanning.

By showcasing Caeneus' military ability among an army of centaurs, Ovid highlights his newfound hybridity and transgender identity. The centaurs are hybrid creatures of man and horse. They are freaks of nature, and symbolize barbarous masculinity taken to its extreme. Centaurs are closer to bestial, rather than human or godly (Kirk, 153-154.) The centaur invokes both the wildness of horses and the civility of men; his liminality allows him to symbolize corrupted, bestial masculinity (Kirk 160.) It is no coincidence, then, that the climax of Caeneus's epic journey happens at Hippodamia's wedding ceremony, which the "savage centaurs" wreak havoc on (XI.218). Their threat to rape the bride is particularly frightening.

"Eurytus seized Hippodame: the others
whosoever they wished to, or could, and
it looked like the rape of a city."

(XI.227)

To rape a city is to dominate and subjugate its inhabitants, as depicted in the *Rape of the Sabine Women*. Male Roman citizens would be very familiar with this story and its implications, especially as the Empire expanded. Though centaurs are not quite men, they still have the penetrative power of the *vir*. This frightening power renders the centaurs barbarous. Throughout Ancient Greek and Roman myth, centaurs symbolize the danger of unrestrained male lust and dominance (Irving 162.) They are often portrayed raping, killing, and generally causing mayhem. Ancient Roman philosophers largely acknowledged that sexual intercourse hurt the body and

should be regulated (Martin 200.) The centaurs' disregard of this civility renders them dangerous, barbarous, and conceptually different from the Roman citizen.

Similarly, Caeneus is a sort of hybrid between man and woman. He brings together *natura*, the natural aspect to which the young woman/virgin is tied, and *cultus*, the cultural sphere of the *paterfamilias* (Debrohun 449.) Ovid showcases this hybridity when Caeneus' voice deepens after his transformation. His transformation is a spectacle. Nevertheless, Ovid's telling of the myth validates Caeneus' transformation into a man. The Ovidian narrator affirms that he is successful and powerful in his battles (Adams.) After the centaur Latreus' taunts that Caeneus is "still a woman in [his] sight" and that he should abandon warfare and go back to the feminine art of weaving, the narrator calls this transphobia "such nonsense" (XII.470-480) More importantly, Caeneus' physical impenetrability emphasizes his bodily maleness, and when he stabs Latreus with his sword, he simultaneously asserts his penetrative masculinity and effeminizes the centaur, making "new wounds within the wound" (XII.493.) This violence is another spectacle, and Ovid highlights the centaurs' hybridity by describing how Caeneus' arrow hits "just where the man was joined upon the horse" (XII.478.) The story's focus on these transformed, monstrous bodies adds a voyeuristic aestheticism to both metamorphoses.

However, in the end, Caeneus' unpenetrated death reveals that true masculinity is still out of his reach. While typically bodily harm and bleeding revealed weakness of constitution and effeminacy, for the Roman soldier, it was the opposite (Matterson 40.) Heroes' scarification serves to enhance their masculine

virtue and their commitment to the state. Furthermore, some scholars postulate that if being slain in war was the manliest death, then suffocation was the womanliest (Keith 238.) Indeed, Caeneus' impenetrability results in his suffocation. His superhuman invulnerability reinforces that no mortal can escape death; neither marvel of nature can survive the defining battle (Irving 157.) The centaurs rip up trees, castrating the earth and harkening back to Caenis' original rape. Likewise, Caeneus' monstrously superhuman character highlights the unnaturalness of his masculinity. His iconic spear symbolizes his aggression (Irving 159.) While many soldiers had died at the hands of the centaurs already, Caeneus is barbarously able to slay five even before he kills Latreus. In this manner, he mirrors the centaurs: he kills without distinction like the centaurs immoderately rape. In his near-immortality, he poses a threat to the gods. In the end, he is less like the hero and more like an evil monster in epic (Irving 161.) Ironically, Caeneus embodies the masculine notion of impenetrability so well, he fails to achieve full epic manhood because he cannot be slain. Ovid thereby suggests that the paradigms of masculinity are unachievable thresholds.

In contrast, the tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus naturalizes bodies that do not fit into the male/female binary. Hermaphroditus' rape results in two sexes fusing into one, blurring each other's distinct characteristics and creating an embodiment of androgyny. The androgyne was a stock figure in ancient Greek and Roman literature, often with magical qualities. In Greece, the androgyne was characterized by their lack of gender, while in Rome, they became an embodiment of both male and female. This led to hermaphrodites being viewed as a monstrous

hybrid (Zajko.) Children born with characteristics of the two sexes contradicted normative models of existing (Brisson 13.) No matter how unexplainable of a phenomenon hermaphroditism was, however, Ancient Romans maintained it as natural. Ovid mirrors this contemporary view by providing several natural comparisons for the penetrative act. First, Salmacis holds Hermaphroditus like

“a serpent...[who] twines round head and feet
and entangles his spreading wings in her coils.
Or as ivy often interlaces tall tree trunks. Or as
the cuttlefish holds the prey it has surprised
underwater, wrapping its tentacles everywhere.”

(IV.361-367.)

While these images of flora and fauna predatorily enveloping their captured prey are aggressive, they are also naturally occurring. Thus, Ovid notes that though aggressive female sexuality is not tolerated within the bounds of Roman society, it can occur outside the bounds of society, fuelled by passion (Brisson 285-287.) Similarly, the two bodies fuse “just as when someone grafts a twig into the bark, they see both grow joined together and develop as one” (Book IV, 375-376.) The natural imagery of penetration and fusion is feminine, another contrast from the patriarchal world of Roman society. As such, though hermaphroditism falls outside the gender binary, Ovid follows Ancient Roman thinking in recognizing it as legitimate and natural.

Hermaphroditus is simultaneously genderless, bigender, and trigender. Luc Brisson in particular calls the myth’s metamorphosis “a state of indifferentiation,”

where binaries are unclear (Zajko). According to this characterization, all genders become muddled together within Hermaphroditus' body, even swallowing up his rapist entirely. As her consciousness and name are gone at the end of the plot, it becomes clear that Salmacis fails in her role as penetrator. She cannot uphold masculine subjectivity when she rapes Hermaphroditus; she is not "man" enough to maintain control over her boundaries (Keith 219.) Yet, as some scholars propose, she gains an increase in status when she becomes Hermaphroditus. Their fusion is a *semivir*, an incomplete half-man, but still superior to a woman nonetheless (Richlin 166.) Like his encounter with the Naiad unmans him, Salmacis' encounter with the boy unwomans her (Keith 239.) Therefore, neither of them are able to fully attain the normative superiority status of the Roman male.

The sexually intertwined union of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis is an attempt to work towards the ideal of completion, but ends up twisted and malformed. The daughters of Minyas' various tales on union and completion emphasize that sexual coupling cannot bring long-term satisfaction (Brisson 82.) Yet, the intertwining of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis' two bodies into one echoes the sentiment behind marriage—two lives, two identities, becoming one (Romano 558.) Their fusion is also reminiscent of the original union between Gaia and Ouranos, sky and earth, from which all new life was birthed. This sexual merging, like all mergings, would be impossible without Eros, sexual love (Brisson 58.) Erotic fusion invokes another story of two bodies joined together, namely Aristophanes' speech in The Symposium. At a banquet praising Eros, Aristophanes tells the story of how originally, a person was two humans joined together. After challenging the

gods, they were split in two to become today's recognizable individual. Aristophanes gives this explanation as the origin of the human desire to find a "soul mate." To fuse, then, is to return to the past, demonstrated by these ancient origin stories. However, it is also the future; it is an "ultimate project" to work towards (Zajko, Brisson 77-80.) The myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis builds on this notion of completion. Even in the poem's *forma*, its structure, there is a beginning and ending with unity (Segal 17.) Hermaphroditus begins effeminate, and he ends completely effeminized. Thus, the story that begins with a man and a woman incorrectly performing sexuality results in the corrupted hermaphroditic amalgamation that is Hermaphroditus.

Caeneus' transformed masculinity is also incomplete, and as a result, he suffers another rape-like injury at the hands of barbarous masculinity. The trees the centaurs pile on him suggest he is being pushed down to Hades (Adams.) The ending also suggests that Caeneus is transformed once again, this time into a "bird with golden wings" that flies up to heaven (Fantham 95.) This final animalistic metamorphosis recalls other Ovidian rape victims transformed into natural creatures, like Io, transformed into a cow after being raped by Jupiter. Another prominent rape victim whose life was transformed after her rape was Philomela. Her sister's husband cut her tongue out so she could not talk about what he had done. Like Philomela, Caeneus is punished for his rape, and loses his humanity, voice, and identity at the end of the myth. Philomela turns into a nightingale, a bird symbolizing sorrow and mourning (Iriving 99.) Caeneus' transformation into a bird is more similar to that of a phoenix, a divine bird symbolizing his rebirth and flying

up to the gods (Irving 116.) This is a much more celebratory and positive metamorphosis than Philomela's, which symbolizes bodily pollution and escaping from the oppressive home into the wild (Irving, 107, 111-112.) At the same time, Caeneus shares many of Philomela's characteristics, with his body polluted from being raped and having slayed. Furthermore, as a bird, he is unable to tell his own story. This last transformation into a bird is less an escape from an effeminizing death than it is another way in which Caeneus loses himself. As a bird, Caeneus is in a liminal state, not quite dead and not quite alive (Irving 37.) Thus, his death remains ambiguous. Though still solid and impenetrable, he has lost his identity, his voice, and his human life.

Ovid's decision to tell the story of this metamorphosis beginning from Caenis' rape and ending with Caeneus' death is telling. The rape one defining moment of transformation, and his death is another. His body and identity are clearly fluid; the Ovidian narrator emphasizing his masculinity post-transformation adds to the notion of gender defying birth or biology. Similarly, in Hermaphroditus' rape, the passive, effeminate male collides with the active, penetrative female. The rape robs Hermaphroditus of his masculine identity, but at the same time, creates a new gender, albeit deformed. By changing the typically male rapist into female, Ovid allows the reader to imagine a world in which the strictly gendered social and sexual hierarchy is transformed. The tales of Caenis/Caeneus and Hermaphroditus and Salmacis stand out from other rape and transformation sequences in the Metamorphoses. Ovid uses tropes of dominance and subjugation, voyeuristic gazes and vulnerability to queer boundaries, with disastrous results for the protagonists.

Chapter II:

Magical Confusion in the Early Modern English Forest:

Gender Mutability and Queer Constancy in *Gallathea*

Ovid's writings of magical gender transformation inspired John Lyly over 1500 years after the poet's death. Though the Metamorphoses remained popular in the Middle Ages with the *Ovide Moralise*, a retelling of the stories in accordance with Christian morality, the Renaissance revitalized European interest in the classics (Fantham 30, Zajko.) Lyly wrote the play *Gallathea* in 1584, and the Children of Paul's, a troupe of boy actors, performed it in Elisabeth's court (Chess 146.) *Gallathea* provided inspiration for Shakespeare and later playwrights to write gender-bending tales, but moreover, it is important in how it plays with Renaissance notions of gender. The play's primary storyline revolves around two virgin girls, Gallathea and Phillida, who are supposed to be sacrificed to Neptune in an annual appeasement ritual. To avoid this fate, their fathers disguise them as men and send them into the forest, where they meet and fall in love. In the end, approving of their steadfast love, Venus transforms one of them into a man so the couple can get married. Subplots centering on Cupid, Diana's followers, and three young men seeking their fortune also deal with love, disguise, and metamorphosis. In what Simone Chess calls a "MTFTMTF/M"¹ comedy, *Gallathea's* confusion is resolved only to reveal gender's malleability (152.) It would be ahistorical to suggest that Lyly was

¹ Borrowing language referring to transgender "transitioning," Chess describes Gallathea and Phillida's gender as "male to female to male to female/male" in reference to the boy actors costumed as women disguised as men, one of whom reverts to female at the end, and the other who is magically turned into a man.

subverting the accepted gender norms of the time, however; the English Renaissance, viewed gender as mutable and performative, and more complex than the male/female binary commonly associated with later Western tradition. However, anxieties surrounding this mutability were ubiquitous, and literary and other artistic works often expressed this. The Renaissance stage, then, was the perfect place for Lyly to express the uncertainty of categorizing male and female bodies into a binary, present the artificiality of gender through a romance that is simultaneously lesbian, gay, and straight, and use godly magic to showcase marriage as an androgynous union.

Conflicting ideologies on shifting gender roles allowed gender anxieties to manifest on the English Renaissance stage. Social changes during the English Renaissance unsettled the status quo and gave rise to fears of social mobility and chaos. The Anglican Church's redefinition of marriage in the mid 1500s, for example, also entailed a redefinition of the traditional notions of femininity (Rackin 30.) Though reactionary backlash impeded women's social advancement in early modern England, women were also granted more freedom (Rackin 32.) Women's increased independence was associated with fears of masculinity's decline, and art like popular theater expressed these conflicting ideologies through tragedy and comedy. In many ways, Renaissance Theater demonstrates men's reliance on women to construct masculinity. For example, women were only permitted to be spectators of theater. Performances thus demonstrate male actors' reliance on women to watch and validate their literal performances, of both masculine and feminine characters. Furthermore, as Judith Butler notes, theater is subversive by

nature in how it exposes the “contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity” (Shepard 10-11.) In Renaissance Theater in particular, where prosthetic beards were regularly used to construct masculine characters, masculinity was as more of a performance than a fixed identity (Fisher 163, 173.) While John Lyly was a court playwright, and Court Theater was generally associated with the legitimization of the status quo and maintenance of authority, his plays were also subversive in many ways (Wixton 244.) Lyly’s humanism, looking towards the ancient Greek and Romans for inspiration, was in congruence with the popular theater of the time (Cartwright 207.) The intense emotion he generated in his audience through comedy highlights the anxiety associated with the gender confusion onstage.

Like in Ancient Rome, anxieties surrounding patriarchal superiority rose to the forefront of the social consciousness in the English Renaissance. Gender in the Renaissance continued to base itself on Ancient Greek and Roman notions of the one-sex body. Men had to actively demonstrate their mental hardness and their social impenetrability to distinguish themselves from women. In part, they had to exhibit what Stephen Greenblatt calls “self-fashioning” (Spiller 61.) To be considered a true man in the Renaissance, one needed to not only publicly display physical masculine characteristics (through his beard, sword, etc.) but also had to demonstrate social prowess, such as wealth, status, and knowledge of traditional customs (Fisher 157; Shepard 175.) This proved his psychological self-mastery, which supposedly justified his dominance over others (Breitenberg “Introduction” 9.) However, the anxiety-inducing aspect of self-fashioning was that a man’s body

could theoretically “degenerate” into a woman’s. (Breitenberg “Inscriptions of Difference” 162.) While a lack of heat would turn his body into a woman’s, an inability to achieve patriarchal expectations of wealth and martial status also jeopardized masculinity (Shepard 206, 249.) Theorists of masculinity such as Machiavelli even believed manhood was a learned characteristic rather than an inherent trait (Saxonhouse 103.) Thus, according to Renaissance biological and social theory, masculinity and femininity were two sides of the same coin, and though the gender divide proposed a hierarchy, it was a slippery slope.

The virgins’ masculine disguises in *Gallathea* paradoxically present Gallathea and Phillida’s bodies as simultaneously one-sex and two-sex. While it is almost universally acknowledged that Galenic medicine and the one-sex body dominated the Renaissance, scholars such as Elizabeth Spiller note other contemporary social and biological models that conceptualized men and women’s bodies as fundamentally different (Spiller 66-67.) *Gallathea* thus presents a world in transition, with women being able to turn into men, but at the same time, these disguises being alien and unnatural to them (Chess 164.) In Act 1, Scene 1, Gallathea is introduced dressed in male clothing. Her apparel confuses her, asking her father why he disguised her like this. This scene presents an element of detachment to her gender presentation: it is not a personal choice, but something done to her. Similarly, when she first meets Phillida, thinking she is a man, Gallathea plans to “learne of him how to behave [her] selfe.” Phillida, too, wants to use Gallathea to “decipher the follies of their [men’s] kind” (II.i.) Again, this paints man as fundamentally different from woman, a foreign creature that need to be studied in

order to imitate convincingly. The disguised virgins in *Gallathea* are detached from, resistant to, and uncomfortable in their masculine presentation.

Characters in *Gallathea* also hold a fear of their feminine bodies betraying them and giving away the characters' true sex. Again, this fear stems from anxieties about the one-sex body. According to the Galenic model of the body, the primary difference between men and women was their blood: its heat and the individual's ability to regulate it. Ovid draws on this medical notion when he describes Hermaphroditus' "very becoming" blush (IV.335.) The visible rush of blood to his face symbolizes youthful beauty and Hermaphroditus' naïveté ("He did not know what love was," IV.334.) Similarly, in *Gallathea*, blushing symbolizes not only heat and sexual desire, but also feminine uncontrollability (Chess 155.) Diana's nymphs blush when Cupid casts his love spell on them (III.i.) Like the feminine rush of blood to the face, the spell conjures uncontrollable and undesired feelings of love. Similarly, Phillida is afraid her unruly feminine blood and body will betray her male disguise. She is worried she will not be able to act convincingly as a man because she will "unwarelie blabbe out something by blushing at every thing" (II.i.) Two forces of feminine lack of self-control are at work here: Phillida's words, which come out against her will, and the uncontrollable bodily fluids causing her blush. Yet, ironically, when Phillida and Gallathea meet, her body does not betray her. Phillida, lying to preserve her masculine disguise, says she "blush[es] in supposing [her] selfe" a virgin. She insinuates that for her masculine disguise to be mistaken for a virginal woman is so shameful it would cause her to blush. Later in the same scene, though Gallathea suspects Phillida may be, like her, "a mayden," she notes Phillida's

lack of blush as confirmation of her biological manhood (III.ii.) While blushing does signify the female body and the associated lack of control, Lyly also contorts this trope to show how Phillida does have control over her blush as she suppresses it to uphold her disguise. Moreover, relying on blushing to denote gender actually causes more confusion in the play, suggesting that this divide between the genders is artificial, after all.

Though Gallathea and Phillida are both women, unpredictable and unruly according to Renaissance tradition, Lyly portrays Gallathea and Phillida's coupling as constant. Constancy was a highly valorized trait during the Renaissance. Typically linked with masculinity, one could achieve constancy through physical moderation and emotional rationality (Shepard 46.) Neo-Stoicism, a revival of the Ancient Roman philosophy of self-mastery, endorsed lack of emotion, embedding it with Christian morality (Vaught 13.) However, many modern English writers were worried that the emotionless constancy Neo-Stoicism called for would turn to hardness and pride (Bruce 58.) During the 1550s, there was a shift towards Aristotalian notions of moderating rather than eliminating the "dangerous threat of the emotions" (Vaught 13.) In theater, this move towards moderation led to male characters being portrayed as emotional and female characters being more rational (Vaught 3.) Lyly, too, flips the traditional script of masculine stoic impenetrability by portraying a queer, lesbian couple as the epitome of constancy. Gallathea and Phillida's paradoxical union as virgins experiencing amorous pleasure is an image of epitomized constancy. Though the virgin is the classical ideal of constancy in her

unpenetrated self-containment, the play makes numerous references to sex acts (Meyer 199-200.)

“Phillida: Come let us into the Grove, and make much
one of another, that cannot tell what to think one of
another” (III.ii.)

While Phillida’s mention of sex is clear, she does not specify what kind of act, and most importantly, whether or not it is penetrative. This confusion around sex is deliberate, as it allows Gallathea and Phillida to exist in a liminal zone where they are simultaneously lovers yet remain chaste.

Furthermore, the homosexual nature of their relationship adds to Gallathea and Phillida’s constancy. The virgins lack characterization and are deliberately undifferentiated (Wixton 250.) Both are considered “the fairest and chastest virgine in all the Countrey,” are disguised as men, and fall in love simultaneously (I.i). Their sameness is also shown in their blushes and mirrored concern about appearance and modesty (Chess 155.) This act of duplication, Lyly’s decision to portray two virgins instead of just one, is not arbitrary. Their attraction to each other is on the basis of their similarities rather than their differences (Shannon 187.) In a way, each virgin is so constant that she is only attracted to a mirror image of herself—a beautiful girl, disguised as a man. This preference for likeness rather than difference invokes the notion of Renaissance homonormativity, a philosophy that deemed being drawn to beings similar to oneself was natural (Shannon 191.) In fact, reading their relationship through the lens of the virgin’s masculine disguises, it falls in line with the early modern English ideal of male friendship (Shepard 124.) Relationships

with other men were naturalized in Renaissance England, often analogized to animals' union in mating (Shannon 193.) They were also compared to marriage, or indeed, valued more than marriage, since male-male bonds were thought to be more validating and intimate than male-female relationships (Shepard 124.) Only a man could have the high enough status to validate another's masculinity (Paster 104.) Aristotelian philosophy even likened intense male friendships to self-love, further emphasizing the ideology of homonormativity. However, even this idealized friendship was viewed as a "double-edged sword," as male friendship could also lead to credit and indebtedness, which could pose a threat to one's masculinity (Shepard 123.) Gallathea and Phillida avoid this pitfall, however, as they have no masculinity to prove. Their disguised male-male love story, which is lesbian at its core, then, is the perfect idealized union, with no heterosexual clashing to affect its constancy. If anything, the play perhaps only critiques their romance as too good to be true. Neptune considers their love "an idle choyce." In the same breath, however, he also notes that they have "a constant faith" (V.iii.) Here, the godly patriarch acknowledges that Gallathea and Phillida's steadfastness can overcome the barrier between the possible and impossible. Focusing on their love and devotion to one another demonstrates Renaissance ideals of constancy, and Neptune validating the strength of their love furthers the value attached to homonormativity in the Renaissance.

Another feature of the virgins' relationship that this homosexuality highlights is their attraction to each other's feminine attributes. While masculinity is typically posited as a positive subject in texts, with femininity acting as its negative foil, here,

femininity is a desirable characteristic (Rackin 33.) Phillida, for example, is attracted to Gallathea's "face so faire, so lovely a countenance, so modest a behaviour (III.ii.) Gallathea also praises Phillida's fairness (IV.iv.) Indeed, whenever the virgins compliment each other's physical attributes, though they believe the other to be a boy, they note his feminine features. By contrast, masculinity is portrayed as overly aggressive, hypersexual, and even barbaric. Phillida associates dressing in male attire and taking on masculine attributes with aggressive sexual interrelationality. She worries that if she keeps company with boys, she will "commit follies unseemingly for [her] sexe." But if she relates with girls while dressed as a man, she will also be thought of as behaving inappropriately (I.iii.) Essentially, she worries about upsetting the highly classed divide between the genders. Overtones of transgressive sexuality express that men (or a woman dressed as a man) improperly interrelating with women degenerate the orderly status quo. Another instance where improperly performed masculinity triggers disorder and danger in *Gallathea* is in the figure of Neptune. He is introduced as a threatening figure, associated with the barbarism of virgin sacrifice and bestial sexuality (Wixton 246.) The terrifying and monstrous Agar, the beast that carries out the sacrifice, epitomizes "voracious male desire" (Shannon 200.) The fearsomeness attached to male sexual desire and the transgression involved in heterosexual mixing furthers the ideology of Renaissance homonormativity. Gallathea and Phillida's feminized queer relationship remains constant, idealized, and pure in contrast.

What queers this relationship even further is how the bodies of the boy actors playing Gallathea and Phillida were gendered according to Renaissance

biology. As Thomas Laqueur writes in *Making Sex*, in the Renaissance, sexual difference was thought of in degrees rather than as a male-female binary (Fisher 175.) This is why early modern English manhood was often referred to as an estate, a temporary state of being, rather than a fixed identity (Shepard 46.) Chess' description of a MTF/TMTF/M model of gender, then, is not fully accurate. Boy actors dressing up as female characters in Renaissance theater was not viewed as a binary switch between the two genders. The opposite of "man" was not just "woman," but also "boy" and "old man." While men's humeral bodies were thought to be hot and dry, boys' were characterized as hot and moist (Smith 72.) Prime manhood was thought to be between about the ages of 30 and 50 (Shepard 245.) And while women's bodies were considered imperfect versions of men, youthful male bodies younger than 30 also still needed to be refined. Referring to the boy actors playing virgin girls as "crossdressing" is not entirely accurate, as they were not considered fully masculine yet. The way in which theater showcased boys somewhere in between male and female was not without controversy, however. There was opposition to boys playing female actors, fuelled by masculine anxieties about instable gender identity (Breitenberg "Inscriptions of Difference" 161.) This backlash highlights how actors' boyish bodies, which became manlier as they refined with age, were also queer. Gender was not binary in English Renaissance Theater, despite social attempts at categorization.

Gallathea's subplot of Cupid casting charms on Diana's nymphs to make them fall in love with the disguised virgins mirrors Gallathea and Phillida's steadfast romance. Like the virgins, the nymphs lack characterization and are indifferentiable

from each other (Wixton 250.) When, in a secluded conversation between the two nymphs, Eurota tells Telusa she is in love, she expresses primarily confusion.

“Eurota: I confesse that I am in love, and yet sweare that
I know not what it is. (...) If this be love, I woulde it had
never beene devised” (III.i.)

The pain and lack of knowledge as to how these feelings came about reveals her love as false and unenduring, unlike Gallathea and Phillida's. Furthermore, Cupid suggests he will make the nymphs practice homosexual “impossibilities” (II.ii.) Childlike, he imitates Neptune's later disbelief in lesbian romantic relationships. Finally, Cupid crossdresses as a nymph to infiltrate Diana's hunting party. Like the virgins, he enters the woods in a disguise that crosses genders. Godly sex changes are not unique to this early Renaissance play, of course. In Ancient Greek and Roman myth, magic is often used to disguise divine characters (Irving 151.) However, Cupid's disguise is not nearly as convincing as his mythological predecessors or the costumed virgins. He lacks Gallathea and Phillida's constancy, and this renders the love created by his spell fake and his disguise unconvincing. Cupid's androgynous costume is also hollow, as shown when Neptune listens to Cupid's monologue where he meticulously describes his plan (II.ii.) While Neptune does not discover the virgins' true identity until the end of the play, the god sees through Cupid's disguise from the moment he appears in women's attire. Cupid's feeble attempts to metamorphose gender and create love relations are a weak foil to Gallathea and Phillida's true love, as he is hampered by his boyish lack of masculine constancy and self-control.

While anxieties over male artificiality were rampant during the English Renaissance, Lyly tackles this topic in a humorous manner. Inspired by Ovid, who also used wit and comicality in his rape stories to present masculine fears of penetrable borders of the self, *Gallathea* uses comedy to present gender confusion. The main mode of comedy is through the different ways the plot can be read: Two male characters playing love scenes with each other, two female characters playing love scenes to what they believe are men, two female characters playing love scenes to each other, or two boy actors playing love scenes to each other (Kiernander 58.) This leaves the audience with an interpretive choice, implicating them in *Gallathea* and *Phillida*'s performance of gender: the audience chooses which costume to believe (Chess 165.) This fluidity is provoking, as it reveals the arbitrary nature of sexual difference (Rackin 37.) Regardless how the audience chooses to view it, the virgins' relationship is queer, and Lyly drives this point home as *Gallathea* and *Phillida* flirt, effortlessly switching between male and female point of views (Chess 159.)

“Phil: I say it is pittie you are not a woman.

Galla: I would not wish to be a woman, unlesse it were
because thou art a man.

Phil: Nay I doe not wish to be woman, for then I should
not love thee, for I have sworne never to love a woman.”

(III.ii.)

In this humorous banter, *Phillida* speaks first as a man desiring to love a woman. Then she revokes this statement, now speaking from the point of view of a woman

desiring a socially acceptable heterosexual romance. She performs both her masculine and feminine genders badly as she flip-flops, highlighting the hollowness of these social constructs often viewed as fixed identities (Walen 424.)

Comically, Phillida's bad performance of gender does nothing to make Gallathea suspicious of her true identity, as Gallathea also attempts to construct a façade of masculinity. In this way, Gallathea and Phillida's queer relationship is focused on helping each other construct gender. Simone Chess applies Jane Ward's theory of gender labor to *Gallathea* to reveal how the virgins' relationship is built on mutual labor of creating and maintaining each other's gender (Chess 146.) Unlike Butler, who posits gender as something self-generated and often involuntary, Ward's article, "Gender Labor: Transmen, Femmes, and Collective Work of Transgression" looks at sexual relationships between trans men and cis women (though she expands her theory to all genders) to explore how one can actively generate another's gender. Chess proposes that this labor is deliberate, repetitive, and difficult. Gender labor is directly alluded to in the epilogue of *Gallathea*:

"Galla: Venus can make constancie ficklenes, courage
cowardice, modestie lightnesse, working things
impossible in your Sexe, and tempering hardest harts
like softest wooll" (V.iii.)

While here Gallathea is referencing the literal magic Venus does to perform the gender transformation, she also references that it takes hard work to create queer relationships ("impossibilities," as Cupid states in II.ii) and gender, whether cis or trans (Chess 165-166.) One way in which gender labor operates is by making the

other's gender contingent on one's own (Chess 150-151.) In *Gallathea*, the virgins' dialogues and monologues both mirror each other. For example:

“Philli: Have you ever a Sister?

Galla: If I had but one my brother must needs have two,
but I pray have you ever a one?

Philli: My Father had but one daughter, and therefore I
could have no sister” (III.ii.)

Though their lines are both deliberately cryptic, Gallathea does not press Phillida on the meaning of her words, but only mimics the questions. Ward refers to this as the “labor of forgetting” and “labor of alliance.” The virgins make a distinct effort to provide a model for each other's behavior, and purposefully forget details that do not support the other's chosen gender presentation (Chess 151.) This idea of gender creation is not exclusive to modern gender theorists, however. According to Aristotle, only men could be creators. He used the image of a carpenter and his tool crafting a bed as a metaphor for man and his semen producing a baby. This implied that women provided nothing more than a vessel to incubate the fetus, while men did the actual work of creation. While the social connotations of man as creator were revived in Renaissance society, especially in the arts, they were tempered by more moderate Galenic understandings of women also contributing to procreation (Spiller 70-74.) Lyly offers a more radical alternative to Aristotle's carpenter by postulating that two women can create something together without male involvement. The difficult, repetitive, mutual labor they both do to sustain each

other's gender is truly queer in the sense that it allows (at least one of) them to transform their disguises into reality by the end of the play (Rackin 37.)

The merging of absolutes allows *Gallathea* to take on a symbolic tone rather than one based in realism. In what Peter Sacchio calls Lyly's "situationalism," the play is an allegory that disregards characterization in favor of deliberately blurring distinctions between individual characters (Meyer 193.) As with most court plays, the ideological effect of *Gallathea* is to legitimize aristocratic rule and delegitimize defiance of authority (Wixton 245.) This ideology is perpetuated through the text's "extreme sense of balance," an overlying sameness that makes differences between characters stand out prominently (Wixton 248.) Gender differences in particular imply hierarchy, with patriarchal authority at the top. Venus and Diana are insubordinate to Neptune, and the virgins go into the forest on their fathers' will rather than their own (Wixton 251.) The play punishes defiance of authority; in particular, Cupid's shenanigans to make Diana's nymphs fall in love with the disguised virgins end badly for the god. Cupid announces he plans to let Diana and her nymphs "knowe that Cupid is a great god" (I.ii.) He is attempting to prove his power and godly superiority. Though modern readers may read Cupid's gender as male, and thereby socially superior to Diana, in the Renaissance, Cupid's boyhood would have been read as a separate gender from patriarchal manhood like Neptune's. His boyish body was not viewed as superior to Diana's womanly one. She demonstrates her authority and usurps his attempt to outrank her when she discovers his tricks:

“Diana: I will breake thy bowe, and burne thine
arrowes, binde thy handes, clyp thy wings, and fetter
thy feete. (...) All the worlde shall see that I will use thee
like a captive, and shew my selfe a Conquerer” (III.iv.)

The play punishes Cupid for stepping out of line when the play returns to a harmonious social balance at the end (Wixton 248.) He attempts to establish a patriarchal reign like Neptune controls the villagers. However, his trickery can only go so far before Diana intervenes with her authority, restoring order. Gallathea and Phillida’s love, too, is disorderly and queer, but the final scene molds it to fit into heterosexual, hierarchal society. In this way, the play ends with a return to order and provides justification for the existing status quo.

The playful gender mutability that takes place in *Gallathea* is outside the bounds of civil society, normative location, and time. This provides a location for their sexual and gender deviance to manifest without fear or restriction. Similar to Ovid’s *locus amoenus*, the natural site is beautiful, but also filled with potential danger. But while disaster and rape rule in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Lyly’s “green world of laughter and fulfilled desire” is open to humor and creation (Wixton 253.) The setting is deliberately ambiguous in the opening scene. Tyterus, Gallathea’s father, locates them on the edge of the Humber estuary (I.i.) Beginning the play next to a body of water immediately invokes Neptune, the god of the ocean (Meyer 202.) The primary antagonist, alluding to him in the beginning tints the setting with threat; his patriarchal presence is already looming. Moreover, by using geographical features rather than political borders to determine the setting, Lyly situates the

play outside of social codes. In Act I, Scene IV, it is finally located in Lincolnshire, a county in England, but even then remains imprecise. Furthermore, references to Ios and Smyrna, Greek cities, in the prologue and the featured gods, nymphs and monsters queer any sense of a linear, fixed timeline. Lyly's idealized, mythical forest in which the characters frolic is simultaneously Renaissance English modernity, the classical past, and somewhere in between; it is a queer location where the static plot impedes the normative cause-and-effect time flow (Chess 147; Meyer 193.) In Venus' final speech, she also queers time. She references Iphis and Ianthe, another queer relationship in which one member's sex was changed to match his crossdressed disguise. In doing so, Lyly melds past with present, and shows how queer gender transformations transcend the standardized forward flow of time. The romanticized setting outside the bounds of civilization allows Gallathea and Phillida's socially unacceptable, passionate courtship to take place (Rackin 34.) Thus, the forest serves as an opposite to civilized society, a locale where homosexual love can exist as an epitome of sameness without having to change to meet the demands of society.

Indeed, upon emerging to face their fathers and the gods in Act V, time starts again and their femininity behind their disguises is immediately revealed. Only once the virgins emerge from the forest does their romance change to meet the demands of the social order (Chess 161.) The heterosexual marriage that Venus facilitates is only possible, ironically, because of Gallathea and Phillida's steadfastness. Even after discovering the other is, like herself, a woman, they remain in love.

“Gallathea: I will never love any but Phillida, her love is engraven in my hart, with her eyes.

Phillida: Nor I but Gallathea, whose faith is imprinted in my thoughts by her words” (V.iii.)

This constancy impresses Venus. With the other gods’ approval, she offers to transform one of the virgins into a man to make their union work. Even a play as queer as *Gallathea* ends in heterosexual marriage. In order for the typical heterosexual marriage in Renaissance romantic comedy to take place, tropes of likeness or “commixtures” need to be established across gender difference (Shannon 187.) This paradox allows for ideological Renaissance homonormativity to coexist with social heterosexual norms. Gallathea and Phillida’s relationship, on the other hand, is already so homonormative that tropes of difference need to be magically created to fit into society’s heterosexual requirements.

The virgins, meanwhile, desire the gender transformation because of the romantic and sexual closeness it permits them:

“Phillida: I am content, so I may imbrace Gallathea.

Gallathea: I wish it, so I may enjoy Phillida” (V.iii.)

There is nothing explicitly heterosexual—that is, implying penetrative sex—about these desires. Rather, Gallathea and Phillida’s romance remains queer because the words “embrace” and “enjoy” are ambiguously sexual (Chess 163.) In the end, the virgin’s masculine sexual disguise ends up becoming the truth (Rackin 37.) This metamorphosis suggests the artificiality of fixed gender identity and the ability to create gender through performance. The new possibility of marriage also furthers

the virgins' constancy. Their relationship is allowed to continue outside the privacy of the forest, and they are rewarded for the naturalness of their desire that does not transgress gender, and thereby class, boundaries (Walen 425; Wixton 251-252.)

Rather than society ending Gallathea and Phillida's forested romance, then, it transforms it. *Gallathea* posits nature and society are not only opposites, but complementary spheres whose interaction actually fuels most of the play's comedy (Rackin 33; Paster 3-4.) This allows for *Gallathea's* allegory of the perfect constant romantic partnership to be subversive, and simultaneously, hold up the conservative ideals supporting the status quo.

In particular, the play's celebration of androgyny and marriage is subversive, yet conservative. In *Gallathea*, these are both symbols of completion, epitomizing of love and the aesthetic ideal. This poses a stark contrast to Hermaphroditus and Salmacis' "love" story. While Hermaphroditus and Salmacis are an example of heterosexual union gone wrong, Lyly's virgins are self-contained; their constant love is an aesthetic image of completion. While Ovid still portrays the intersex Hermaphroditus as natural, in the early English Renaissance, hermaphroditism was viewed as a "monstrous unnatural unknowability" (Breitenberg "Inscriptions of Difference" 167.) Women or men who crossdressed emphasized gender artificiality, and their refusal to display social signifiers of their "biological" gender was a frightening defiance of the status quo (Breitenberg "Inscriptions of Difference" 151, 160.) The anxiety surrounding crossdressing and the imagined monstrously deformed body concealed behind the clothes was expressed in conservative Renaissance pamphlets such as *Hic Mulier*, which condemned crossdressing women

for appropriating masculine clothing (Breitenberg “Inscriptions of Difference” 160.) This was not the only view towards hermaphroditism during early modern England, however. During the high Renaissance, the image of the androgyne as mystical perfection and completion became more prominent (Rackin 29; Chess 147.) By setting Gallathea and Phillida’s crossdressing in the same story as mythical gods and nymphs, *Gallathea* follows this ideal, depicting androgyny as a symbol of magic (Rackin 34.) Simultaneously, this positive association with hermaphroditism is also linked to conservative ideals of marriage. In the Renaissance, marriage was a classic symbol of contesting forces merged in union—in other words, it produced hermaphroditism (Rackin 30; Shannon 194.) If Hermaphroditus and Salmacis are a dysfunctional union turned monstrous by Salmacis’ excess desire and Hermaphroditus’ emasculation, Gallathea and Phillida’s homonormative relationship is idealized and celebrated. *Gallathea*’s implied heterosexual marriage at the end, then, utilizes this androgynous symbol. According to, Aristotle marriage was a “species of friendship,” one that created a union between two polar opposites (Shannon 189.) Within Gallathea and Phillida’s bodies, as well as their relationship, two ordinarily contesting forces converge into one. The cumulating of their forest fling into marriage, then, is a build-up to an androgynous ideal. The end of the play successfully harmonizes the conflicting forces of gender that made the virgins uncomfortable with their attire at the beginning.

Venus’ final intervention in transforming gender and brining Gallathea and Phillida’s relationship into the realm of possibility rounds out the play’s allegory around love and gender construction. It is possible to read the metamorphosis of

one of the virgins into a man as a form of virgin sacrifice, with the initial proposed threat being carried out after all (Chess 202.) After all, classic myths propose there is death at the heart of love, with godly love for a mortal typically resulting in the mortal's death (Chess 201.) In the Metamorphoses, myths in which a god desires a human end disastrously for the human. Caeneus, for example, cannot go back to his life before the rape. Hermaphroditus also loses his sense of self and his authority. The virgins' fathers in *Gallathea* fear the loss of their daughter who must change into a man for the sake of love. Mellebus and Tyterus first argue over whose daughter should transform, with neither wanting to lose his daughter. At Venus' prompting, however, both fathers agree to leave the choice in her hands "because she is a Goddess" (V.iii.) In this sense, godly magic once again brings about the death of femininity. Gallathea and Phillida, on the other hand, do not care which one of them is transformed. This supports Adrien Kiernander's thesis that they do not consider the gender transformation a loss of identity (58.) In fact, at the end of the play, gender is so fluid that becoming a man is a minimal change to both Gallathea and Phillida's individual identities and their relationship overall (Kiernander 59.) Lyly thereby suggests that gender is not only performative and fluid, but that it is entirely inconsequential. The virgins respond to the age-old question, "Who is the man in the relationship," with detached lack of interest:

Venus: One shall be, doth it suffice?

Phillida: And satis-fie us both, dooth it not Gallathea?

Galla: Yes Phillida" (V.iii.)

The remarkable lack of concern exhibited in this exchange demonstrates that gender is completely marginal to their relationship. Moreover, it is irrelevant to the audience, who never discovers which virgin will change gender (Rackin 30.) The ambiguous ending does end much of the confusion taking place in the forest, but does not answer all of the audience's questions.

Writing during the English Renaissance, a time of great transition and masculine anxiety surrounding gender, Lyly plays on social norms and ideas about gender and the bodies. *Gallathea* is a conservative court play using paradox and allegory to upholding the status quo. However, though it celebrates masculine self-control and constancy, it is also a subversive text that shows a simultaneously homo- and heterosexual relationship constructed by repetitive mutual labor and godly metamorphosis. This queer play would not have been made possible without the influence of Ancient Roman thought and Ovid's classic tales of transformation and loss. *Gallathea's* lighthearted comedic banter and the final celebration of androgyny and marriage present gender as queer, mutable, and transformative.

Conclusion:

The Borderlands of Gender

Interrogating patriarchal systems is difficult when one is still trying to exist within them. Because of this, conversations about definition and defiance begin at the border between male and female, civilian and barbarian, and Subject and Other. Modern feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldua, for example, notes the utility of interrogating the borderlands as a site of conflict and exploration. Ovid and Lyly, too, avoid society in favor of a more natural, feminine setting to stage their studies in gender mutability. When constructed categories clash, they offer an opportunity to garner a better understanding of how they are created. Ovid and Lyly attempt to do just that by exploring gender and sexuality at the edge of society. They give their protagonists opportunity to rebel through the setting: the Metamorphoses and *Gallathea* take to the outskirts of civilization to propose alternate methods of being. The relationships in these two works rely on the forces of love and lust to construct identity. They view gender as being more multifaceted and mutable than dictated by patriarchal civilization.

This does not mean that the two texts are radical. In fact, they are quite conservative in how they address masculine anxieties of obsolescence and being reduced to the same subjugated position as women. Caenis' rape reveals women's porousness and men's impenetrability. The literal robbing of Hermaphroditus' masculinity postulates the potential danger of overzealous, aggressive femininity. However, Lyly approaches the subject with humor, while Ovid does so with fear. The

Ancient Roman rape tales end in violence and distress because of how their culture viewed gender as something permanent, tied to the body, and difficult to escape from. Lyly, on the other hand, further builds on classic medical beliefs that men's bodies could change into women's, and that gender disguises could become reality. Anxieties surrounding gender fluidity are equally present today. Transgender women, drag, and the body's natural penetrability all exist at the border of masculinity and serve as potential threats. Nowadays, as always, the danger for man to slip into womanhood is ubiquitous.

The more times change, the more they stay the same. Western society is currently in a state of change, not dissimilar to Rome's shift from republic to empire and the changing social structure during early modern England. The anxieties surrounding hierarchy, dominance, and the status quo that arise during these times of flux remain similar. However, in Ovid's Metamorphoses, boundary transgression results in pain, leaving the reader with an ominous warning. Meanwhile, Lyly's comedy, ending in a beautiful wedding scene, gives the hope of gender creation and new possibilities. These literary works queer gender roles and use deviant sexuality to focus on the fears associated with fluidity of identity and the lack of control over one's body, which render identity categories obsolete.

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