"SHE COMES IN A SHIRT OF MAIL...OR A MALE SHIRT":
COSTUME AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER
IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND, 1550-1630

A Thesis
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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how costume shaped gender identity in Renaissance England from 1550-1630. Examining the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, the Puritan antitheatrical tracts of the period, and Moll Frith, theatrical character and real-life crossed-dressed woman, yields a new understanding of gender constructions in the theatre and the larger society. These three areas of study form a set of concentric circles which work inwards from broader cultural influences to the heart of the theatre itself. Ultimately, these three loci reveal a similar logic about gender: a strong attempt is made to uphold a strict separation of masculinity and femininity. These gender divisions are intrinsically mapped onto the physical body, conflating sex and gender together and producing a strict biologically-determined gender binary. The Renaissance was in a state of transition from a single-sex model of gender to the relatively new two-sex system. Any inconsistencies or violations of the fledging gender system had to be resolved, for by threatening the new conception of gender, they also threatened the socio-sexual divisions founded upon it. Cross-dressed boys or women, and women in positions of "masculine" authority had to be explained to preserve the gender binary. A process of exclusion was employed. Queen Elizabeth, boys playing women's parts, and the cross-dressed Moll Frith were exempted from the gender binary through elaborate discourses which defined them as superhuman, diseased human, or subhuman. By not meeting the basic criterion of humanity, these individuals no longer had the power to harm the biologically determined two-sex system. All of these exclusionary attempts had serious flaws inherent within them, however, and ultimately only proved the fundamental inadequacies of a conflated sex/gender system.
Dedicated to my family, and Ban T. La
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INTRODUCTION

Within the last decade, thanks in part to the new historicist and feminist movements, scholars have begun to amass an impressive body of work on issues of gender in Renaissance England. Both methodologies have placed increasing emphasis on the societal, economic, and material aspects of the theatre. At this time, however, there exists no comprehensive examination of the ways that costume defined the gendered body. Many scholars—including Laura Levine, Jean Howard, and Stephen Orgel, to name a few—have examined the phenomena of cross-cast boys in performance. Just this past year, Orgel published a book, *Impersonations*, which begins to discuss the effects of costume on the perception of gender. Orgel's primary interest, however, has more to do with the broader topic of the *performance* of gender. In contrast, this thesis examines how the physical costume shaped gender identity in Renaissance England, from 1550-1630. This inquiry is essential to theatrical study and existing knowledge, because without considering how clothing concretely fashions the gendered body, any generalized discussion of cross-dressing is significantly incomplete and likely to be distorted in its conclusions.

One of the immediate difficulties surrounding this topic is how to successfully distinguish the notion of "costume" from the broader concept of "clothing." It is crucial to develop a clear definition of costume before attempting to explain how it relates to gender identity, but several barriers appear when studying the Renaissance. Upon first consideration, the distinction between costume and clothing seems obvious: costume is meant to be worn on the stage in order to present one's self as someone else, whereas
clothing is more generally day-to-day apparel used by all men and women. Such a division is oversimplified, however, particularly in relation to the Renaissance. First of all, there is the vexing problem of the lack of substantial visual evidence for theatrical costumes. Almost no actual garments of the period have survived the centuries; the only remaining evidence resides in paintings, engravings, and a handful of inventories. Most of these sources provide information only about the clothing of everyday individuals. Even in R. A. Foakes's *Illustrations of the English Stage*, a book which attempts to collect into one source all available pictorial evidence of theatrical costume, the author is careful to point out that many of the engravings probably have only an imaginative relationship to the real costumes worn in productions.

To work around this deficiency of pictorial and actual evidence, I turn to the texts of the plays themselves, as well as to the frontispieces accompanying them. Both indicate that the costumes worn by actors were, in all likelihood, similar if not identical to the everyday contemporary dress of men and women of the time. Consider, for example, the frontispieces to *The Roaring Girl* and *The Spanish Tragedy* (figures 1 and 2). It is true that these illustrations must be treated with care, since it is impossible to know how faithful they are to their actual productions. But if we accept for the moment a reasonable degree of concordance between these pictures and the material reality, both contain clear markers of everyday, merchant class Renaissance dress. Moll (*The Roaring Girl*) wears silk stockings tied with garters, wide slops, a stiff lace ruff, and a cloak thrown fashionably over one shoulder; the boy actor playing Bel-Imperia (*Spanish Tragedy*) has the typical exaggerated puffed sleeve-to-shoulder attachments, straight bodice, and huge farthingale. Herbert Norris refers to each of these articles of clothing as belonging to the merchant or noble classes (depending on fabric, fit, and embellishment) in his book on Elizabethan fashion (528-9). Characters within a wide range of plays also make references to articles of clothing that concur with the typical dress of the period. To give a few brief examples:
Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is tricked by Maria into putting on what would be considered unfashionable, foppish yellow stockings and double-tied garters; Bosola curses the Duchess of Malfi's farthingale for disguising a suspected pregnancy; *The Roaring Girl* specifically refers to Moll's wearing of a male doublet alongside her female safeguards. Clearly delineated differences between costume and daily clothing are difficult to ascertain.

As a result of these complications, a degree of fluidity must be allowed in what is labelled as "costume" or "clothing." These complications necessitate drawing on more substantial and readily available evidence about Renaissance attire, as well as using a range of source material to provide information. As such, the focus here is on the numerous portraits of Queen Elizabeth's costumes of state, the Puritan anti-theatrical attacks on cross-dressing, and a play and autobiography about one Moll Frith, an actual woman who spent her life dressed in men's clothing. Although these areas of study appear to be greatly divergent from one another, in reality they are closely interrelated in their constructions of gender. It may also seem that the Queen, the Puritans, and one singular woman have little to do with the theatre itself, but these diverse subjects actually form a set of concentric circles narrowing in on the Renaissance stage.

I begin with Queen Elizabeth, not only because she has direct influence over the theatres, but because she is the most visible example of how Renaissance constructions of gender were played out. I then move to the antitheatrical tracts, which direct attention from a general social and historical gloss to more direct commentary on the theatre. Although the Puritans in no way expressed the opinions of the majority, they wrote down some of the only surviving contemporary opinions about the stage and, specifically, the practice of cross-dressing. These tracts demonstrate at least one particular gender system circulating in English society at the time. Finally, I turn to the figure of Moll Frith, the play written about her (*The Roaring Girl*), and her autobiography. Moll is the perfect intersection of clothing
and costume: she exists in real life, and her persona also exists in the theatre through Dekker and Middleton's play.

Ultimately, these three loci reveal a similar logic about gender. In each case, a strong attempt is made to uphold a strict separation of masculinity and femininity. These gender divisions are presented as intrinsically linked to the biological body: the female body necessitates certain behavioral traits, just as the male body does. Both "costume" and "clothing" fall within the domain of what will be labelled the "gender binary." The notion of a biologically determined gender binary is employed to indicate that, during the Renaissance, masculinity and femininity were seen as discrete characteristics absolutely determined by one's biological sex. This understanding is related to what Gayle Rubin has called the "sex/gender system." Rubin describes the system: "Every society has a sex/gender system--a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner" (165). In the Renaissance, the difference in biological sex between men and women was used as a justification for the division of behavioral characteristics and social positions. "Masculine" behavior could only be attached to the male body, and "femininity" could only (in a healthy and sane individual) be expressed by a female body. Clothing helped to emphasize this absolute distinction between men and women, by splitting off into two discrete, non-transferable categories. To put it simply, gender and sex were conflated, with predictably unstable results.

It may seem strange to the reader that I should need to assert the existence of a two-sex model of gender. After all, such a division has been so thoroughly accepted and projected by our culture and those of many past societies that it is difficult to imagine any other possible model. However, recent Renaissance scholars have been doing just that. Stephen Orgel, in his book Impersonations, argues that a single-sex understanding of

gender was prevalent during the Renaissance. Laura Levine and Thomas Laqueur also favor the single-sex model as an explanation of Renaissance gender construction.\(^2\) Orgel believes that the theories of Galen were the primary basis for Renaissance conceptions of gender. Most important of all was Galen's idea that a woman was simply an imperfectly formed male: she lacked the heat necessary to draw her sexual organs out, and so her vagina was simply an inverted penis. This understanding of anatomy was then directly responsible for all of the anxieties surrounding cross-dressing; if the body was not clearly demarcated into male and female categories, how could society justify the schism between men and women's roles? The differentiation of costume was symptomatic of the need to cement the fledgling gender binary, and its influences on the social order. Cross-dressing proved extremely problematic, because it undermined the very source by which the biologically determined two-sex system was to be permanently solidified. A man wearing women's clothes, and women donning men's garments hearkened back to the single-sex theory of gender, and denied the cultural significance of the delineation of clothes into two genders.

A critical examination of how costume was perceived and employed by Renaissance society contradicts the single-sex model of gender. As this thesis will demonstrate, while Galenic theory was indeed accepted by many physicians, a second, competing two-sex model was being solidified. As medical tracts (such as that of the famous anatomist Helkias Crooke), and the relatively new, but exceedingly strict, division of clothing by the two biological sexes illustrate, women were not simply seen as unfortunate mistakes, or poorly developed males. Women were more than corruptions of the male body: they were seen as an independent sex, fully formed and essential to reproduction. Clothing was carefully, even obsessively divided between garb for women and garb for men. Any mixing of the two was not only a moral outrage, but punishable by law. The elaborate

discourses of disease, mythology, and bestiality that arise in connection to placing the wrong gendered clothes on the wrong gendered body contradict the single-sex model, or at least point to its decline in the Renaissance. Galenic theory was no longer the central way of understanding and ordering gender; an immutable, two-sex system was being established. The confluence of the two systems also explains the incredible anxiety generated by cross-dressing: the newly established two-sex system had to be supported and defended against attacks to protect it from the fading effect that Galenic theory was experiencing.

As with all ideological constructions, contradictions to the gender binary arose out of every segment of society. Elizabeth's portraits, the antitheatrical tracts, and discussions about Moll Frith demonstrate how an overwhelming impulse to defend the binary evidenced itself across discourses. Metaphors of disease, bestiality, and mythology saturate these understandings of gender. These seemingly disparate discourses are united together beneath an overarching discourse of exclusion. Individuals exhibiting the "wrong" gender are labeled subhuman, diseased human, or superhuman, in order to strip them of the significant threat they pose to the gender binary. As non-humans, cross-dressers or women in male positions of power need not have a gender assigned them. These potentially dangerous inconsistencies are cast out from the realm of humanity, which relieves the pressure they place upon the biologically determined two-sex model. The difficulties inherent in such convoluted logic are revealed in the various cultural loci that will be examined here.
Queen Elizabeth may appear an odd or inappropriate choice for a discussion of costume in the theatre. Recently, however, new historicists such as Stephen Greenblatt and Stephen Mullaney (drawing in turn upon Foucault) have developed a concept of power in which power exists only through the theatrical representation of itself. This methodology can be extremely productive when applied to the clothing Queen Elizabeth wore; after all, she herself viewed her wardrobe as a "state treasure," and created a small branch of her government to manage it. In this way, although Elizabeth did not perform in the playhouses, every procession and every meeting she had was an expression of a public performance. Elizabeth's costumes were significant in projecting her identity to the world (and to herself). As a brief example, consider the "Rainbow" portrait, with its depiction of Elizabeth's gown of eyes and ears: a perfect symbol of a watchful government (figure 3). Symbols and mythological figures were frequently embroidered into the Queen's gowns (and subsequently represented in portraits) in order to lead the viewer to an immediate and striking ideological understanding.

Additionally, Queen Elizabeth not only carefully chose what she wore, she made it her concern to regulate what her subjects were allowed to wear as well. Her influence extended to both the general populace and the players, the former by her Sumptuary Laws, and the latter through her Censors. Even when Elizabeth was not intentionally sorting out the acceptable garbs for every class and sex, she influenced the clothing trends of the time period. "Fashionable" women sought to imitate her red hair, even at the cost of losing their own to the harsh acidic dyes. They also mimicked her small, flat-chested figure, through iron or bone bodices, and increasingly larger farthingales which shortened the appearance of the body. Even the exceedingly rich considered it a privilege to receive a dress or coat
from Elizabeth's cast-off wardrobe (Arnold xiv). Queen Elizabeth's clothes not only played a crucial role in defining her position in the society (gendered and otherwise), but also affected how other men and women constructed or were constructed by their garments. For these reasons, she is an excellent point of departure for a study of costume and gender.

There is a veritable plethora of primary and secondary resources available to a scholar studying Queen Elizabeth. Janet Arnold has compiled an invaluable collection of materials in her book *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*. Not only does Arnold gather together most of the existing portraits of Elizabeth, she includes transcriptions of letters by foreign visitors to the Queen, as well as listing in full both the Stowe and Folger inventories of her clothes. Arnold makes no attempt to examine this wealth of information for ideologies of gender, however; her goal is merely to assemble and make available the primary materials. This methodology is pervasive in the works of scholars who examine costumes of the Renaissance, and conversely, while there are an increasing number of studies concerned with how Elizabeth affected gender politics, none to my knowledge avail themselves of her costumes. Other major sources include Roy Strong's *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, Elizabeth Pomeroy's *Reading the Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, and Herbert Norris's *Costume and Fashion: Volume Three, The Tudors*. Additionally, books dealing more generally with clothing and costume as a whole in the early modern period often rely on portraits and accounts of Elizabeth's attire as a primary source of evidence for their conclusions. For this reason, works such as Graham Reynolds's *Costume of the Western World: Elizabethan and Jacobean*, M. Channing Linthicum's *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, and Jane Ashlford's *Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I*, to name a few, also prove relevant.
Chapter two moves from the most public female of the time to the group of individuals most vociferously involved in espousing a strict gender binary: the antitheatricalists. These tracts are one of the few sources that deal explicitly with theatrical costume (and especially the practice of cross-dressing). Although one cannot accept the conclusions drawn from these texts as representative of the whole society, since the writers were primarily Puritans who often did not even attend the plays they criticized, these texts are still extremely valuable in piecing together one of the many existing discourses about gender. There were other competing ideologies on the nature of clothing and gender, but the antitheatricalists' views correlated, overlapped, and impacted all other competing belief systems. There are a surprising number of tracts surviving from the period: Stephen Gosson's *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* and the *Schoole of Abuse; Haec-Vir, or the Womanish-Man; Hic Mulier, or the Man-Woman;* William Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix.* In addition, Phillip Stubbes's more general discussion of contemporary fashion in his *Anatomie of Abuses* is another excellent source for attitudes about clothing and gender. Scholarly studies on antitheatrical tracts are rapidly growing, but Laura Levine's *Men In Women's Clothing,* Jean Howard's article "Crossing the Stage," and Jonas Barish's ground-breaking book *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* provide good starting points. My own critical examination of the antitheatrical pamphlets has revealed that the biological body is crucial to the antitheatricalists in constructing gender. The writers conceive of two essential physical forms of man and woman, as well as two fundamental divisions of costume which are intended to compliment those different shapes. A person's attire should represent and highlight his or her unique shape and place in the natural social order.

Clothing assumes a real power to affect or alter the body's gendered form, for if a person
put on the attire of the other sex, a process of dissolution, degeneration, and disfigurement was thought to rapidly ensue. These conceptions of gender coalesced into the fundamental belief that gender is not a continuum: a man cannot become a woman, or vice-versa. Instead, by mixing the two separate sexual spheres, the resulting product is a body which is neither man nor woman, but a type of monstrous "nothing."

"It is a Thing One Knows Not How to Name":

Reinscribing the Cross-Dressed Moll Cutpurse into a Gender Binary in *The Roaring Girl* and *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*

The last chapter turns to Moll Frith: flesh-and-blood woman and theatrical character. Moll serves as a fitting end for this examination of costume and how it affected gender construction because she becomes a locus of cultural assumptions in which the "reality" of the wider society of London intersects with the "fictions" of the public stage. Mary Frith, also known as Moll Cutpurse, spent her entire life cross-dressed as a boy and gained a reputation for thievery and prostitution. Moll became a household name, serving as the subject for numerous poems, epigrams, ballads, plays, and an autobiography. The focus here will be on the similarities and tensions existing between Moll's stage persona, as seen in Dekker and Middleton's play *The Roaring Girl*, and her "real-life" persona, as chronicled in the autobiography entitled *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*.

Interestingly enough, contemporary commentary on the cross-dressed Moll demonstrates the same fierce defense of the gender binary as is seen in Elizabeth's portraits and the antitheatrical tracts. All of the discourses used to resolve the tension between the assumed gender binary and the actual contradictions of that binary coalesce within the identity of Moll Frith. Moll, in particular, demonstrates the impossibility of successfully defending the biological model of gender. Attempts to explain away the aberrant individual end up
encouraging others to violate the system, or invest the troublemaker with a frightening degree of power.

An increasing number of articles have been written about the Dekker and Middleton play, the autobiography, and these texts' relationships to the real-life Moll. Majorie Garber delves into the dynamics of Moll's cross-dressing in her article "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl." In "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in The Roaring Girl," Mary Beth Rose discusses the ramifications of Moll using cross-dressing for other purposes than disguise. Jean Howard devotes a chapter of The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England to Moll, using The Roaring Girl to highlight the inconsistencies in Renaissance understandings of gender. Susan Krantz, in "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's The Roaring Girl and in London," locates three distinct sexual identities within Moll. Finally, Paul Mulholland, in his "The Date of The Roaring Girl," provides a transcript of a court case Moll was involved in for her cross-dressing, regular appearances at male places of gathering (tobacco shops, etc.), and public appearances on the stage of the Fortune theatre. All of these articles provide a rich framework to begin an examination of costume and gender as it relates to a real-life woman of London.

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By focusing on Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe, the anti-theatrical tracts, and Moll Frith, one finds that the physical "stuff" of costume affected understandings of gender identity in Renaissance England. In Renaissance society, a transition from one sex/gender system to another was occurring. The Galenic single-sex theory of the body was giving way to a two-sex model: differentiated clothing being the most visible symptom of the change. A biologically determined gender binary system came to justify the society's
economic and social inequalities. This relatively new model had to be protected against contradictions in order to ideologically solidify its authority and maintain those social relationships. In that only a handful of cross-dressed individuals were most flagrantly violating the system, a policy of exclusion was attempted. Discourses of mythology, bestiality, and disease saturated discussions of cross-dressing, because if the offending individual could be removed from "human" expectations of the binary, that gender binary would remain safe from inconsistency and disjunction. Studying the delineation of gendered bodies through costume facilitates an understanding of how theories of gender operated to affect both private and political existences.
CHAPTER 1

"THE STOMACH OF A MAN" AND THE STOMACKER OF A WOMAN: QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A LOCUS OF GENDER STRUGGLE

Beginning an inquiry into the relationship between costume and gender in Renaissance England's theatres with an extended discussion of Queen Elizabeth I's clothing may perhaps seem somewhat unorthodox or tangential. It could be argued that Elizabeth had absolutely no bearing or influence on theatrical attire or gender conceptions during the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the assertion might be made that, since the theatres had exclusively male actors, questions of correlation between gender constructions as expressed through Elizabeth and representations of women on the stage become moot. In actuality, however, Queen Elizabeth's costumes had a great deal of impact on the portrayals of women in the theatre. Her choices of attire, and the way in which they evolved through the course of her reign, demonstrate an important shift in the way gender was perceived; a change which influenced all elements of society, including the theatres.

The first justification for using Elizabeth as a model for understanding the costume/gender relationships expressed in the theatres is the fact that clothing and costume did not have a clear differentiation at the time. As an example of this, the clothing of the upper classes, when it became unfashionable to be worn any longer, was often not thrown out (and rarely wore out, being constructed mostly of heavy, durable velvets and wools). Rather, it was sold or given to the theatres to be used as costumes. Although written
documentation of such sales or donations is scant, engravings of the stage created during
the Reniassance provide pictoral support for the phenomenon.

R. A. Foakes, in *Illustrations of the English Stage*, gathers together a wide variety
of etchings of specific plays. These illustrations depict actors in the clothing of every class.
Foakes include a drawing of Richard Tarlton--the famous clown--by John Scottow (45)
(figure 4). He is clothed in simple, unadorned jerkin and trousers. The shapeless, baggy
appearance of the fabric suggests the clothes are probably wool. As Foakes points out,
Tarlton wears rough leather shoes, known as "startups," which reach "to the ankles or
above, [and] are worn by rustics or clowns" (45). The clown, who traditionally plays
lower-class roles, is dressed accordingly, suggesting the use of regular clothes as costume.
Comparing the Tarlton engraving to an illustration of Thomas Middleton's *A Game of
Chess* reveals tremendous differences (figure 5). In this picture, the bishop, black knight,
and white knight are all depicted. The fabrics have become much more sumptuous: the
white knight's breeches have embroidery all over the material, cartwheel ruffs appear on
both knights, the black knight has a fur mantle and fine leather bucket-top boots, and the
bishop's robes have even, well-constructed pleats and heavy fabrics. One might argue that
these engravings are little more than products of an artist's imagination; these illustrations
were, after all, used to help sell the publications of the plays. Foakes counters this concern
by noting, "A contemporary witness, John Chamberlain, wrote that the actors
'counterfeited his person to the life, with all his graces and faces, and had gotten (they say)
a cast suit of his apparel for the purpose, and his litter,' and much of the play's point would
have been lost unless the political figures concerned were imitated as closely as possible;
thus the engraving almost certainly shows them as they were costumed on the stage" (123).

The Middleton engraving was not an isolated incident. An engraving of Francis
Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* depicts two merchant class costumes
(figure 6). Both characters wear large slops, shoe roses, gartered leg bands, pointed and
stuffed doublets, and small cartwheel ruffs. The size of the rapiers is also a demonstration of the characters' social positions. Janet Arnold mentions that the attempt to one-up one's neighbor got so out of control that Elizabeth was forced to pass a proclamation stating that one's rapier blade could be no longer than thirty-two inches (159). Returning to the illustration of *The Maid's Tragedy*, Foakes concludes that, while "the landscape in the woodcut...appears to be fanciful....The costumes...relate to the way the play was presented, and were in fashion about 1619" (115). Other illustrations, including one for John Crooke's *The City Gallant*, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, all depict characters in middle to upper class garments (figures 2;7;8). Although these pictures were produced to serve as frontispieces to the plays, they still approximate the actual garments worn by the actors on stage. Foakes demonstrates their accuracy through comparisons to contemporary accounts of performances, directions within the plays themselves, the demand for appropriate attire generated by the plots of the plays, and the pictures' correlations to the fashions of the time.

Theatres thus had access to clothing of all social classes. Although one cannot definitely state that the richer, more sumptuous clothes came from sales or donations by the nobility, at the very least it can be asserted that the elaborate costumes of the aristocracy were in circulation in the society. Queen Elizabeth's own practices regarding her clothing also provide support to the theory that clothes were donated to the theatres. Although many textbooks like to portray Elizabeth as a vain woman so in love with her clothes that she would not let a single item out of her inventory, this is a fallacy. Janet Arnold reproduces the entire *Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes*, a document dating from 1600 that lists most, if not all, of the Queen's attire (Appendix). She then relates entries from the *Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes* which show that Elizabeth periodically gave her maids-in-waiting old gowns as gifts (xiv).
Aristocratic clothing was circulating throughout the society, not only through actual donations, but through images of those clothes as well. Elizabeth serves as one of the best sources of primary information about garments in Renaissance England, because so many portraits—well over one hundred paintings and miniatures—were painted of her. It is possible to prove that these portraits did, in fact, represent Elizabeth in her actual garments, as the painted garments match descriptions given in the official catalog kept by the Queen's Treasury at the time. Once again, the *Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes* becomes invaluable evidence. Using the document, Arnold is able to draw connections again and again between the costumes listed in the *Inventory* and the costumes depicted in the existing portraits of Elizabeth.

What these portraits demonstrate is that, although most individuals did not wear costumes with any great resemblance to the Queen's, nonetheless, such clothing was readily recognizable by all, and circulated through the streets of London. The many public processionals of the Queen, and her renowned attention to the pleas of individual subjects, no matter how poor, gave even the lowest classes an opportunity to witness Elizabeth in all her finery. The fact that aristocratic clothing made its way on stage in some manner gave those fashions an even greater degree of publicity, for they were displayed in what amounted to a public forum attended by all classes of society. Even if most people did not possess such fine clothes, this did not prevent them from observing them on the backs of others, and being influenced by those fashions in some manner. The richness and lavish embroidery on such gowns were specifically created with the objective of high visibility; the incredible amount of labor involved in the creation of these garments, with their fantastic designs and emblems, strongly suggests that they were made first and foremost to be seen.

The argument might be made that Elizabeth's clothes are irrelevant because they are simply not representative of the common people, and as such, prove nothing about the
majority of the population. As a response, I would point out first of all that when plays were presented, most dealt to some degree with either aristocrats or mythological beings, along with the "peasant" classes (who were often mocked as slow and uncouth). As Foakes points out, upper class clothing would certainly be used, as the plays depended upon them to immediately define characters by their class. In addition, Elizabeth's costumes, in particular, had an especially broad, far-reaching circulation through the society, thanks to the phenomenon of the miniatures. Miniatures were tiny portraits of the Queen, stamped out of base metals, and then worn by the lowest classes. They also included finer painted pendants or brooches worn by the middle classes, as well as boxes and even full-size paintings of the Queen found in the houses of the wealthy (Strong 22). It was highly fashionable for all strata of society to wear or have an image of the Queen in all her royal splendor on their persons or in their homes. In this way, while it is not likely that every person had access to all of the portraits that will be discussed in this chapter, they nevertheless would have had very close, personal contact with similar or even identical images of the Queen on the coins, pendants, brooches, and boxes they wore or handled daily. Elizabeth's image absolutely saturated her society, and as such was both pervasive and persuasive; it could not help but influence the attitudes and conceptions of the society so constantly flooded with those images. Among those segments of society, then, can be included the theatres.

It is, of course, no small point to add that Elizabeth was, after all, the ruler of the country, and thus in a unique position to influence the theatre, both through literary references as well as direct contact and issues of control and censorship. The theatre has always been an inherently political arena: since it is so immediate, it often deals with topical issues of the day. Images of Elizabeth crop up frequently in Renaissance literature, not only in obvious homages like Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, but in more veiled guises, such as in Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, where Dol Common (a prostitute) dresses up like "The Queen
of Faery," who, supposedly, by her very looking at a man, grants him everything he could ever desire. Jonson, in fact, describes this "Queen" in this way: "Her grace is a lone woman,/ And very rich, and if she takes a fancy,/ She will do strange things" (l.ii.155-157). Such passing references and critiques of Elizabeth help to illustrate how deeply her persona was embedded in her society's consciousness and day-to-day discourse. The theatre, being a public forum, proved a very popular place to engage in discussions about her. On the more concrete side, Elizabeth also had direct control over the theatres, as she controlled both the censorship of plays as well as the licensing of the theatres. In other words, playhouses were forced to confront the Queen, whether they wanted to or not, because she made it her business to exert her influence over them. The welfare of each theatre depended quite literally on the relationship they managed to establish with the throne.

All of these issues point to the importance and central position the Queen had in her country's political sphere, as well as its cultural, social, and economic affairs. Elizabeth was a locus, or crux, of Renaissance English society, and dissecting the elements surrounding her reign are invaluable in helping the researcher ferret out an understanding of the value systems of the wider society, including gender constructions.

Understanding the Evolution of Elizabeth's Costumes: A Three-Part Model

It is clear from the visual evidence of the portraits that Queen Elizabeth's attire altered dramatically over the course of her forty year reign. Take, for instance, the simple, sparse, even drab visuals of William Scrots's portrait of Elizabeth in 1546, when she was merely a princess and expected to remain so (figure 10); the first official portrait of the Queen circulated after her ascension to the throne, circa 1560-1565, still stark and simply presented, but with a new emphasis on jewelry, rare and exquisite fabrics and furs, the use
of pinking or slashing to reveal the full glory of those fabrics, and the beginnings of the neck ruff (figure 11); the "Phoenix" portrait, c. 1572-6, with an explosion of intricacy including more pronounced slashing, rolls at the sleeves, exceedingly dense embroidery, lavish displays of jewels, the burgeoning farthingale, the drawn-in waist, and the thin, angel-like hood (figure 14); George Gower's "Armada" portrait, from 1588, featuring the enormous sleeves, huge stiff ruff cleanly separating the head from the rest of the body, stiff, flat bodice, and enlarged farthingale (figure 21); and finally, Marcus Gheeraerts's "Ditchley" portrait, of 1592, which illustrates a complete departure from the real female form, with its wheel farthingale of such extensive girth that Elizabeth can rest her hand upon it like a table, the tiny, elongated waist approximating a mere fourteen inches, the spiny ruff folded back to reveal a constricted but plunging breast, and the wing-like, gauzy hood framing the back of the head (figure 23). The simple, unadorned cut closely draping the body was quickly abandoned in favor of a fashion that pinched, flattened, beefed up and puffed out the figure until the woman was entirely lost beneath the excess.

Although these pictures demonstrate a startling degree of change in a relatively short span of time, they do not inform the researcher of the reasons behind the radical transformation. To explain this evolution, I turn to costume history and art history. The degree of correlation between the two fields in describing the course of and the motivations behind Elizabeth's shifting wardrobe is striking. Not only do critics in each field pinpoint the most significant transformation occurring around 1580, they also attribute the switch to Elizabeth's final decision to remain unwed. Costume historian Jane Ashelford, in her enlightening study of Elizabethan attire, *Dress In the Age of Elizabeth I*, points out the proportionality and natural appearance Elizabeth's clothes possessed at the beginning of her reign: "the most marked characteristic of female dress when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 was symmetry: the triangular shape of the skirt in perfect balance with the inverted triangular shape of the bodice and deep hanging sleeves" (11). Around 1575,
however, Ashelford observes that the clothing has begun to warp the female form, squeezing and bloating it into strangely exaggerated designs that move further and further from reality as time progresses. "The period 1575 to 1580 was a transitional one," she writes, "as the female silhouette became fuller and stiffer...the elegant tapered lines of the earlier costume have been replaced by a more swollen and rounded shape which is accentuated by a tiny waist...." (26). Not coincidentally, she remarks that by 1582, after the proposed match with the Duc d'Alencon fell through, it became clear to the nation, if not the Queen herself, that Elizabeth would never marry (8).

J.B. Black, in *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603*, concurs with Ashelford's assertion. He notes that the last marriage proposal Elizabeth considered was that of Anjou, or Alencon, in 1578. Elizabeth herself revived this possible union, because the Duke was attempting to gain control of the Spanish king's inheritance. Elizabeth wanted to be sure she would have some influence over the situation (300). However, when word of the possible match reached the larger population of England, the people were incensed. John Stubbs published a pamphlet entitled *Discovery of a Gaping Gulf Wherein England is like to be Swallowed by Another French Marriage* (302). Anjou was a devout Catholic, and although the masses wanted Elizabeth to wed in order to provide a clear heir to the throne, they were unwilling to endure yet another struggle between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Black points out that when Elizabeth punished Stubbs for publishing the attack by having his right hand cut off, "it was clear [he] had the sympathy of the multitude, for the spectacle was witnessed in dead silence" (302). Both Elizabeth's council and parliament condemned the match, and Elizabeth was forced to forgo the union. Elizabeth was forty-five at the time of the marriage talks, and once they fell through with Alencon, she never initiated another proposal (303).

Elizabeth's unwed status began to manifest itself in her clothing. Ashelford mentions, as an example, the shift away from wearing "looped-up" golden chains towards
a pronounced preference for thick ropes of pearls which lasted to the end of her reign. Pearls, being an important symbol for purity and chastity, thus served as a visual element of Elizabeth's status as Virgin Queen (30). It was not merely the trappings which changed along with the country's hopes for Elizabeth's marriage, however. The very cut of Elizabeth's clothing underwent dramatic change as she moved farther and farther away from the possibility of being wed. In fact, by the end of Elizabeth's reign, Ashelford maintains that any "sense of harmony and restraint had disappeared and the balance between bodice, skirt, and sleeves had broken down...it was a bizarre silhouette created by extensive stiffening and padding, and so encrusted with decoration that the natural female form entirely disappeared....an increasing preoccupation with decoration and exaggeration" (11).

This evolution was by no means accidental, according to Ashelford. She maintains that Elizabeth manipulated her external appearance in order to profit from her virginal status to the greatest extent she could. For one, her choice of costumes, with their embroidery, jewel, and color symbolism all made her unwed status immediately visible and undeniable to the public. Moreover, Ashelford asserts that "the emphasis on appearance was a vital part of Elizabeth's strategy, for she had turned her unmarried position to advantage by encouraging the court and country to celebrate her as Cynthia, Astrea, and Diana, all goddesses famed for their chastity and purity" (8). Ashelford discerns a clear and significant shift in Elizabeth's attire over the course of her reign, and attributes the most striking changes to her final decision to remain unwed.

In the realm of art history, critics have independently arrived at similar conclusions. Roy Strong, author of two influential books about the portraits of Queen Elizabeth--*The Cult of Elizabeth* and *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*--attributes the transformations of Elizabeth's attire to her final unwedded state. Strong theorizes that the exaggerated and excessive quality of her dress, along with the intricate symbols inscribed
onto it, was a carefully calculated attempt on her part to fashion herself as a goddess figure, in order to allay fears concerning the successor to the throne and to maintain her position of authority. When describing Elizabeth's early portraits in *Gloriana*, Strong continually emphasizes the uncertainty and ultimate importance of the Queen's marriage status, labeling the pictures "celebrations not of a triumphant Virgin Queen but of a ruler still expected to marry" (65). Elizabeth's earliest costumes construct her as woman, with a woman's physical presence; there is no attempt to mar, disfigure, or mystify her young female body.

Strong notices a significant break from this trend in 1579, when the first allegorical painting of Elizabeth was produced; it is not by accident that 1579 also marked the year it became certain that the Queen would never marry (41). At this point in her reign, according to Strong, Elizabeth begins for the first time to actively utilize her virginity in creating a persona that transcended human boundaries. Strong specifically makes mention of the crescent moon and arrow jewels Elizabeth began to wear in her hair and upon her chest, as these symbols are a clear reference to Diana, the goddess of chastity. "The moon goddess role as Diana or Cynthia assigned to the monarch, for the first time, cosmological powers...the images produced after 1580 reinforce the concept of the monarch as being separated, sacred, and set apart" (128;36). This cult of Elizabeth continued to grow exponentially throughout the last decade of her reign, and her costumes reflected this adulation and symbolism by becoming more and more exaggerated and inhuman in quality. The more the female form was disfigured, the less earthly and more transcendent the Queen came to look, for she approximated no human figure in her clothing's girth.

The emphasis on Elizabeth as a timeless, eternal goddess grew to such a fervor that in 1594 a proclamation was passed stating that the official image of the Queen to be emulated in all portraits was one of "legendary beauty, ageless and unfading" (20). In fact, Nicholas Hilliard was commissioned to create a "Mask of Youth," which was the face of

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3 Ashelford and Strong disagree on the year of Elizabeth's last failed marriage proposal, the former proposing 1582 and the latter 1579. Black concurs with Strong's use of 1579, while Frederick Chamberlin agrees with Ashelford.
Elizabeth from younger days to be copied precisely by all other artists. Elizabeth's maids also helped maintain the illusion of immortality: by clever manipulation of her clothing, hair, and the application of an inch and a half of makeup, "the Queen could still appear to the outside world something of a goddess" (20). Elizabeth's outlandish, incredible costumes were thus designed in part to cover up the ravages of time. One can best see the culmination of Elizabeth's efforts to construct herself as a goddess in her death. Strong relates the speech of a Dr. King at her funeral on March 24, 1603 in Whitehall: "Soe there are two excellent women, one that bare Christ and an other that blessed Christ; to these may wee joyne a third that bare and blessed him both. She bare him in hir heart as a wombe, she conceived him in fayth, shee brought him forth in aboundance of good workes...in Earth the first, in Heaven the second Maid" (43). Elizabeth has become directly responsible for England's salvation.

This happy collusion between art history and costume history therefore provides a useful model on which to base my own set of inquiries. I will adopt the three-stage model of Elizabeth's costumes--that is, the "early reign," "transitional," and "mythic" eras--and use it as a foundation for an exploration of the gender issues embedded in these changes.

Ashelford and Strong's conclusions bring to the forefront, but do not directly address, the crucial question of why Elizabeth's final failed marriage brought about such dramatic change in her attire. It is my belief that every stage of Elizabeth's changing wardrobe can be attributed, in great part, to her attempts, and the attempts of those around her, to find a way to fit her into a biologically determined two-sex gender system.

Elizabeth's strange amalgam of female body located within a position of public authority and action (a traditionally masculine activity), caused anxiety and unease in her society. Her costume and its many phases of development becomes indicative of the attempts to locate and firmly define Elizabeth's ultimate gender. As expectations of marriage for Elizabeth changed, her costume also changed, and the fundamental schism
between female body and male authority finally irrevocably entrenched itself into Elizabeth's identity. The Queen's relationship to her power changed (once she finally decided to remain unwed, there was no longer any hope that she would take a rightfully "feminine" backseat to the rightful male authority of the King), and her costumes bespeak continual attempts by Elizabeth herself and those around her to find an image or symbol through which her confusing, mixed-up genderedness could find an uneasy truce. Art and costume history have provided the skeleton or timeline of costume change, and by employing an examination of how Elizabeth's costume reflects or constructs her gender identity, I hope to flesh in the body, or "meat," which is precisely the motivations behind those changes.

The "Early" Period: Creating the "Average" Eligible Bachlorette

In the two extant portraits of Elizabeth painted before her ascension (and indeed, before anyone, including Elizabeth herself, had even the slightest notion she would rise to the position of Queen), simplicity holds sway (figures 9 and 10). The heavy stamp of Henry VIII's tastes in clothing can be seen in the folded-back, heavy sleeves (Norris 507). Although they utilize a great deal of fabric, it is important to note that they still conform to the natural shape of the arm, and in no way attempt to distend or restrict it. The shoulders do not have the heavy rolls of fabric lumping up the natural slope down through the arm, but instead are cut wide, revealing the skin itself and then gently descending down the upper arm. Already emerging at this early date is the vogue for "showing off" as many sumptuous fabrics as possible. The rich stuff exposed by the rolled-back sleeves and peeking out in the kirtle in the Scrots's picture demonstrates this trend; at the same time,
restraint, rather than excess, is the norm here. Embroidery is elegant, but simple, with abstract patterns rather than symbols or icons.

Jewelry is also sparse and simple, as would have befit a princess. There are two necklaces of pearls in the Scrots's portrait, perennial favorites of Elizabeth's, a large but austere brooch, and a jeweled waist chain ending in a pomander. In the *Family of Henry VIII*, Elizabeth wears no jewelry at all, save for a simple pendant. Elizabeth's pride and joy, her reddish-golden hair, is severely styled, parted and pulled back underneath a French hood. Her upper chest is uncovered in both pictures, a common practice for unwed girls (although customarily covered by a thin wrap of lawn). In other words, this is an altogether typical portrait of an English maid. There is nothing extraordinary about the clothes, which serve, in their simplicity and familiarity, to include, rather than seclude, Elizabeth and her viewers. The dress closely follows the curves of her own body, and does not attempt through cut or ornamentation to divert or distort the audience's interpretation of the real female body.

Essentially, what these portraits evince is a faithfulness to the "normal" or "average" female form. By today's standards, these costumes may indeed still appear quite alien or strange, but the important point is that these clothes do not significantly alter Elizabeth's natural shape. The sleeves, for example, are, certainly, extremely wide-mouthed at the wrists, but the viewer can identify this as being a product of the fabric and the cut: we can see Elizabeth's slender hands and wrists beneath it. The costume is not attempting to alter, expand, or delete any aspects of Elizabeth's body. Notice that the drape of the fabric adheres to the shape of her hips and waist, and falls naturally to her feet. The "normalcy" of these two portraits is particularly crucial because they clearly reflect Elizabeth's status at this period in her life. She is merely a princess, a woman of only slight importance, the last resort to maintain the royal family. Since her destiny at this point and time appears to be a quiet marriage and fruitful male offspring, there is no attempt on
her part or others to deny or alter her gender. There is no need to play with symbols and icons, because Elizabeth is not yet in a position to generate anxiety. She has broken no gender boundaries at this point, but remains in compliance with the model of female body/female passivity.

With her sudden (undoubtedly surprising) assumption of the English throne, the situation begins to change. England is faced with a quandary: a woman's body in a man's authoritative, active position. Of course, Elizabeth was not the first instance of a female ruler in England. Mary I had reigned just before her. The crucial difference between the two women, at least as far as gender relations go, is that Mary was married, while Elizabeth was not. It is also true that Mary's choice of partners--Philip of Spain--generated its own anxiety among the English subjects. Philip was Catholic, after all, and both he and Mary threatened the security of the Church of England set in motion by Henry VIII (Meyer 13). By marrying Philip, however, Mary effectively relinquished a great deal of her authority. As Arnold Meyer comments in his book *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth*, "When she threw herself into the arms of her idolized Philip, Mary sacrificed England's welfare to the world-wide schemes of Spanish politics" (13). Philip's machinations and desires took precedence over Mary's own authority, partially due to her own consent. In Mary's case, then, the focal point of anxiety was not a female ruler in a male position of power, because, by marrying, Mary had put a male body back into that role. It was political and religious affiliations which caused strife. Elizabeth, on the other hand, generated anxiety for both reasons. Late in her reign, as already mentioned, her possible match with Alencon created religio-political strife. Once this was resolved, however, it still left the incurable conflict between female body and male position of power.

Returning to her early reigning years, one discovers that the friction generated by the inability of Elizabeth to continue to fit into the biologically determined gender binary incurs anxiety, and a need to resolve the inconsistency. Frederick Chamberlin, in *The
Sayings of Queen Elizabeth, notes the constant pressure placed on Elizabeth to wed from both within and without the borders of England. He mentions such widely ranging individuals as Sir Thomas Pope, the Spanish Ambassador, the Swedish Ambassador, the Duke of Norfolk (who headed a delegation in 1560 whose only purpose was to get Elizabeth to marry), the Duke of Württemberg, the French Ambassador, Sir William Drury, the Scottish Ambassador, and the Ambassador of Emperor Ferdinand (56-69). In each of these cases, Elizabeth has responded with a letter indicating her reluctance or possible interest.

More importantly, both Parliament and her own Council continually urged her to wed. Chamberlin records one of Elizabeth's responses to her Council's admonishments to marry: "If my subjects love me and wish to see me live and to be ruled by my prosperity, they must leave me to marry or not and to take any husband I choose" (64). Chamberlin also recounts an event in 1559, when the Speaker, Knights, and Burgesses of the Lower House of Parliament delivered an address in the great gallery of Whitehall Palace, urging her to wed. Elizabeth responded: "It will be quite sufficient...if, when I die, an inscription be engraved on a marble tomb, saying, 'Here lieth Elizabeth, which reigned a virgin, and died a virgin" (57). Such an answer could indeed strike anxiety into the hearts of her advisors. A short time later, however, she replies in the opposite manner to Parliament, claiming, "I have not bound myself by any vow of celibacy never to trade in that kind of life called marriage...as a prince I endeavor to bend my mind to it" (58). The level of anxiety can therefore be kept at a low level, because the easiest solution to the problem--getting a male into that male role--is a definitely attainable, and absolutely expected occurrence. Costume therefore remains relatively stable, because Elizabeth is being prodded down the same avenue she would have faced if she had remained a princess: marriage. If Elizabeth were to wed, she would immediately relinquish her position of authority, and reinstate it back where it should have resided all along: with a male body.
She would return to the passive, private arena which served as the rightful borders for a female body.

Marriage was thus not only viewed as desirable for Elizabeth, but as an inevitable occurrence. The violation of the gender binary at such a powerful and, more importantly, public level, was almost inconceivable. To demonstrate the intense pressure Elizabeth faced concerning marriage, and the faith others (if not Elizabeth herself) had in her eventual transformation into wife, I turn to two early portraits sanctioned by Elizabeth for circulation by her foreign embassaries, created between 1560 and 1570 (figures 11 and 12). The first of these is quite stark: perhaps even more rigid and austere than her pre-monarch days (figure 11). Elizabeth is dressed in white and black, colors that were quickly to become her trademark. In fact, she remarked as early as 1565 that "these are my colors" (Arnold 2).

During the Renaissance, every color had an emotion associated with it, and certain combinations connoted very specific ideas. According to Sicile's *A Rare True and Proper Blazon of Colours and Ensignes Military* (as quoted in Arnold), white could stand for "purity, faith, chastity, and humility," black for "darkness, constancy, woe, death, or grief," and white and black together had the duality of either "grief" or "eternal virginity" (90). Elizabeth was so devoted to white and black that she caused the members of the court to adopt these colors as well, in deference to her. Ashelford comments, "The most fashionable ladies at court were the unmarried Maids of Honour, who were expected to provide a harmonious white...background to reflect but not outshine the awesome figure of the queen" (8). In the case of the 1560 portrait, however, the effect is not dazzling, but exceptionally somber in tone. The heavy black velvet of the gown slenderizes and straightens Elizabeth's form, minimizing volume while closely adhering to her body. The only nod to contemporary style is the slashing which permits the ermine lining to peek out

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4 It is certainly true that black was also a popular color for men's attire during the period. Some of this can be attributed to a desire to emulate or honor the Queen. As well, while Elizabeth certainly appears to be using black and white to fashion a specific persona, this fact does not necessitate that everyone who wore black also had to have a political agenda. Sometimes black clothes are just black clothes. It is Elizabeth's systematic use of the color combination (on herself and those present at court), and her comments about that decision, which indicate that they were, indeed, symbolizing more than themselves.
strikingly, with its brilliant white jumping off of the jet black velvet. Were it not for the enigmatic smile on Elizabeth's face, one might think this more suited to a picture of mourning rather than a sort of sixteenth century singles' ad.

The second of these circulated portraits follows a similar trend (figure 12). The cut and styling have gained a bit more flair, as the pinking has become more pronounced on the sleeves and a waist chain with a pendant has been added to help the eye make out the woman's shape under the light-absorbing velvet. Curiously enough, however, one further detail has been added that complicates the ostensible function of these portraits. On Elizabeth's fourth finger of her left hand is a ring, imprinted with a sort of triangular seal. It is clear, however, that Elizabeth was still unwed, and it makes little logical sense that she should send out a picture to potential suitors with this highly visible "hands-off" signal. Nowhere in my research have I found anyone who has commented on the meaning of the ring, or indeed anyone who seemed to notice its existence and possible significance at all.

One possible solution to this quandary may come from the words of Elizabeth herself. Early in her reign, she is reported to have told her judges, "Have a care over my people...they are my people.... I care not for myself; my life is not dear to me. My care is for my people.... I shall lend credit to nothing against my own people which parents would not believe against their own children" (Chamberlin 11-13). Elizabeth constructs herself as a symbolic parent of the people of England, literally wedded to the state itself. Roy Strong also notes this particular self-fashioning of Elizabeth in the laws of the age: "Legally, the Queen's body and the body politic of her realm were inseparable" (98-9). Just as the Church's doctrines on marriage asserted, Elizabeth has become the wife of the state, merging her body and will with England to form one seamless whole. The ring, then, may be a deliberate political move on Elizabeth's part, whose meaning can be reduced to a proclamation of Elizabeth's fidelity and love for her country and her people. Although in one manner of thinking, the "state-wedded" Elizabeth seems to contradict with her
emphasis on her Virgin Queen mystique (as in the black and white she zealously wore),
when viewed from a pragmatic angle the wed-unwed aspects fit together cleverly.
Elizabeth, by "marrying" an abstract idea, could use this to combat any actual marriage
proposals: she could argue that she remained single out of concern for England's welfare
(and not her own selfish motivations). In fact, Chamberlin records a statement of hers
which exactly demonstrates this thought process. In her final rejection of the French suitor
Alencon, she writes, "Although my affection for you is undiminished I have after an
agonizing struggle determined to sacrifice my own happiness to the welfare of my people"
(13). By utilizing the Church's demands of a wife--to endlessly sacrifice herself for the
needs of her husband and family--Elizabeth has paradoxically saved herself from a real
marriage of subjection.

The contradictions embedded in these portraits reveal resistance to accept the
gender binary being thrust upon Elizabeth. A certain degree of self-fashioning is occurring
in the pictures, for, as Elizabeth chooses black and white as her colors, or deliberately
places that ring upon her fourth finger, she begins to construct a persona that refutes the
roles being demanded of her by her society, and secondly, provides a way of allowing her
to be both woman and ruler. Elizabeth complicates her own public image, and asserts
different future for herself. Essentially, the Queen displays insight about the inadequacies
of the biologically determined gender binary, and begins to push at its inconsistencies and
weak spots. Her method of exploding the binary is, however, complicated by the fact that
she tries to utilize standard or accepted feminine roles or images (the virgin, or the wedded
woman, even if to an ideal rather than a person) to accomplish this goal.
The "Transitional" Period: The Flaming Virgin and the Sacrificial Mother

Stereotypical feminized images or symbols continue to be explored in the second stage of Elizabeth's costume development. She further utilizes and manipulates the contradictory duality between virgin and wife/mother within her "transitional period," as Ashelford dubs it (that is, 1570-1580). Her employment of these two images vacillates wildly during this period, a phenomenon which can be attributed to the obvious inability of either to successfully redefine the gender binary. The images arise as products of the standard gender binary, so they prove to be problematic in justifying Elizabeth's position of authority. A genuine battle rages here, for as the increasingly tenuous possibility of Elizabeth's marriage reaches its fervored peak, two possible fates emerge. The first expected outcome is that Elizabeth will indeed wed, and no longer threaten the biological sense of gender (boy or girl, body and societal role matching perfectly). The second, increasingly probable result, is that Elizabeth will reject a union, and, without some other symbolic intervention, the gender binary will be completely undermined by Elizabeth's fusion of female body and male authority. This veritable war, and the mounting anxiety instigated by Elizabeth's stubborn refusal to conform to biological "law," is absolutely reflected in the uneasy symbolism and strangely amalgamated costumes Elizabeth displayed during this "transitional era."

Two complementary portraits stand out as extraordinary examples of Elizabeth's pragmatism translated into visual signs, the dense mixture of stereotype and innovation she employed, and positive and negative constructions of her identity that resulted from her choices of attire. Nicholas Hilliard produces the "Pelican" and "Phoenix" pictures as an intentional set: the two Elizabeths are, in face and body posture, mirror opposites of one another (figures 13 and 14). The first of these, the "Pelican" portrait, is so named because of the amulet that falls down to the middle of Elizabeth's chest (figure 13). As a piece of
personal iconography, the pelican yields fascinating, complex, and significant symbolic codes. In fact, the pelican merits its own etching and poem inside the work of one of the Queen's contemporaries, Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes*, pinpointed as "the first emblem book in English" by Ashelford, who further maintains that "from that point on a common visual vocabulary was available to everyone" (90). The etching shows the mother pelican standing above her brood of young, hungry nestlings, goring her own breast in order to feed the babies with her blood. The accompanying text follows:

The Pelican, for to requite her younge,  
Doth pierce her breast, and give them of her blood:  
Then search your breast, and as you have with tongue,  
With penne proceede to doe our country good:  
Your zeal is great, your learning is profound,  
Then help our wants, with that you doe abound. (Whitney 87)

Whitney's verse almost reads as a direct exhortation to the Queen: there are references to her country, great learning, and a plea for aid couched in terms of rather fawning approval. Regardless of whether the sentiment was written with Elizabeth in mind, it can be asserted with relative security that she had, at the very least, seen Whitney's emblem, and was conscious of the verse associated with it when she wore the symbol on her chest. Having the pelican as a *pendent* is doubly appropriate, for not only is Elizabeth making a direct visual reference to her motherly intentions towards her country, she places that symbol on the part of her body most closely associated with motherhood in the verse--her breast.

Her costume also reflects the essence of the pelican's symbolism. The rolls at the shoulders have returned to exaggerated proportions, looking somewhat like burgeoning wings. A small triangular part of Elizabeth's bosom, untouched by lawn or gauze, peeks through the elaborately embroidered bodice and sleeves. A pansy can be seen pinned above her heart, which, as Ophelia well knew, was "for thoughts," as well as faithfulness (IV.vi.173). Positioned as it is above the organ responsible for pumping all of that life-sustaining blood out to the brood, the pansy suggests that Elizabeth's very essence is intricately connected with her people, for she thinks of them at all times, and remains ever
constant to them, even at the cost of her own vitality. Finally, Elizabeth may have been attracted to the pelican symbol because while it plays up the importance of the sacrificial mother, the father (the traditional supporter of the home) is conspicuously absent. Even Whitney's picture deletes the male presence, depicting only a larger-than-life mother, wings filling the frame, entirely shielding her babies as her blood trickles into their waiting beaks. Once again, Elizabeth struggles to construct herself as an independent female ruler, but is forced to rely on a paradoxical image of the self-generating woman/mother in the attempt--the quiet beginnings of her eventual mythic status, which will take this image to its logical extreme.

The omission of the male helps establish a coherent link between the "Pelican" and its sister, the "Phoenix" portrait (figure 14). Again, Elizabeth wears the mythical bird as a pendant upon her bared chest. Whitney includes an emblem for the phoenix as well in his Choice of Emblems:

The Phoenix rare, with fethers frethe of hewe,
ARABIAS righte, and facred to the Sonne:
Whome, other birdes with wonder feeme to vewe,
Dothe liue vntill a thoufande yeares bee ronne:
    Then makes a pile: which, when with Sonne it burnes
Shee flies therein, and fo to afhes tumes.
Whereof, behoulde, an other Phoenix rare,
With fpeede dothe rife most beatifull and faire. (177)

The Phoenix is serving as the ultimate symbol of virginity, as it reproduces not by means of sex, but self-destruction and renewal. It is significant that Whitney refers to the creature, of which only one exists in the entire world, as a "shee." It seems fitting that Elizabeth would be drawn to such an icon, for it represents an immensely strong, wise female who cycles through the ages irregardless of the meddlings of men. Jane Ashelford comments on the unique suitability of the phoenix to Elizabeth: "A more obvious and public message was intended by the Queen's use of the image of the phoenix. This mythical bird could renew itself only by burning to death and arising anew from the flames, and thus was symbol of uniqueness and chastity" (100).
Again, Elizabeth's clothing, which has altered subtly from the "Pelican" portrait, emphasizes the meaning behind the phoenix. In her hand, as well as embroidered all along her sleeves and kirtle, are eglantine roses. Although any sort of rose was typically employed as a symbol of female virginity in the Renaissance, Ashelford points out that the eglantine rose had special significance. The eglantine was "the flower of purity and chastity... 'the honour of virgins who become goddesses for their chastity'... [It] had been used in medieval art to celebrate the Virgin Mary, but was used by Elizabethans as an extension of the traditional rose imagery" (98-100). In the rose, we see the faint but quickening impulse to equate Elizabeth with a supernatural being or a goddess. The Queen transcends mortality to become a monolith, an archetype, or an icon rather than an actual flesh-and-blood woman. In this way, the complicated and problematic combination of virgin and mother begins to resolve itself into one coherent symbol, as the next phase of Elizabeth's life will confirm. The white fabric puffing out beneath the sleeve pinking, as well as the angelic-looking transparent veil wafting across her shoulders adds further to her vision of virgin perfection. The amount of uncovered bosom has increased from the "Pelican" portrait, which is not surprising when one considers that it represents the common practice of unwed girls to keep their chest uncovered, even in public.

Positive aspects of the conspicuously absent male exist in these twin portraits of the Virgin and the Mother, but Elizabeth's decision to construct her persona utilizing these symbols has a darker, more disturbing side. In both cases, as Whitney's verses declaim, the female bird gains only at the price of severe self-sacrifice and suffering. To be the Mother of England--the pelican--Elizabeth must be willing to shred her own breast, and to literally allow her people to suck her dry. The Virgin--phoenix--fares no better. In order to renew herself, the phoenix must endure being burnt alive by the "Sonne"--a suspiciously masculine symbol. (It is from within the positive and negative duality of the animal symbols that the admittedly awful pun leading into this section arose, for Elizabeth is not
only literally "flaming," or burning to ashes, but uses the phoenix overtly and conspicuously to flaunt her virginal status.) These icons both construct rigid roles for Elizabeth in which she must play the stereotypical sacrificial victim of a woman; anguish and self-destruction are the only ways a woman can seemingly accomplish good without the aid of a man. Thus, while Elizabeth's symbolic ornaments and the accompanying clothes appear to advance her cause as independent, self-generating Virgin/Mother, in reality, they entrap her. Since the images of Virgin and Mother arose out of conventional feminine roles, accepted and encouraged by the existing biological gender binary, it is hardly surprising that, when put to use by Elizabeth, the stereotypes begin to control and subsume Elizabeth's persona. The Queen's attempts to utilize the Virgin and Mother to challenge gendered assumption ends with detrimental demands placed upon her in a stereotypical fashion.

The remainder of the decade (the 1570s) shows Elizabeth continuing to struggle with her external identity, in the same way that she struggled with the issue of whether or not to marry. As Chamberlain records, Elizabeth proved to be staggeringly mercurial in her attitudes towards wedlock, moving from one extreme--"I should call the wedding-ring the yoke-ring"--to the opposite--"I am determined to marry...for the satisfaction of my subjects" (61;65). This indecision reveals itself in her clothing as well. Examining the portrait with the unwieldy title "Elizabeth I as Sovereign of the Order of the Garter", painted in 1575, one discovers a strange and conflictual amalgam of symbols (figure 15). On the surface we have a woman attempting to assimilate the costume and demeanor of a military man. Elizabeth wears a top which is a blend of a woman's bodice and a man's jerkin: the sleeves show some delicate lace and the embroidery down the front of the bodice is rather feminine for a uniform. The flattening, iron-cast appearance of the top, its sky-high neckline (extending beneath the ruff of the collar), and the multiple medallions pinned as decoration over its entire surface, however, place it within a masculine discourse.
The gender of the costume is further complicated by the pearl droplets—Elizabeth's beloved symbols of virginity—around her neck and along the stiff, heavy headdress covering her hair. The headdress is essentially feminine, and yet, it is being used to entirely cover the long locks of reddish-blonde hair Elizabeth loved to wear down, in the fashion of unwed girls (Arnold 81). Even Elizabeth's expression illustrates conflict: half-solemn, half-smirking, she appears fully aware of the complex role(s) she inhabits. Finally, the focal point of the picture, the medallion depicting a knight on his horse that Elizabeth holds up to the viewer, also reveals this confusing male/female duality. The manly, courageous, but steadfast knight prepared to lead the troops into battle appears to be the ostensible message of this painting. The attitude emitted by this portrait is one that demands the viewer to take Elizabeth at face value as a capable, infinitely masculine war leader. For this reason, the Queen grasps this imprint of the knight firmly in her hands, holding the image up to better draw the viewer's eyes. It is significant, however, that Elizabeth is not in armor or on a horse herself; the closest she can come is to hold a replica in her hand. This action returns us to the image of Elizabeth as Mother, for with the medallion placed between her breasts and cradled carefully in her hand, Elizabeth appears to be giving the gift of this knight to England. She does not fight herself, but begets fighters, directing them, like a good mother, how to become good men.

A second portrait created during this "transitional" period embodies another costume-induced masculine/feminine blur, but with the final emphasis on Virgin rather than Mother. The "Darnley" portrait, painted in 1575, depicts Elizabeth dressed in a bodice and kirtle of inflated girth (accomplished by stuffing or padding at the shoulders and around the hips) (figure 16). The skirt is unquestionably feminine, with its substantial billows and the waist chain and hanging pendant to accentuate its hourglass line. The ostrich fan that Elizabeth holds in her right hand, too, is an entirely feminized accessory. Elizabeth's headdress reveals some of her prized hair, and has a graceful train flowing down her
shoulders. The bodice, however, is an almost exact replica of a male jerkin, from the exaggerated and bulging "leg-of-mutton" sleeves, to the front brocade fastening system and the extremely shortened waistline (figure 24). The virgin pearls looping gently down the front of the top perfectly highlight the battle between the masculine and feminine raging here.

These elements combine to create a boy-like girl: a good approximation of the young virgin in the eyes of Elizabethan, at least under the law. Fran Dolan points out in her book *Dangerous Familiars* that the only time a female had any sort of freedom of will was when they were in an unwed, virginal state, for it was at this time that they were the closest to being asexual (27). In the Darnley portrait, asexuality is being played up, not only by the hybrid crossing of farthingale and jerkin, but by the covering of all of Elizabeth's flesh save her hands and face and the flattening of her chestline. The male/female duality in this case creates not a Mother figure, but a Virginal figure--a boyish girl who has suppressed any hint of woman-ness or female sexuality. The stiff, awkward positionings the clothing forces Elizabeth into only accentuates her virginity further, as it makes her appear uncertain and uncomfortable, if not outright unaware, of her own body.

The last representative portrait from this decade of change is one of the so-called "sieve" portraits, painted by George Gower in 1579 (figure 17). In it, the Virgin image asserts itself fiercely. The portrait acquires its name because of the large sieve that Elizabeth carries in her left hand (in place of the former "wedding" band). Roy Strong points out that the sieve had a specific myth associated with it, for it was linked to the Roman Vestal Virgin Tuccia. Tuccia was accused of impurity, but filled a sieve with water from the Tiber and carried it without spilling a single drop back to the temple (95). The myth has obvious sexual signs: the virgin proves herself to be still in possession of her hymen--that is, uncracked or sealed. Elizabeth's decision to include the object in her portrait is therefore making a strong, clear statement about her own sexuality. This is
especially important as it is part of those few crucial years in which she and the French Duc d'Alencon were negotiating a possible match. Strong believes this was a deliberate statement against the match; Elizabeth was using a "deliberate intensification of the mystique of her chastity" against her Council, who were stridently urging her to marry as soon as possible (97). Or, to put it another way, Elizabeth was pushing one stereotypical (and thus acceptable) version of "femininity" to the extreme in an attempt to serve her own ends as a female ruler; the results of assuming such an extreme, exaggerated persona quickly emerge, however.

Reverting back to the colors of black and white helps establish a link between the external symbol of virginity of the body of Elizabeth herself, but even more interesting is the grotesque warping of her shape--the backlash of the stereotype--that is beginning to fully emerge. Elizabeth has returned again to the custom of uncovering her bosom, but her chest appears to have thickened, flattened out, and grown amazingly broad and tubular in shape. Although her neckline is at its lowest, Elizabeth appears to have no breasts at all; the shoulder rolls seem to be the only thing holding up the bodice. The arms have remained padded, emulating the masculine leg-of-mutton, and their girth makes them unwieldy and clumsy. Elizabeth's waist has shrunk substantially at this point. Not only does the bodice squeeze her in, but the waist chain, with its point resting lower than the natural waistline, highlights the difference in inches between the bottom of the bodice and the top of the skirt. Pearls and pansies abound on this dress, so that if every other symbol failed to communicate meaning to the viewer, these old, trusted standbys would remind him or her of Elizabeth's faithfulness and chastity. The "Sieve" portrait signals the end of Elizabeth's period of transformation, and the first decisive step into the realm of the superhuman. Elizabeth utilizes the Virgin image, but the image, as evinced through her clothing, also utilizes her, contorting her body beyond any true human form.
Throughout this decade, Elizabeth has been engaged in a fierce struggle to define herself, not only as ruler, but also as an independent woman. Her society has, at the same moment, been engaged in a similar effort; agreeing with Elizabeth's constructions periodically at best. The Queen experimented with the stereotypes open to her as a woman (that is, Virgin and Mother), attempting to fashion some sort of acceptable loophole through which she could successfully function as a female ruler and be accepted by her subjects. Neither conception of femininity could manage to satisfy the quandary created by the contradictory elements of female and rulership. The next phase of Elizabeth's attire will not entirely reject these explorations, but rather will condense the two stereotypical images together into their logical endpoint—the virgin/mother, cult figure, and goddess—and will expand outwards to include other nonhuman mythical figures.

The "Mythic" Period: If You Can't Assimilate Them, Disqualify Them

Mythical cults of Elizabeth begin to spring up in increasing numbers, elevating the Queen to superhuman status. Elizabeth's clothing reflects this curious phenomenon, diverging sharply away from any "natural" rendering of the female form, leaving a figure instead that is both bloated and constricted, with huge arms and circumference, but a flattened chest and infinitesimally tiny waist. A seeming solution to the friction between Elizabeth and the gender binary has been found (or, more appropriately, constructed). By being elevated to goddess status, she has, in effect, been "disqualified" from the human category. Elizabeth has become an exception to the gender binary, a third category completely separate from ordinary human beings. Since she is a goddess, and therefore nonhuman, any notion of her possessing a gender (since that gender is determined exclusively by the sexual body) becomes irrelevant. The gender binary is safe, since
Elizabeth, the non-female superhuman, can now freely and safely sit in her position of authority.

One of the first significant portraits Elizabeth commissioned of herself after the final failed marriage of 1582 is William Segar's "Ermine" portrait of 1585 (figure 18). A explosion of ornamentation has occurred. Elizabeth is literally encrusted with jewels, from her hair to her cuffs to her farthingale. Most of these gems are pearls, but other precious stones are also incorporated into the intricate, if lavish, design. This massive display of wealth can be interpreted in two opposing ways. The first is positive: Elizabeth is showing her subjects and other countries the power she wields in raw material terms. She has an impressive income at her disposal, which could be used to facilitate any number of militaristic or humanitarian ambitions. The second interpretation of a display of wealth pasted onto the human body is negative. Women and property were largely equated during the English Renaissance: a woman could not inherit property, and upon marriage, she became legally subjected to her husband. In other words, she was a possession to be guarded and treasured, like gems or any other type of material object of worth. Placing an extreme array of jewels on Elizabeth's body thus doubly highlights, through visual association, her potential status as a possession.

I say potential because Elizabeth's self-constructed Virgin (or imposed persona—I have yet to discuss how much control she had over her images) helps to free her from this quandary. Elizabeth utilizes animal symbolism once again to call up the notion of perfect chastity in the minds of her audience. Perched on Elizabeth's arm is a small white ermine, famed for its purity and fastidiousness. Elizabeth Pomeroy discusses the myth surrounding the ermine, describing how it was said to prefer death to soiling its perfect white fur; the ermine thus serves as a fitting representation of virginity (55). By including the stylized animal into the portrait's sitting, which, in all likelihood, is pure fantasy on the part of Elizabeth and Segar, Elizabeth's image is elevated into a new realm of symbolism.
and iconography not seen to this point. Although she utilized the phoenix and pelican in other sittings, both were merely cast-metal representations, rather than a depiction of a flesh-and-blood animal. The ermine casts the painting into the same discourse as heraldry or religious works. Elizabeth has graduated from the mere stereotyped female to the inflated goddess figure.

The sheer volume of gems attached to her costume further bolsters Elizabeth's ascent into iconographic status. With all of the glitter and glamour stitched onto an outfit which paddens out her shape to prodigious widths, Elizabeth appears both brighter and larger than life. The expanding neck ruff also contributes a celestial air, as it makes her head appear to float above the rest of her body, and its brilliant whiteness against the velvet casts a warm glow across her face. The round shape of the ruff, combined with its deceptive ability to make Elizabeth's face seem to shine from within, gives the Queen a goddess-like aura. As later cults in the court will make explicit, she resembles Diana or Cynthia, goddesses of the moon and heavenly spheres. The shaping of Elizabeth's hair into two half-ovals calls into mind the planets once again, both in terms of their trajectories, as well as by appearing to be a sort of half-infinity sign. Finally, the collar of Elizabeth's cape, standing up in delicate, gossamer-thin half circles, reminds the viewer of insect or angel wings. Elizabeth's status as a human being is being downplayed--through the alteration and disguise of her natural female figure--in favor of a dazzling, mystic, even holy persona.

Finally, although Elizabeth's basic womanhood is being eradicated through the disfiguration and ornamentation of her body, it is not being replaced by a masculine equivalent. After Elizabeth has finally declared unequivocally to the world that there will be no more marriage negotiations, and that she will die a virgin, attempts to make Elizabeth into a man by placing her in a man's jerkin or hose completely cease, with the notable exception of her costume worn to rally her troops during the Spanish Armada (which I will
come to momentarily). While Elizabeth does have a sword--the traditional ultimate symbol of manhood--included in this picture, she does not touch it or even seem to notice it. The sword lies passively on the table, and, when contrasted with the excess of gems, even appears out of place in the "Ermine" portrait.

This trend of including swords in Elizabeth's portraits continues through the next decade, but in no case does Elizabeth ever wield the weapon, or even have it attached to her person. The 1585 portrait with the small dog, painted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder, illustrates this (figure 19). Elizabeth grips her delicate kidskin gloves and a fragile ostrich feather fan, eyes demurely cast downwards, but does not even touch the gigantic sword on the floor with her toes. The sword is large enough to seem a ridiculous exaggeration; it seems unlikely that anyone could wear something so long about their waist. Nonetheless, an uneasy truce is taking place between perceptions of Elizabeth and perceptions of a military personage.

The inclusion of a masculine symbol of identity, coupled with a reluctance to integrate it into Elizabeth's persona, can be seen in a third portrait of the decade, called the Allegory of the Tudor Succession (figure 20). Although painted around 1590, Henry VIII features prominently in the middle, sword in lap, with young Edward to his right, also armed even at his early age. To Edward's right is Elizabeth, gripping gloves once again and stepping just in front of a large sword (which an allegorical character is trodding upon). Although Elizabeth is depicted in all her late-reign glory--by which I mean her costume is richly bedecked and stuffed-out, with the wing-like collar and huge ruff--she is denied any hint of masculinity. Elizabeth is clothed where Henry is exposed: his legs are bare, and her bosom is uncovered. Although the defeat of the Spanish Armada had taken place just two years ago, with her as the ostensible leader of the navy, she retains no signs or symbols of her role as military leader. What this reoccurring ideological phenomenon reveals is that Elizabeth's costumes are losing masculine or feminine identification, and
more towards something superhuman. Her body is not loaded down with masculine symbols after her crucial decision to remain unwed and fully at the helm of England's throne, as one might expect; rather, it is warped by her costumes into something neither male nor female, but beyond sexual identities. Elizabeth returns to the Virgin/Mother persona, who can have the sword resting at her feet as a Biblical symbol of the truth and justice of God and His Church of England (of which, she, of course, was the head).

The political ramifications of Elizabeth's developing Virgin/Mother persona must be discussed. One of the most important actions of Elizabeth's early reign was her reinstatement of the Church of England. Meyer comments: "The work of this first parliament of Queen Elizabeth was briefly this: the repeal of Mary's Catholic legislation...and the re-enactment of the anti-Roman legislation of Henry VIII" (21). The eventual result of Elizabeth's action was her excommunication by Pius V in 1570. Pius's bull had the effect of rallying the people of England behind their queen. Meyer describes this unintentional effect:

The Roman thunderbolt kindled a blaze of loyalty towards the throne and its occupant such as had not been known in the country for centuries.... Popular writers never wearied of making merry over the similarity of *bull* in English and *bulla* in Latin.... No figure of speech was too coarse to serve as an insult, no mud too dirty to throw at the Catholic church.... Englishmen never forgot their queen's excommunication.... The story...effectively put a stop to every thought of toleration for the papists. (84-5)

In fact, prior to 1580, Elizabeth had actually been fairly lenient with Catholics, allowing them to leave the country to escape fines and other punishments. After her excommunication, however, the persecution of Catholics erupted with intense fury. Significantly enough, it is precisely when Elizabeth begins to adopt Virgin/Mother iconography that her attacks against the Catholics reached their peak.

Meyer describes in detail the sorts of punishments Catholics were forced to endure. Imprisonment for attending mass was common, to the point that the prisons were filled with Catholics (126). "A distinction was drawn between being and becoming a Catholic.
The first was punishable by fine and imprisonment, the second by death (148). All priests were to leave the country within forty days or be branded traitors. Anyone studying at or sending a child to a seminary on the Continent was a traitor. Most cruelly, anyone over sixteen years of age was forced to "betake themselves to their usual dwelling and abode, and...not at any time after pass or remove above five miles from thence" (149). Violations of this rule resulted in lifelong loss of property. Meyer relates a compelling story of a woman who asked a man of note to use his influence to obtain pardon for a man condemned to death. The woman was asked if the man was a murderer. "By no means," she replied, "only a Catholic." "O dear," the gentleman said, "had he been a murderer I should not have hesitated to comply with your request, but as it is a question of religion I dare not interfere" (177-8). The ultimate message Elizabeth sent to her subjects was the inseperability of the political and religious realms. The two were irrevocably intertwined.

Elizabeth's utilization of Virgin/Mother images are therefore useful to her on two different levels: both gender identity and religio-political concerns. Elizabeth is not just assimilating or superimposing the image of the Virgin Mary onto her own public persona. Rather, Elizabeth inserts her own individuality into the iconography, and in the process, transforms its ultimate symbolism and function. In a sense, Elizabeth's manipulation of the very familiar image of the Virgin/Mother allows her to supersede the Catholic church while keeping the ideological system intact. Just as the Church of England began as Catholicism with a secular leader, Elizabeth blends together holy images with her own political persona, to create an image both familiar and refreshing. England had a new, self-proclaimed spiritual leader, and just as Elizabeth superseded the Pope's authority, she also usurps the power invested in the Virgin/Mother image to serve her own end. The people of England were no longer permitted to worship the Virgin Mary, but Elizabeth did her best to create a similiar role for herself in the vacuum the ousted Catholic church left behind. Elizabeth
was simply tapping into the enormous connotative power of the Virgin/Mother icon, and the cult status it could provide her.

Returning back to Elizabeth's costumes, one portrait of Queen Elizabeth exists which deals explicitly with her role as military leader: George Gower's "Armada" portrait of 1588. It was painted specifically to celebrate England's victory over Spain under the careful and circumspect guidance of their Queen (figure 21). Once again, the portrait proves to be extraordinarily complex and contradictory in its symbolism. Elizabeth's costume has swelled monstrousy: the arms are stuffed to four or five times their normal girth, the farthingale bulges to such an extent that it now requires a set of steel hoops to maintain it, and the ruff has turned into a sort of pinwheel. One possible advantage to such an increase in size is the increased authority it grants the wearer; Elizabeth simply disperses more mass in such a enormous costume, and as such, appears to be larger and more powerful. Size affects how human beings perceive one another. The sheer magnitude of the costume helps make Elizabeth seem "larger-than-life," as a goddess or icon.

At the same time that it increases her stature and thus her initial impact upon a viewer, however, it also works to the disadvantage of her natural strength. The girth and weight of such a costume absolutely assure a restriction in the wearer's agility, range of motion, and speed. In a dress that triples her size, Elizabeth's body suddenly becomes unwieldy, slow, and difficult to control. In fact, the size of the farthingale was so considerable that it became the fashion for women to rest upon cushions on the floor instead of chairs, simply because they would not be able to get themselves in and out of the furniture. Herbert Norris notes that a woman would "approach the pile of cushions...and in order to avoid disarrangement of the skirt...turn and raise herself high on her toes, and then sink elegantly into their midst" (619). The farthingale became so broad that it literally served as a sort of table for women to rest their hands upon, as Elizabeth is doing with her fan in this portrait. The costume not only deforms the female figure, it alters the form into
an aberration that transcends gender, leaving the body disabled and monstrous. While it manages to twist the body into the idealized stature of an icon, that transformation works ultimately to inhibit Elizabeth physically.

It is curious that Gower (and/or Elizabeth--there are no existing records to help the scholar discern who was responsible for the costume chosen for the sitter) decided to depict Elizabeth in garments which still retain considerably more feminine than masculine elements; after all, this portrait was intended to celebrate a monumental naval victory. Elizabeth's costume in the painting is entirely at odds with eyewitness accounts of her clothing when she went in front of the troops to rally their spirits. Ashelford recounts a contemporary's description of the event: "She wore a polished steel corslet on her breast and below this...a farthingale of such monstrous amplitude that it is wonderful how her mettled war-horse submitted to carry a lady encumbered with a gabardine of so strange a fashion" (xv). Frederick Chamberlin adds further information about the scene:

She was on a horse, attended only by Leycester...and the Earl of Ormond, who bore the great sword of state before her. Behind him a page carried her white-plumed helmet.... [She spoke]: "I am come among you as you see at this time...resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all..... I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king". (14)

This is the only recorded description of Elizabeth dabbling in cross-dressing. The Queen attempts to construct herself as a womanish-man. Despite her pointed assertions, it is clear the feminine/masculine mixture is an uneasy one at best: the "monstrous" farthingale does little to assert her true female form, but once again she is denied holding the sword-that visually obvious symbol of manhood. Like her later portraits, Elizabeth's effort to make herself into the best of both genders ends up only removing her from both gendered spheres. Failing to cross-breed the genders into a hybrid results in the Queen's movement into a new class of being that transcends gender and enters the realm of myth.
As Chamberlin puts it, "She must have thrilled [her army] as nothing else could have done" (14). Serving as a visible, representative shattering of all gender codes of the time, Elizabeth cut a figure larger-than-life and deeply rooted in iconography.

Returning to the Gower portrait, armed now with eyewitness accounts of the actual scene of the Queen at the Armada, the viewer can get a sense of exactly how great the alterations are. The steel corset, helmet, and sword have entirely disappeared. The farthingale remains ludicrous in its girth, but instead of lending a sparse military air to the Queen, the numerous ribbons, embroidery, lace, and pearls detract significantly from any sense of serious warfare. Looking at all of Elizabeth's trappings and fripperies, it is hard to consider the somber possibility of the loss of England and English lives to the Spanish. Several critics have explained away the bows as a mere nod to French fashion. In my opinion, this is not a sufficient clarification. Like today, bows in English sixteenth century fashion were the almost exclusive property of women's fashions; men who donned them were considered fops or dandies. Elizabeth's decision to wear a costume bursting with bows, then, severely undercuts her earnest desire for the men in her military to see her as essentially masculine. The abundance of pearls serves as another clear reminder of female virginity. Elizabeth's hair is completely uncovered as well, and she holds yet another ostrich fan in place of a weapon.

Femininity thus holds sway over any masculine impulse in this portrait, despite the earnest effort Elizabeth made in real life on this occasion to blend the two genders evenly within and upon her body. Art historians Pomeroy and Strong both view this portrait as a depiction of strength, however. Pomeroy maintains that Elizabeth is presented in "glorious excess," which inflates the Queen's image until she becomes "myth made visible" (21). Strong concurs that, by exaggerating the feminized qualities of the costume to such a bloated, exaggerated extent, Gower has helped to bolster an image of Elizabeth not as a mortal human, but as "Cynthia, the wide ocean's empress" (128). Strong is taking his cue
from an actual "cult" which sprang up in Elizabeth's court, in which the members hailed the Queen as a virtual goddess, alternatively viewing her as Diana, the chaste huntress, or Cynthia, goddess of the moon and tides. In the last decade of her life, Elizabeth would actively cultivate this association; the portrait depicted in figure 22 shows Elizabeth with a large embroidered crescent moon with shining rays stitched across her chest. The Queen would wear all manner of moon-shaped jewels to help remind people of her mythical goddess status, and, as the 1600 costume demonstrates, used the extravagance of the rest of her garments, such as the wide, gauzy, wing-like cape collars to drive home the point. While Elizabeth utilized feminine clothing to create her iconographic image, she employed it in such an extreme manner as to ultimately detract from her human female body and place her more firmly in the realm of myth, beyond biological sex or gender.5

Returning attention to the "Armada" portrait, it is clear that both Strong and Pomeroy view the picture as helping the Queen's public image. Strong writes, "We contemplate Elizabeth exultant in her victory" (132). I am not as certain as Strong that this picture really glorifies Elizabeth's strength as a military leader; rather, the portrait actually reinforces stereotypes about a woman's ability to lead a military. All of the action occurs behind Elizabeth, and, as she faces forwards, staring rather emotionlessly, if not outright blankly, she is clearly absent from the chain of events occurring behind her. Elizabeth is not in command of this situation; she is not even focused on the battle. Instead of a military leader, the audience receives an image of a fussily dressed woman handicapped and immobilized. Elizabeth does no work; her men fight for their lives somewhere far behind her, while she sits among her ribbons and pearls. Gower's portrait is thus a teeming mess

5 It might be argued that Greek and Roman gods and goddesses were hardly an example of asexualism. Nearly all of them were engaged in some sort of sexual relationship with other gods or humans at any given time. I do not deny that the myths were extremely immersed in sexuality, but I argue that their primary importance in relationship to Elizabeth was their non-human quality. The Queen is released from the gender binary by being equated with a goddess, not because that goddess has no sexual connotations attached to her, but because, by the essence of being a goddess, she is necessarily something superhuman. Elizabeth therefore falls outside the domain of the biologically determined gender binary, which relies on humanity as its first fundamental tenet.
of conflicting messages. The Queen is puffed up into mythical status, and yet her impulse to be masculinized to prove her worth as a military leader is made ambiguous.

The contradiction embodied in the "Armada" portrait reveals a crucial thread running through any discussion of Elizabeth's costumes; that is, the ultimate impetus behind the intense mystification of the Queen. An implication exists in these portraits that suggests that Elizabeth and/or others may have in fact been playing up her status as a goddess precisely in order to play down her real human female form. The portraits, taken all in conjunction, form an evolving dialogue with the viewer. In the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth is portrayed as the virginal maid, absolutely chaste but still destined for marriage. The chastity in these portraits strikes the viewer as an insurance policy on the part of the state: Elizabeth can't be off having any illegitimate heirs to the throne. At this point, the primary emotion expressed in the clothes is expectation.

As time passes, and Elizabeth asserts her own will and steadfastly refuses to get married, her costumes began to mutate dramatically. No longer draping close to her natural female body shape, which the early clothes manage to highlight in an appropriately demure way, Elizabeth's costumes begin to puff out, warp, and exaggerate the female body until it finally resembles no human form at all. It is as if Elizabeth's contemporaries need the cultivation of a superhuman goddess figure in order to accept the authority of an unwed woman. Only if Elizabeth can be transformed into something far greater than an insignificant woman, can she then be perceived as a military ruler and appropriate helms(wo)man for the country's future. The grotesque deformity of her costumes act as padding for society, giving it distance away from the female body which terrifies society with its perceived weak and alien quality.

Queen Elizabeth's role in all of this transfiguration is perhaps less clearly discernible. It is apparent that she supported a wide variety of these mythification projects: from serving as patron to Spenser's immense *Faerie Queen*, to commissioning epic
portraits of herself, to incorporating visual symbols of these icons into her clothing. Elizabeth had a careful hand in her ascent to deity status. At the same time, however, some of Elizabeth's actions appear in direct contradiction to this project, revealing a Queen who saw the flattery and could tell when to step away from the myths. Elizabeth never lost sight of her womanhood, even if the rest of the nation was taken in by the clever ruse. One striking example which illustrates Elizabeth's ability to remain connected to her simple bodily presence, and her playful desire to expose others to the mortal, flesh-and-blood Queen, exists in the writings of the French ambassador DeMaisse. DeMaisse visited England and had several audiences with Elizabeth between 1597 and 1598. He kept a journal of all events of significance that befell him while in England, and then published the memoirs under the title *A Journal Of All That Was Accomplished By Monsieur DeMaisse Ambassador In England From King Henri IV To Queen Elizabeth.*

DeMaisse comments several times on Elizabeth's outfits and her rather strange behavior associated with those garments. He writes at one point, "She was strangely attired in a dress of silver cloth.... She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot" (25). Were a scholar to believe this reference to baring her breasts was a fluke or a mistranslation, DeMaisse mentions a similar habit at a later date: "She had a petticoat of white damask, girdled, and open in front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress and one could see all her belly, even to her navel.... When she raises her head she has a trick of putting both hands on her gown and opening it insomuch that all her belly can be seen" (36). There is always the possibility that this display was accidental. It might be explained away as an example of the mental decay of a senile old woman. If, however, we grant that Elizabeth was fully conscious of her activities, she then appears to be wreaking havoc on her superhuman, non-gendered iconography. She is deliberately violating the symbolism her white clothes
contained: she has become the immodest, and therefore necessarily incontinent woman, instead of the virgin. In addition, she makes a graphic display of her female body, which takes on particular importance when one reflects that Elizabeth was over sixty years old when DeMaisse saw this behavior. Not only is the Queen reminding her (literally) mystified subjects about the mortal female flesh beneath all of the bombast, she does not shy away from admitting the decay and imminent mortality of that body. Her body is not just a weak woman's flesh, it is old, weak, woman's flesh, to boot. Elizabeth combines sexual behavioral signs with visual signals of asexuality—her colors of purity and the very markings on her aging skin—in a way that complicates seemingly flawless iconographic machinery in motion.

One of the very last portraits painted during Elizabeth's lifetime also supports this newfound complexity between myth and mortality. The "Rainbow" portrait, painted around 1603, looks at first to be just another example of a costume flagrantly exaggerating and altering the mortal human frame (figure 3). Elizabeth wears a crescent jewel in her hair, seemingly accepting her role as Cynthia/Diana. The cape collar, too, follows the elaborate wing-like design that had grown so popular in the 1590s; the two ovals create a symbol for eternity which flank Elizabeth's head on either side. Ornamentation, too, is lavish and beautifully rendered. There are, however, some very significant changes which throw the iconographic status of this portrait out of balance. The most immediately apparent difference is the lack of a corseted bodice, with its narrowing waist and tapered point. The monstrous farthingale has been subdued as well. The end result is a richly decorated gown which drapes loosely about Elizabeth's natural body shape. Once again, the real female body is allowed to show through, with its normal curves and bulges. Although the sleeves are still stuffed, their girth has also decreased to a more acceptable size.
Even more importantly, this dress has the lowest cut neckline of all portraits hereto surveyed. For the very first time, in fact, the cleavage line between Elizabeth's breasts can be observed. Her chest is no longer painfully constricted across her ribs, but rather, becomes the focal point of attention as it is left entirely exposed. Elizabeth is playing with the odd tension between the custom of virgins to leave their bosom uncovered and the obvious sexual attention this brings upon that virgin body. The serpent stitched onto her left arm, with the red gem hanging from its mouth also incites contradictory symbolic interpretation. Strong offers the following interpretation of the snake: "her left sleeve bears...a coiled serpent from whose mouth is suspended...a ruby pendant in the form of a heart.... The serpent must appear here in its benign aspect as a symbol of wisdom" (159). Perhaps, but another possible meaning teases the viewer: appearing as it does on her left arm, along with an already possibly indiscreet outfit, the serpent could also represent the voice of evil in Eden, with an apple, rather than a heart, in his mouth. The evil serpent clashes ironically with Elizabeth's cult status as Virgin Queen. The portrait makes one last comment on Elizabeth's Mother image. The painting acquires its name because of the rainbow Elizabeth grips in her right hand. Curiously enough, the rainbow is not depicted in all colors of the spectrum, but rather simply as an orangey-yellow. Even more significantly, the rainbow is semitransparent, and is painted so that it appears to disappear beneath her loose gown and continue to the region of her belly. As such, it appears as a sort of umbilical cord, attaching Elizabeth to whatever lies outside the realm of the portrait. It is a strange application of a religious myth altered to fit the myth of a Queen. Overall, the "Rainbow" portrait is playful, ambitious, and immensely intricate. Elizabeth seems to have left a last tongue-in-cheek statement to the world about her status as a Virgin/Mother icon. After an increasing departure from the reality of the female body, leaving Elizabeth larger-than-life and a sort of "monstrous" crossbred that was of no true gender, her last portrait firmly reinstates the woman.
Elizabeth passed through a series of "phases" in her costumes over the course of her reign, all of which serve as indicators of her changing tactics in regards to Renaissance gender conceptions. Elizabeth's difficulty consisted in the contradiction she embodied by combining together the female body and the "masculine" position of authority. Since gender constructions were based exclusively on the biological body--resulting in an inflexible two-gender system--Elizabeth created extensive friction by violating the system in such a flagrantly public way. As the head of the country, Elizabeth was in an unique and even dangerous position to upset a fundamental division used in all strata of Renaissance society. During the course of her reign, as her own situation changed, especially in regards to the issue of marriage, Elizabeth herself and her society both utilized different images and stereotypes to attempt to fit Elizabeth into the existing system.

Early in her reign, when the possibility of marriage was still great, images of Elizabeth as available virgin circulated. Elizabeth saw the disadvantages marriage would bring her, and began to employ available images of femininity to herself in new, unusual ways, in the hopes of constructing an acceptable gender solution. The Virgin and Mother were the two most prevalent symptoms of this quest. Since these images were stereotypes, Elizabeth quickly found the personas damaging to some degree. Deciding to reject the notion of marriage altogether, the Queen incited a new level of anxiety. The pressure created by this increased friction between female body and male power caused the final solution to be engendered, and Elizabeth as mythical goddess was born. The beauty of this invention was that it bypassed the issue of gender altogether. Elizabeth became a superhuman, outside of the gender binary altogether. Her position of authority could then be regarded as an exception that would not be repeated.
My next chapter, moving through the set of concentric circles towards a direct discussion of the theatre, will examine antitheatricalists' critiques of the theatre, focusing exclusively in on their attacks on the practice of cross-dressing. Just as Elizabeth violated the binary gender system, so too the young boy apprentices served as flagrant contradictions to the accepted order of things. Similar to Elizabeth's transformations and reception, a separate category will be created to exempt these boys from having to fit into the "normal" human binary. Specifically, the antitheatricalists employ a discourse of disease in order to exclude the cross-dressed individual and salvage the biologically dependent gender binary. Once again, a series of struggles ensue, and various images or labels are one by one assumed and cast-off as unsatisfactory. Ultimately, only exclusions and exemptions can save the gender binary from erosion.
CHAPTER 2

MEAREMONSTERS AND LIVING GRAVES: DISSECTING ANTITHEATRICALISTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER IDENTITY THROUGH COSTUME AND DISEASE

An examination of the evolving costumes of Queen Elizabeth provides visual evidence of the biologically determined, anxiety-perpetuated gender binary during the Renaissance. Elevating the Queen to mythological status resolved the incompatibility of a female body and a male position of power; excluding the Queen proved a convenient way to maintain the social division and still allow for her leadership role. Having begun with this wider historical and sociological approach, I now turn to a group of primary documents which fall between the larger society and the smaller space of the stage itself: the antitheatrical tracts. The term "antitheatrical" is a relatively recent one; it is clear that the Puritans who penned these tirades against the theatres did not classify themselves under this heading. Even modern scholars such as Andrew Gurr or Chambers do not specifically refer to these authors as "antitheatricalists," but tend to simply discuss them by individual authors, or lump them together by their religious affiliation. Word searches in general reference databases pinpoint a meager handful of sources which contain the term "antitheatrical" in their titles or subject headings. It is only within the past two decades that the term appears to have grown in popularity and usage, circulating with increasing frequency within discussions specifically concerning cross-dressing, feminism, and gender constructions--including Laura Levine's *Men In Women's Clothing* and Jean Howard's
Crossing the Stage--and culminating finally in Jonas Barish's history of attacks on the theatre, entitled *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Given the relative newness of the term, it is not surprising that modern critics often contradict one another when describing exactly who fits into the category of an "antitheatricalist." Making the matter even more complex is the fact that the term "antitheatricalist" is also used to describe a specific movement condemning theatre during the nineteenth century. For the purposes of this chapter, I am defining an antitheatricalist as a writer of tracts--typically Puritan in religious conviction--that condemned the public theatre in Renaissance England between 1575 and 1635. In this chapter, I examine the works of Stephen Gosson, William Prynne, and two anonymous tracts known as *Hie Mulier* and *Haec-Vir*. Although Barish identifies several other individuals in his chapter dealing specifically with Renaissance England ("Puritans and Proteans"), I have chosen to focus on these authors as they have received the lion's share of scholarly criticism over the past decade, and as such, appear to be the closest thing to a representative sampling of antitheatricalists. Stephen Gosson is credited with the largest number of tracts in circulation, and William Prynne's thousand page *Histriomastix* is a virtual warehouse of every possible argument or justification for the destruction of the English stage. I include *Hic Mulier* and *Haec-Vir* because of the attention given them in Jean Howard's *Crossing the Stage*; indeed, they provide some of the most crucial information about conceptions of cross-dressing and gender conception of any primary source during the period.

To provide more background information about the phenomena of the antitheatricalists as a whole, as well as provide the underlying foundation for my own examinations of the antitheatricalist tracts, I will briefly summarize the key arguments of Barish, Howard, and Levine. Barish views the motivation behind these increasingly shrill and lengthy tracts as fundamentally rooted in fear: "Why should anyone ever wish to write such a book? The only possible answer can be to work off a staggering load of resentment
and anxiety" (87). He traces this terror back to religious and social roots, pulling apart the
Renaissance's societal need to avoid impurity, mixture, or, more simply, the blurring of
strict boundaries, whether they be of class, race, or gender. Barish maintains that the
Puritan belief system included faith in the concept of an "absolute identity," which in
essence refers to the concept that God has given each person a distinct and proper being, or
identity that is clearly visible, unchanging, and neatly sequestered into one of several
bounded categories. Cross-dressing, then, became a particular point of concern for
antitheatricalists because it flagrantly tampered with such neat, self-evident presentations of
the identity. Anxiety was the immediate result, as these violations threatened Puritan social
and religious structures with total upheaval.

Feminists have been intrigued by the antitheatricalists' discussions of cross-dressing for similar reasons, but they narrow their focus exclusively down to gender
constructions. In Laura Levine's book, *Men In Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and
Effeminization*, she argues that discussions of cross-dressing by antitheatricalists uncover a
fundamental anxiety of the Renaissance period. Antitheatricalists, she concludes, fear is
that there is only one inherent gender, and that gender is female. Since the fundamental
gender is female, male bodies are endlessly entangled in a battle to retain their superior
form. To willfully put on the garb of a woman, then, is a monstrous act, because it
facilitates that man's own dissolution back into the female form. The ultimate conclusion
Levine derives from her examinations is that, since masculine identity is always understood
to be unstable and in fluctuation, unlike the solid and essential feminine identity, it is only
masculinity which needs to be continually acted out in order to be preserved.

Jean Howard also sees gender in as an unstable, shifting entity which is easily
manipulated and altered. She does not believe, however, that this fluctuation flows only
towards an ultimately feminine body. She partly confirms Stephen Greenblatt's
explorations of Galenic theory, which suggest that if there was indeed one essential sex, it

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would have been male. Howard is not content to rest with a single model to describe
gender definitions, though; she believes constructions of identity in Renaissance England
are intricate and contradictory in nature. She asserts that the antitheatricalists defend
gender as two clearly demarcated and self-contained zones, but this anxious assertion only
serves to highlight the actual fluidity and precariousness of gender divisions.

These three scholars will serve as the ground upon which to build up my own
conclusions. All three aptly highlight the tremendous anxiety surrounding these tracts'
discussions of gender; a phenomena which precisely emulates the frustration and fear
evinced by those helped to mythologize Queen Elizabeth's persona. However, I plan to
take a somewhat different approach to the tracts and their relationship to gender
constructions in the Renaissance. My examination of the antitheatrical texts reveals a
striking discourse of deformity and disease, with particular emphasis on the sexual body.
Through the dialogue of illness and monstrosity a definition of gender emerges which is
not a continuum. Rather two distinct loci, mixed through costume, degenerate into a
"nothing" or non-gendered body. It is at this point that I diverge from Laura Levine's
assertion that the real fear sparking the antitheatricalists' vociferous condemnation of cross-
dressing was the belief that men could actually degenerate into women, and support
Barish's theory of a fear of contamination or mixture of the two distinct sexual/social
classifications of male and female. Just as was demonstrated through the evolving
costumes of Queen Elizabeth, the antitheatricalists, in their perceptions and representations
of cross-dressing, express the same overpowering necessity to encapsulate gender into two
biologically determined, immutable sexes of male and female.

The antitheatricalists do not simply limit applications of gender to the body itself,
but go one step further and include clothing into these fixed and permanent sexual
divisions. For the antitheatricalists, a male article of clothing actually possesses all of the
characteristics of masculinity, and as such, has the power to either bolster the correct
gender behavior when placed on the correctly gendered body, or, if placed on the wrong 
body, corrupt it, causing inappropriate or monstrous emotions and actions from the 
individual. The same is true of female attire. A similar process of exclusion is also 
employed by the antitheatricalists to find a way to neatly resolve the (endless) threat posed 
to the biologically determined two-sex gender model. While the apparent incompatibility of 
Queen Elizabeth's female body and male position of authority was solved by creating 
images of the Queen as a mythological, superhuman being, the antitheatricalists use the 
slightly altered, but still fundamentally exclusionary recourse of disease to resolve the 
contradiction between male body and female dress or vice versa. By, in effect, 
disqualifying these cross-dressed individuals from having to fit into a rigid gender model--
one that could not in fact explain or account for their gender blurring--antitheatricalists were 
able to protect a relatively new social structure, with its economic and political ramifications, 
from crumbling apart.

In the Beginning, There was the Word: Puritans, the Bible, and the Sexual Body

Although the biologically determined two-sex gender system might appear to be 
only a product of scientific or medical inquiry, in truth the most fundamental and frequently 
employed justification for the strict division comes not from anatomy books, but the Bible. 
Considering that the majority of those individuals who could rightfully be included under 
the term "antitheatrical" were stout Puritans, it is most appropriate and indeed absolutely 
necessary to begin an examination of their beliefs with the text that grounded their essential 
moral tenets and prescriptions for everyday living.

The Old Testament proves to be a rich site for discussions of clothing and gender, a 
fact which did not go unnoticed by the antitheatricalists themselves. The most recurrent 
complaint to grace the pages of the antitheatricalists' tracts concerning cross-dressing is that

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it is contrary to both God and nature to confuse the clothes of men and women, because they have been distributed by God in order to maintain a strict separation of the sexes. The scripture passage repeated often to justify this viewpoint is Deuteronomy 22:5, which states, "The Woman shall not weare that which pertaneth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a womans garment; for all that doe so, are abomination to the Lord thy God" (quoted in Prynne 179). Clothes are made distinct for the two sexes because they are designed to accommodate the different responsibilities men and women have been assigned by God. As the author of Hic Mulier phrases it, "Your Maker made for our first Parents coates, not one coat, but a coat for the man, and a coat for the woman; coates of seuerall fashions, seuerall formes, and for seuerall uses: the mans coat fit for his labour, the womans fit for her modestie" (8-9). There is an interesting contradiction at work in this phrase, for both men and women are said to wear "coates," and the author has to carefully spell out that they are definitely distinct articles.

A crucial digression away from strictly religious considerations is necessary here in order to demonstrate the extent to which this slip of the tongue reveals the essential precariousness of the biologically determined two-gender system. First of all, the term "coate" was not generally used to describe the gender-identifying garments during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Blanche Payne points out in The History of Costume, the basic male garments for all classes were the doublet and breeches, and the basic garment for women was simply called the gown (309,317). Even overgarments were not labeled "coates" (the way we might use the term today), but had names like cape, cloak, or mandillion (310). For the author, then, to employ a less accurate--even archaic--term when that word precisely counters the distinctions between the sexes he is trying to draw, is curious indeed.

The term "coate" actually goes all the way back to the Norman/Romanesque period of English history (between 1060 and 1150, approximately). In this period, it had a
slightly different spelling--"cotte"--and could refer to either the garment of the male or female. In *Costume and Fashion*, James Laver notes that the female equivalent garment was sometimes known as the cotte, and sometimes as the robe or gown (56). The *Oxford English Dictionary* also makes note of the nebulous gender properties of the word, calling it first, "1. An outer garment worn by men," and later, "2. a garment worn suspended from the waist by women or young children; a petticoat, a skirt (both definitions have primary source references as far back as the fourteenth century). The term "cotte" will be consistently used for the basic male garment, and somewhat more ambiguously employed for the basic female garment up until the fourteenth century. At this point, the name (and the shape of the garment it applies to) undergoes a slight transformation, becoming the "cotehardie." This label is used universally for both male and female garments (with none of the ambiguity for the female costume remaining), and lasts for another century (Payne 217,224). It is not until the fifteenth century that clear and fixed differentiations between the name and cut of the male and female garments emerge; as Blanche Payne puts it, "Men and women's silhouettes had very little in common" (272).

What this pulling apart of the term "coate" proves is the relatively short lifespan the distinct two-gender model had before the Renaissance. The author of *Hic-Mulier's lapse*, coming exactly at the point of his argument which demands the clearest separation of costumes, bodies, and genders, points convincingly to the weaknesses of the fledgling social division/order. Although to modern sensibilities two hundred years seems likes an enormous amount of time for change, it must be kept in mind that, with extremely limited technological capabilities, two centuries for those living during the Renaissance cannot be in any way comparable to the lightning-fast transformations we have witnessed in our own time. The writer's use of "coate" demonstrates an immediacy with the past which we have lost in our era.
Precisely because it is such an inopportune moment to use the word, the inclusion of "coate" evinces how deeply the previous blurred or one-gender system of clothing was still embedded in the Renaissance subconscious. The fierce and vociferous nature of antitheatricalists' attacks on cross-dressing begins to make more sense, as the fundamental instability and vulnerability of the biological, immutable two-sex gender model is discovered. The incredible sense of anxiety prevalent in these texts finally finds a significant, justifiable instigation; the model—and the social, economic, and political structure that were constructed based on this absolute division of the sexes—was not a firmly entrenched tradition in English history (despite religious injunctions), but a relatively new system that could be potentially overthrown.

Moving back to religious influences on the fixed two-gender system, other antitheatricalists focus in on the differences in the bodies of men and women, which "naturally" justify the creation of different clothes to fit each sex. In this view, to cross-dress is to forcibly mar or disfigure the God-given form of each sexual body. Prynne writes, "[The Scripture] enjoynes men not to alter that forme which God hath given them by adding or detracting from his worke...a kinde of violence to Gods owne Image and mens humane shapes, metamorphosing them into...which God never made them" (893). Passages such as Prynne's reflect the crucial importance of the differentiated male and female sexual bodies in antitheatrical formulations of gender identity. Cross-dressing is a violence to the body, a mutilation or physical violation expressive of a willful and malicious destructiveness. To wear the wrong gender's clothing results in a biological transformation: the person purposefully defaces the "perfection" God had given him or her.

Prynne further stresses that gender difference is clearly stamped into the different forms of men and women, or that the very flesh is a costume of sexual division, by discussing other earthly animals. "Why being a man, wilt thou not seeme to be that which
thou art borne?" he laments. "Why dost thou take unto thy selfe a different forme?.... Nature hath clothed every sex with its owne garments.... There is a...different colour, motion, pace, an unequall strength, a different voice in a man and in a woman. Yea likewise in living creatures of another kinde.... In Deere also, so much as the sex doth differ, so much dothe the forme.... The male Peacockes are beautifull; the females are not adorned...." (191-2). Clothes are cut in order to fit clearly demarcated male and female bodies. By clothing themselves in the proper attire, men and women are simply augmenting the "natural clothes" their very shapes provide them with.

If a man strays from adopting his proper clothes, one of the many horrifying results which the antitheatricalists point to as a logical necessity is his loss of those inner qualities nature has clothed him with before he ever put on a garment. As Prynne succinctly puts it, "A man enfeebled in all his joynts...Yea, men are unmanned on the Stage: all the honour and vigor of their sex is effeminated with the shame, the dishonesty..." (168). Prynne's use of the term "unmanned" is particularly intriguing because of the double resonance of meaning it carries: one, that men lose those essential qualities which define them as men; and two, that they are left without guidance or proper direction, like ships at sea.

The OED supports this dual interpretation of the term "unmanned" for the Renaissance. The bulk of the definitions support the first point--"unmanned" means losing those properties which make a person a man. The OED lists, "To reduce below the level of man; to degrade, brutalize," "To deprive of manly courage or fortitude; to make weak or effeminate," and "To deprive of virility; to emasculate." These usages all date back to the early or mid-sixteen hundreds, and include Shakespeare and Stafford among the authors. In these definitions the degradation or violence to the body induced by cross-dressing discussed earlier is clearly indicated.

The alternate meaning of "unmanned"--that is, without guidance--has two definitions in the OED to help support this interpretation. The primary definition of
"unmanned" is "To remove from the category of men." Although this appears to follow the same reasoning as the other definitions mentioned, if one examines the primary sources from which this meaning was derived, a very different interpretation results. Within the time period of the Renaissance, two sources are mentioned by the *OED*. Marston writes in 1590, "Why, sower Satyrist, Canst thou vnman him? here I dare insist...he is a perfect soule." In 1643, Tuckey writes, "the Apostle un-manneth him that hates [his own flesh]." Every one of the four remaining quotations also includes a reference to the Bible or religion. To "unman" is thus to remove that person from God's watchful care, because the very understanding of what constitutes a man includes the notion of a religious essence or nature. It becomes even easier to assert that "unmanning" implies removing the leadership or guidance of a larger being when the definition is expanded to include a masterless ship. The *OED* states, "To denude (a vessel or fleet) of men."

Having established that the term "unmanned" does in fact carry within it a multiplicity of meanings during the Renaissance, it is evident that antitheatricalists support both of these connotations. Not only has the cross-dressed boy become weak and sedentary, qualities which are diametrically opposed to "masculinity," but in willfully putting on the wrong garments, he has thrown off the support and protection of God and become abominable to His sight. Prynne elaborates on the inherent masculine qualities which are sacrificed to woman's garments, calling the practice of cross-dressing "directly contrary to the...virility of nature," because it "adulterates, emasculates, debases,...unmans...[and] uncreates" the men involved in the practice (887,172). All of these verbs reinforce strongly the way in which the actual body itself is transformed through contact with the wrong sex's clothing.
Deformed Instruments and Unchaste Members:  
Cross-Dressing as Social and Literal Disease

Although the antitheatricalists make a little go an extremely long way in regards to religious exhortations against cross-dressing, sooner or later even William Prynne finds that he has exhausted the usefulness of the direct references to clothing and sexual division in the Bible. These authors then make a fascinating shift in their arguments, taking up the definition of "unmanned" as "reduced below the level of man," and using it to fuel a vast, complex model of cross-dressing as the literal disfigurement and infection of the physical body. Placing the wrong gendered clothing on the wrong gendered body results in a process of degeneration likened to venereal disease: a sexual body comes in contact with another, gets the communicable disease, falls into sickness and decay, and likewise threatens the health and stability of others with whom he or she comes into contact. The emerging discourse of disease reveals the larger threat to the fledging social order founded upon the fixed, unarguable division of the sexes. The anxiety generated by a female or male blurring the biological gender binary through his or her attire explodes into a terror of cross-dressing as a sickness or illness: something intangible, untrackable, unstoppable, but able to move anywhere and attack anything. Just as Renaissance doctors are unable to resolve illness into clear, definitive categories explaining the cause and the cure, the antitheatricalists are unable to make the cross-dressed individual fit into the categories of biologically-determined male and female genders. The result of both groups' failure to define and categorize their subjects of inquiry is a deep-seated anxiety, frustration, and misguided expressions of anger.

The antitheatricalists begin constructing this discourse of disease with a less virulent or dangerous conception: that of simple physical disfigurement. Inappropriate attire not only causes a man or woman to lose the qualities deemed essential to his or her gender, as
argued in my last section on religious justifications against cross-dressing, but actually effects a gross deformity on the body. The author of *Hic Mulier* rails, "this deformitie hath no agreement with goodnesse.... It is all base, all barbarous...exorbitant from Nature, and an Antithesis to kinde...to disguise the beauty of their creations, to mould their bodies to every deformed fashion" (5-6). The woman who would clothe herself in masculine attire somehow degenerates to a less developed, or barbarous state of being, horribly divergent from her original beauty and grace. This description of the transfigured unnaturalness and uncivilized spectacle of the cross-dressed individual is rather mild in comparison to most accounts. Besides being the "antithesis" to everything that a properly clothed individual represents, these cross-dressed abnormalities incite witnesses to "affright" and "scorne," being "halfe beast, halfe monster, but all odious, all Diuell.... Stranger things than euer Noahs Arke unladed, or Nyle ingendered...not found in any Antiquaries study, in any Sea­mans trauell...stranger than strangenesse it selfe.... Goblins themselues start" (*Hic Mulier* 10,2-3). To attempt to mix the clothes of one gender with the body of the other produces a physicality so repulsive, so utterly astray from nature, that even the denizens of hell are taken aback by the sight.

Although such an assertion is an exaggeration of an overzealous and overimaginative mind, nonetheless the antitheatricalists clearly believed that a body could be marred and disfigured by inappropriate attire. This attests to the enormous significance the tracts place on clothes not just as markers of gender identity, but real creators (or destroyers) of gender as well. William Prynne supports the image of the cross-dressed individual dissolving into a hideous beast or monster. He condemns "such beastly male­monsters in the shapes of women," and likens them to the "bearded Venus...like a man from the girdle upwards, and like a woman from the girdle downwards.... A lively emblem of our halfe-men-women monsters" (200,204). The wrong clothing clings to a body's
form and wrings it from its natural and rightful shape, not into the quality of the other sex, but into something simply inhuman and monstrous.

Turning once again to the *OED* for clues as to how the words "monster" and "monstrosity" were interpreted during the Renaissance, an interesting mix of definitions emerges. A monster or monstrosity is defined primarily as "something extraordinary or unnatural," "an animal...deviating in one or more of its parts from the normal type," or "formed contrary to the ordinary course of nature." Under this definition, the antitheatricalists can be seen to employ the term to exclude the crossed-dressed individual from "normal" human society. This is the direct opposite type of exclusion employed by those surrounding Queen Elizabeth. While the Queen was exempted from the gender binary on the basis that she was superhuman or mythic, cross-dressers are excluded from the model by being labelled subhuman creatures. On the other hand, both Elizabeth and cross-dressers are seen to be non-human entities, and, as such, can be safely explained away for the ultimate preservation of the biologically determined (human) gender binary.

The definitions of monster and monstrosity then begin to take a surprising and intriguing turn. Two other denotations of the terms are, "with emotional sense, expressing indignation or wondering contempt; outrageously wrong or absurd," and "an imaginary animal (such as the centaur, sphinx, minotaur, or the heraldic griffin, wyvern, etc.) having a form...partly brute and partly human." These definitions bespeak clearly the way antitheatricalists used the term "monster" to dissipate anxiety generated by the cross-dressed individual's failure to fit into the rigid two-gender system. First of all, it has the clear notion of disbelief, anger, or the feeling of having been deceived: "indignation" and "wondering contempt" point to a group of people who are eager to simply dismiss these abnormal individuals as freaks unworthy of the attention or concern of the larger society. The insistent cross-dresser should simply be removed from both sight and mind; this move
is sufficient to solve the problem because it is an isolated and therefore containable phenomenon.

The second implication—created by the notion that the monster is an "imaginary animal"—returns to the tactics employed by those surrounding the Queen. Once again, a type of mythic status (albeit less glorified and more critical in nature) is being called upon to excuse the incompatibility of the cross-dresser and the gender binary. Additionally, since this sort of monster is ultimately only an illusion, the antitheatricalists can console themselves on their inability to stamp the practice out. Being merely a sort of chimera or mermaid, the cross-dresser's threat to the established order can be simultaneously acknowledged and dismissed. Antitheatricalists have made the world safe for a biologically determined gender division.

At this point, the antitheatricalists are poised to take their discourse to the next logical step. By far the most fascinating exploration of gender divisions by the antitheatricalists is the discourse of disease that inevitably accompanies their discussions of cross-dressing. Just as improper attire deforms the body into a bestial or monstrous shape, it can also work its scarring and depleting transfigurations in ways equivalent to sickness. *Haec-Vir*'s author compares cross-dressing to two different virulent and dangerous diseases: "[you will] dye with the flattering sweet malice of an incurable consumption," he warns, and later talks of "that leprosie which I see apparent in you...infection so contagious...." (3, 10). The author has chosen two illnesses which leave highly visible marks of their progress upon the victim's body: consumption through a gradual wasting away of the body, and leprosy through angry sores which literally dissolve the flesh. Putting on the clothes of the opposite gender thus exposes the individual to an actual corrosion of his or her body, as if the clothes were in some way eating away at his or her true sexual form. *Hic Mulier* contains equally vivid and daunting representations of cross-dressed women as carriers of pollution and infection: "they are the stinking vapours dawne
from dunghils...liuing graves, vnwholesome Sinkes.... The markes sticke so deepe on their naked faces, and more naked bodies.... It is an infection that emulates the plague, and throwes it selfe amongst women of all degrees.... [In all] are some spots or swellings of this disease" (5-7). Cross-dressed women not only bring the instruments of destruction upon their own bodies, but they become a threat to other women, being the virulent sources of a rapidly spreading plague. The author suggests that if even one woman infects her body with the clothes of the other sex, the female gender as a whole will quickly sicken as the practice leaps from body to body.

William Prynne also envisions cross-dressing as a highly contagious sickness; the practice may begin with one perverse, malicious individual bringing death and decomposition onto his or her body, but once the original act is committed, free volition is swallowed up by the sheer infectiveness of the fashion. "The man should not take unto him womans apparell," he warns, "lest the shadow...of effeminacy, should stamp some blemish on the masculine sex" (186). One man's act of wearing women's clothes opens up sores on the bodies of all men. Wearing the wrong gender's clothing "enervates" and saps the body of its former strength, and those involved in the practice "delight [themselves] with the entertainment of an impure body, which adheres to unchaste members, which is attoned with the filthy pollution of the body" (168,195). Prynne anchors his understanding of the relationship between cross-dressing and illness within the sexualized body, for he conceives of cross-dressing specifically as a particularly horrific type of venereal disease. To put on the garb of the other gender affords a pleasure akin to sexual intercourse. But like intercourse with an infected person, the illness enters the formerly healthy individual through the physical contact of the "unchaste members," and quickly spreads through the rest of the body. By just laying the opposite gender's clothes against one's skin, a person exposes him or herself to a sexually transmitted disease which will disfigure and destroy his or her body.
Such a belief strongly highlights how antitheatricalists saw costumes not just as stitched material, but as actually embodied with an inherent and immutable sexual identity. Just as the biological, physical body was seen to have an immutable gender--male or female--the clothes themselves assume fixed genders. This gendered-ness becomes an essential, material quality of the garments that cannot be altered or taken away, once the costume has taken its final male or female form. Disease proves to be a useful discourse for antitheatricalists, for just as the Queen could be excluded from the gender binary by placing her outside the realm of human experience (giving her mythological status), the notion of cross-dressing producing illness allows those individuals to be excluded or ostracized in a similar manner. As the lepers were segregated to separate houses outside the realms of the city, the cross-dressed could also be metaphorically sequestered from "normal" society by linking them with disease. Society decides to remove the leper from its boundaries, and society can similarly empower itself against the threat of disorder that the cross-dressed man or woman represents by simply disqualifying them from its standards. The diseased individual--the cross-dressed monstrosity--is no longer a full human being, having been disfigured and degraded by the processes of disease, and can therefore be neatly severed from the gender binary without disturbing its authority. A discourse of disease thus allows antitheatricalists to dispel anxieties through exclusionary tactics.

The linking of cross-dressing and disease has an unmistakable parallel with the antitheatricalists' charge against theaters in general, which were seen as prime spreaders of a plague that God had rained down on London to punish the wicked for the immoral practice of play-going. Stephen Gosson employs this discourse of sickness extensively in *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*, transplanting Prynne's ominous belief in the utter and unstoppable virulence of the venereal disease called cross-dressing to the theaters at large: "They that came honest to a play, may depart infected" (G4). The similarity is not
altogether surprising, especially as the tracts pinpoint plays as the major instigators of the wretched practice of boys dressing like women, for (the antitheatricalists argue) why else would any sane male put on the attire of the weaker, baser sex and throw off the privileges of his more noble birth, if not to gain a profit from it? In the *Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse*, Gosson represents himself as a doctor striving earnestly to block the spread of the disease of theater-going before it destroys the entire populace of London altogether. "If I giue them a Pil to purge their humor, they neuer leaue belking till it be vp, wherein you may perceiue what vnruely patientes I deale withall, howe vnwilling they are to receiue remedy, when their disease hath gotten the vpper hande...." (124). Once a person has been infected with the malady of theater-going, the disease not only threatens the body, but the mind as well, and both will fight savagely against a well-meaning cure.

**All Manner of Things Will be Well: The Antitheatricalist**

"Quick Fix" to Recuperate the Diseased Cross-Dressed Body

The prognosis may appear bleak at this point, but the antitheatricalists are not content to leave the cross-dressed individual in a state of total, irrevocable exclusion; instead, they propose the simplest of solutions for these lost sheep to find their way back into the neatly divided male and female flocks. Even though a remedy to the sickness of theater-going and cross-dressing is often rejected by the infected parties themselves, the antitheatricalists are convinced of the reversibility of these ailments. Making a curious departure from the way in which deadly diseases like plague, leprosy, and syphilis operated in the time, the antitheatricalists believe that the cure is actually a very simple process of reforming one's behavior. Once one accepts his or her proper clothing or employment, all of the disfiguring and destructive influences wrought by playgoing and
inappropriate clothing disappear, and do not even leave traces of scars where the flesh was ravshe.

Gosson envisions this process as a slow but ultimately complete recovery of the body. In his *Apologie*, he comments, "it shal be enough for me...to giue them a plaister, to launce the sore frendly & let it runne, that in processe of time, it may heale of it selfe" (129-30). Gosson places an equal emphasis on help from without and within; the antitheatricalists can offer aid for these diseases, but an individual must take the initiative and final responsibility for health upon him or herself. He elaborates on the process at the end of *The Schoole of Abuse*, where he informs the gentlewomen citizens of London, "These are harde lessons which I teache you: nevertheless, drinke uppe the potion, though it like not your tast, and you shal be eased: resist not the surgeon, though hee strike with his knife, and you shall bee cured" (51). The road to recovery is an unpleasant and even daunting prospect, but ultimately brings great rewards, once the sick remember how wonderful a healthy and invigorated body feels.

The author of *Hie Mulier* insists that the cure for the deformed and diseased body takes place almost instantaneously; that is, as soon as the appropriate attire is placed back on the individual's flesh. "I present these Masculine women in the deformities as they are, that I may call them backe to the modest comlinesse in which they were.... Thus shall you be your selues againe, and live the most excellentest creatures vpon earth...past all imitation" (4, 11). Even though improper clothing has twisted their shapes and attacked their bodies, if these women return to their accustomed costumes, they shall be completely healed, and even improved upon. The author implies that by wearing masculine garb, the women had lost their true sexual identities, but, by taking up their former proper clothing, these gendered "selves" are reinstated into their minds and flesh. Similarly, in *Haec-Vir*, the author gives his fictional character "Mannish-Woman" a long speech in which she explains if effeminized men would again take up their proper masculine garb, mannish
women would eagerly "restore to vs the Blushes we layd by.... Doubt not but chaste thoughts and bashfulnesse will againe dwell in vs, our Palaces beeing newly gilt, trimmed, and reedified, [we will] draw to vs all the Graces...." (13-4). Again, the intricate and essential relationship between clothes and the physical body is revealed, for antitheatricalists believe what we now would label an autonomic function such as blushing can be cast out of the flesh, or sewn back into the body's natural processes through the singular influence of costume.

The stubborn insistence of the antitheatricalists on this "quick fix," coming immediately after they had agonized over the horrific disfigurements and degenerations of the body brought about by cross-dressing, lends additional proof to the theory that this discourse of disease was a means of dispelling anxiety over individuals not neatly fitting into a fledgling two-gender social structure. Exclusion is the first line of defense for the antitheatricalists: a diseased body is not an altogether human one, and can thus, like a leper, madman, or any other unfortunate victim of illness, simply be thrust outside of society's bounds with no concern for whether it fits that society's rules and limitations. However, simply excluding these poor monstrosities still leaves a lingering threat to the gender binary, for if the disease is really as contagious as the antitheatricalists suggests, what is to stop the majority of the population from being infected? If more individuals are excluded from the rigid two-gender system than fit into it, the whole system becomes in serious danger of being overthrown. To counteract this possibility, the antitheatricalists reassure us that, while extremely virulent, and to be guarded against at all costs, if you are one of those unfortunate enough to have succumbed to the degeneration evils of cross-dressing, all is not lost. The sick individual must simply profess a sincere desire to want to be well, and reform his or her behavior accordingly, and he or she will be accepted back into the social order with open arms. This approach makes an interesting return to religious arguments, for just as Christians believe that although their "sins are scarlet, God will make
them white as snow," if a person truly repents of his or her disease, he or she will be miraculously cured, with no lasting ill effects.

Not only is the cure for cross-dressed deformity and disease near-instantaneous and absolute, William Prynne even goes so far as to suggest that the cross-dressed individual's own body will fight against appropriating those qualities of the opposite gender. As he expresses through two anecdotes, the "real" sex of the person will not be contained or disguised permanently, but will be wracked with graphic displays of the besieged, genuine gendered body beneath the costume. The first story Prynne uses to illustrate what a modern reader might term an "immune system" of gender is that of Pope Joan. He explains how "that masculine Roman Strumpet...aspired into the very Popes unerring Throne, by this her masculine habit and tonsure, as a man; till her unexpected delivery of a base-borne issue in the very middest of her solemne procession, descried her to be a woman" (185). It is as if Joan's body, struggling with the masculine habit ravaging and destroying it, spontaneously lashes back at the male sickness by enacting the most basic biological function reserved solely for women: giving birth. The feminine gendered body quite literally labors beneath the masculine costume eating away at its form.

Prynne tells a second tale of a woman called Gundo, who dressed up as a man because she desired to live in seclusion in a monastery. "But no sooner was she entered into the inward parts of the Abbathie, but she was presently strucke blinde in both her eyes...vomiting up blood in a horrid manner, for this her unnaturall bold attempt" (880). The monastery itself is figured as a masculine body, and as Gundo moves into its innermost and private parts, her own feminized body violently reacts against it, even at the cost of her own well-being. To a modern reader, the model of the gendered "immune system" once again seems apt, for Gundo's body responds much like a person might reject a donated organ or the wrong type of blood. Although antitheatricalists would of course be unfamiliar with such medical theories, nonetheless it is clear that they viewed the human
body as having two essential genders, male and female, and clothing as also having the two immutable male and female genders. If the wrong clothing was matched with the wrong body, that body had both the capacity and the drive to fight against the clothing's degenerating properties. Once again, antitheatricalists are attempting to find a way to recuperate those individuals threatening the stability of the biologically determined two-gender system. The very essence of the human body is on the side of the gender binary, and will fight against the diseased impulses of the cross-dresser to maintain this healthy division.

None of the Above: The Monstrosity of Nothing Confirms the Gender Binary

These discourses of disease and deformity ultimately suggest that cross-dressing cannot completely transform a body's sex from male to female, or female to male. Costumes have inherent genders to them, and they have real power to alter a sexual body, but they cannot entirely obliterate the fixed physical gender of that body. Instead, clothes can only deform a figure into a state of being that is neither male nor female, but a sort of gendered limbo that is depicted as "nothing at all." As Jean Howard notes, the antitheatricalists are extremely invested in the notion of two distinct sexes, but they are not necessarily autonomous entities. Rather, although one cannot travel the entire distance from one gender to another, they can get mired in a sort of disfiguring limbo that alienates them from either sex. The author of Hie Mulier describes this process, asking the "mannish" women, "will you leaue the excellent shield of innocence for this deformed instrument of disgrace?" (9). A woman's body and organs are a shield, but in donning masculine clothes, she does not achieve a man's intact, functioning body and organ, but merely a "deformed instrument," capable of neither pursuit or defense.
*Hic Mulier's* author further dismisses women's attempts to "bee man-like not onely from the head to the waste, but to the very foot, & in every condition: man in body... in behavior... in nature... in action.... And in briefe, so much man in all things that they are neither men, nor women, but just good for nothing.... Not all the painting in Rome... can conceale them, but euer eye discouers them almost as low as their middles" (6-7). Women dressed in men's clothing do not metamorphose into genuinely masculine beings, but are only deformed enough from their own feminine forms to become a body of confusing and conflicted identity. Even more importantly, the author is implying that the women have kept one essential feminine sexual structure--their breasts--by which any onlooker can "discover" the true sex of the body within the costume.

Stephen Gosson also indirectly discusses the splintering of the gendered body that occurs through cross-dressing in *Playes Confuted*. He uses the metaphor of costume to explain why plays are inherently duplicitous and therefore evil: "Truth is euer like it selfe, it neuer carrieth two faces in one hoode, that thinge is no where" (C4). Once again an antitheatricalist is reduced to describing a mixture of male and female genders as simply "nothing" or "no where." The implication is that the combination is unthinkable, unknowable, and absolutely impossible.

The term "nothing" also had a complex multiplicity of possible meanings attached to it in the Renaissance which help to reinforce the idea of the gender binary. First of all, the obvious roots of the word--no/thing--lend immediate support to the idea that the cross-dressed individual cannot change sex, but merely distorts his or her own original gender to the point of non-existence. Additionally, several of the definitions listed in the *OED* evoke similar language to that discussed in the "religious justifications" portion of this chapter: "No part, share, etc. of some thing," or "in vain, to no purpose." In both cases, the image of the cast-out individual, or the individual who has wasted God's labor through the willful dissolution of his or her body, comes to the fore. This version of nothing hearkens back to
one of the meanings of "unmanned;," excluded from guidance, and outside of the state of grace.

These connotations are just the tip of the iceberg for this complicated term, however. Several other definitions lend credence to the hitherto discussed concept that antitheatricalists used discourses of monstrosity, deformity, and disease in order to alleviate anxieties about the uncertain state of the gender binary. The threat posed by cross-dressing could be shrugged off with scorn and derision. Nothing is thus also described as "a person of no note; a nobody," "denoting comparative insignificance or unimportance: a thing...not worth reckoning, considering, or mentioning," and "a non-existent...or worthless thing." All of these connotations are reminiscent of those used to define the monster. Of particular importance is the repeated use of the term "thing" in two of the definitions, rather than human being. This usage emphasizes yet again the exclusionary tactic of qualifying cross-dressers as subhumans who are thereby exempted from the gender binary. Additionally, these definitions speak of the derision and attempt to downplay the importance of significance of these cross-dressed individuals. Even though they were a significant, tangible threat to the strict biological gender division, antitheatricalists were determined to dismiss cross-dressers as insignificant, weak-minded freaks.

Finally, a third cluster of definitions for "nothing" center around the disease process. "Nothing" is described as "denoting extinction or destruction," and "denoting the final point, stage, or state of the process of destruction, dissolution, etc." These connotations seem custom-made to fit antitheatrical conceptions of the devastating effects cross-dressing has on the gendered body. The gendered form covered with the inappropriately gendered costume results in the utter and total ruin of that physical body. There is no worse fate for the gendered self than to lose every trace of that genderedness, and that is precisely what the disease of cross-dressing wreaks on the human form. In addition, these rather bleak sentiments further uncover a genuine anxiety by
antitheatricalists concerning the fate of the binary gender system. If cross-dressing can bring individuals members of a society to complete destruction and dissolution of the gendered self, it proves itself to be a very formidable enemy to the social division still in a state of incubation and solidification. The prevalence of the word "nothing" in the antitheatrical tracts beautifully demonstrates the complexities and contradictions embedded in the discourse of disease used to explain away cross-dressing.

Ultimately, what all of these meanings point to is the idea that a gendered body cannot obtain the organs and form specific to the other gender, but instead becomes a "hodge-podged" monster, partly retaining its original sexual characteristics, partly becoming something unidentifiable and definitively non-human. Early on in his *Histrio-Mastix*, William Prynne attempts to reason out why cross-dressed individuals are essentially nothing, or non-gendered creatures:

[They are] neither men nor women, if we will speake truely. For they continue not men, and that they should become women, they attaine not. For what they are by nature, that they continue not, in regard of manners: and that which they wickedly desire to be, that they are not by nature.... They deny themselves to be men, and yet are such: They would be reputed women, but the quality of their body confesseth the contrary. (169,195)

The cross-dressed individual is an unresolvable paradox of gender, whose various signs of sexuality are so conflicted they cancel out any distinguishable gendered meaning of the body.

**The Infection Runs Deep: Uncovering the Unresolvable in Antitheatrical Discourse**

After pulling apart antitheatricalists' understandings of the relationship between costume and gender, and illustrating how a dialogue of deformity and disease shapes their conclusions, it is now profitable to examine these beliefs in the context of the actual clothing worn at the time. Renaissance costumes for men and women greatly complicate the antitheatrical position of two fixed and indivisible genders with two sets of equally
immutably gendered clothes in several crucial ways. Firstly, although Gosson comments in *The Schoole of Abuse* that "You must not cut your bodyes to your garmentes, but make your gowns fit to the proportion of your bodies," referring to the ways in which inappropriate attire was thought to disfigure the gendered form, in reality, neither women's nor men's clothes followed the outline or proportions of their natural bodies (50). As Graham Reynolds points out in his book *Costume of the Western World: Elizabethan and Jacobean*, "In this period more than any other, the shape of the clothed human body was as clay in the hands of the tailors; with wire and bombast they compressed it here and inflated it there, regardless of the anatomical structure of legs and arms, of waists and bosoms. At times they produced results [wildly] different from the natural human form...." (7).

For example, women's upper torsos were narrowed and constricted with the aid of whalebone or iron corsets, which completely flattened the chest, gave the illusion of an elongated figure and produced waists sometimes no bigger than thirteen inches (fig. 24). Also in fashion for upper-class women was the farthingale, a gigantic barrel-shaped hoop which stuck out at the level of the hips and gave the impression that a woman was standing in the middle of a table. As a result of the large circumference of these hoops, women could not put their arms down at their sides and had to resort to sitting on cushions on the floor, because chairs could not accommodate them (Norris 619). The sleeves of women's dresses were also stuffed with bombast, to the point that the arms took on the appearance and name of legs of mutton (fig. 23) The overall impact of these various articles of clothing is that women appear to be buried in their clothes, and the natural form which antitheatricalists make so much of in their tracts is virtually unrecognizable.

Although these fashions were created largely for the use of the upper classes, the middle and lower classes were not exempt from similar displays of excess. The only crucial difference between the economic stations and their costumes was the cost involved in making the costume. The lower and middle classes desired to emulate the fashionable
aristocracy, so they devised increasingly creative means of duplicating the basic shape and
cut of the more costly outfits using more modest fabrics and techniques. For example,
James Laver notes that one fashion trick devised by those "outside Court circles," was the
"'roll farthingale', vulgarly known as the 'bum roll.' This consisted of a padded roll of
cloth in the shape of a polony, or boiling sausage, the two ends being joined together at the
front of the body with tapes" (98). Instead of investing the considerable money and time
into the construction of the Spanish farthingale, with its many hoops of boning lining the
entire skirt, the less-fortunate economic classes simply stuffed a piece of fabric into a roll
and tied it around the waist, achieving the same horizontal dimensionality to their skirts.
To mimic the leg-of-mutton sleeves that were so popular among the aristocracy, middle and
lower class men and women would use grains as bombast to add weight and volume to the
sleeve (despite the inevitable stench and exploding seams that accompanied the fermenting
bran) (Laver 90).

I delve into this much detail only to make the point that, by and large, to talk about
the costumes of the upper classes, and how they did or did not deform or hold true to the
actual human body, is to include, for the most part, the types of clothes worn by the middle
and lower classes as well. While the cost of the fabrics and the methods used to achieve
certain silhouettes vary with class, the ultimate line of the costumes remains largely
equivalent. Therefore, when Phillip Stubbes feels compelled to mention in his Anatomie of
Abuses the absurdities of fashion he saw around him, the researcher can, with assurance,
apply his observations to all members of the society. He states, "When they have all these
goodly robes upon them, women seem to be the smallest parts of themselves, not natural
women, but artificial women; not women of flesh and blood, but rather puppets...of rags
and cloths" (quoted in LaMar 5). Such a statement has a curious resonance with
antitheatrical complaints of the monstrosity or unnaturalness of women attired in male
clothes. It seems that no matter what they wear, someone will condemn women for their artificiality and perverse deformity.

Men's costumes were equally disfiguring, however. Short breeches known as "Venetians" were so padded on the hips—with bombast and steel wires to ensure a full, rounded effect—that the calves peeking out beneath them seem out of proportion (fig. 25). Herbert Norris points out in *Costume and Fashion* that men also wore corsets in order to slim their waists, so as to further accentuate the size of the breeches (542). The upper portions of the male body were equally altered; the "peascod doublet," a coat stiffened with whalebone and filled with bombast to give the man the appearance of a large, lowered belly, was extremely popular with fashionable gentlemen of the age (fig. 26). Contemporary portraits of middle and lower class men affirm again that, while the richness of the fabrics and the methods of costume construction varied by class, the ultimate shape or line of the garments remained largely equivalent. Look, for example, at figure 27, a portrait of a tailor (a thoroughly middle-class occupation) by Giovanni Battista Moroni. The stuffed peascod doublet ending in a point and the full, round pumpkin breeches are worn, even though they are made from plainer, less costly fabrics.

Once again, Stubbes could not resist commenting on the outlandishness and fantastical shapes the human form is squeezed or bloated into: "They are no less monstrous than the rest of their garments; for now the fashion is to have them hang down to the middest of their theighs, being so hard-quilted, and stuffed with four, five, or six pounds of bombast at the least, and sewed, as they can neither work, nor yet will play in them...." (quoted in Norris 541). Stubbes chose the word "monstrous" to describe the doublet: the exact term which the tracts give to the cross-dressed body.

The question raised by these striking concurrences of "monster" and "unnaturalness" is, can any body during this time escape disfigurement? The answer appears to be an emphatic no; even if the proper gendered body puts on the properly
gendered clothes, it is still debased from its natural form. This is not merely a modern interpretation of the costumes, but a position validated by contemporaries who walked among and even wore these exact clothes. The entire discourse of disease and deformity the antitheatricalists have so carefully constructed around the cross-dressed body threatens to collapse, because, without a gender binary system that has clothing representing the "normal" or genuine body shape of each sex, the antitheatricalists' claims lose their point of reference.

There is no longer a genuine or true representation to hold up as the standard for dress and behavior, and the gender binary begins to seem polluted, if not outright infected, itself; within the so-called "proper" gender divisions, the biological body is being destroyed beneath clothing which finally represents neither sex. The equation no longer reads: male body plus male costume or female body plus female costume, but male or female body plus a "nothing" or "monstrous" costume. The deforming clothes--which includes all attire for all sexes and social classes--come to embody the essence of disease in their lack of gendered certainty. Clearly representing neither male nor female, these beastly items, if one follows the antitheatricalist logic, must lead to the eventual decline and overthrow of the entire social structure. It is impossible to exclude certain "warped" or hopeless individuals the way lepers or madmen would be weeded out of mainstream society, because everyone is dressed in these infectious rags. There can be no exception when the exception includes the entire society. The biological gender demarcation begins to reveal its ultimate inadequacies, and the antitheatricalists' attempts to use disease as an exclusionary tactic to salvage that gender binary violently backfire.

This backlash can even be witnessed within the tracts themselves. Specifically, if one examines the frontispieces to these, one discovers that they send signals of meaning which clash with the arguments found within the tracts. Although it could be argued that these engravings are simply one artist's representations, and not necessarily realistic
depictions of actual trends in women's fashions, the pictures still reveal crucial information about the mindset of the authors of these tracts, and the publishers who worked with them to spread their beliefs to others. The cover page to Hic Mulier portrays two mannish-women in the process of transformation (see fig. 28). Both have the "masculine" shorn hair, the figure on the left has a man's waistcoat, and the figure on the right has the man's hat with "wanton" feather. These signs all accord with the author's disgruntlement. However, the waistcoat is fully fastened and closed--not "unbuttoned to entice," as he suggests is standard practice for the cross-dressed succubus, neither woman wears "spurs" or carries weapons, as these mannish-women were supposedly wont to do, and the woman on the right, except for the hat, is entirely clothed in female attire.

The frontispiece to Haec-Vir also seems to contradict the text within (see fig. 29). Although the woman (on the left) has the man's hat and feather, the spurs, and a veritable artillery of weapons, she is fully covered and buttoned up--there are no "naked arms" to be embraced and she retains her full skirts. The man's appearance is also inconsistent, for although he has women's shoes and a badminton racket and birdies, the rest of his attire is all suitably masculine, with hat, collar, doublet, slops, and mustache clearly marking him as male. Once again, these figures do not correlate with the monstrous descriptions related by the texts. Just as there is a tension between the antitheatricalists' insistence on natural clothes accentuating natural gender and the actual disfiguring qualities of "proper" clothing, so too is there friction between the outlandish and lewd monsters described within the texts and the individuals illustrated on the covers. Ultimately, these contradictions point to the ultimate failure of a discourse of disease to exclude the cross-dresser from having to fit within the fledgling gender binary system.
A critical examination of how antitheatrical tracts construct gender identity through costume thus yields rich, if ultimately unsatisfactory and contradictory results; the pamphlets can be seen to employ a complex discourse of disease and deformity to explain sexual difference. The biological body is crucial to the texts, for the antitheatricalists conceive of two essential physical forms of man and woman, as well as two fundamental divisions of costume which are intended to complement those different shapes. Clothing assumes a real power to affect or alter the body's gendered form, for if a person assumes the attire of the other sex, a process of dissolution, degeneration, and disfigurement rapidly ensues. Unlike conventional diseases of the time, however, these bodily alterations could be completely cured simply by casting off the inappropriate garbs.

These conceptions of gender coalesce into the fundamental belief that gender is not a continuum: a man cannot become a woman, or a woman a man. Instead, by mixing the two separate sexual spheres, the resulting product is a body which is neither man nor woman, but a type of "nothing." Antitheatrical views of gender do not mesh well with the actual fashion practices of the day, for if Renaissance clothes have a defining feature it is their ability to transform and disfigure the natural human shape. What this deep-set contradiction reveals is the ultimate inability of the binary gender system to successfully regulate society, and account for all of its inhabitants. It is precisely the inadequacies of this fledgling gendered order which instigates such shrill and vociferous attacks by the antitheatricalists.

In the case of Queen Elizabeth, her incompatible female body and male position of power could be resolved by simply excluding her from human status. This solution was satisfactory because Elizabeth was unique; there was no real threat that a host of other
people would be in a similar situation. Cross-dressing in the theatre and on the streets of London proved a far more vexing problem. A discourse of disease allowed the antitheatricalists to again exclude problematic individuals from having to satisfy the gender binary, and images of deformity and illness also prevented the individuals from being glorified, as happened in Elizabeth's case. These cross-dressed individuals could be degraded, demeaned, and despised. The difficulty with employing the metaphor of disease is that it implied the threatening prospect of spreading to the greater part of the population. If cross-dressing is catching, how could the gender binary remain intact when every individual stood in flagrant violation to it? Processes of exclusion become totally worthless in this scenario.

In my next chapter, I deal with attempts to solve this vexing paradox. Making the final transition to the actual theatre itself, I will examine *The Roaring Girl*, a play which not only speaks volumes about the Renaissance public theatres, but about the real life adventures of its patrons. Moll Frith, the central figure of the play, was also an actual cross-dressed woman who worked as a thief and prostitute both inside and outside of the theatres. Using the playtext itself, along with a curious "autobiography" of the real Moll Frith, I will examine further attempts to salvage the fledgling gender binary through the use of a process of exclusion.
CHAPTER 3

"IT IS A THING ONE KNOWS NOT HOW TO NAME": REINSCRIBING THE CROSS-DRESSED MOLL CUTPURSE INTO A GENDER BINARY IN THE ROARING GIRL AND THE LIFE OF MRS. MARY FRITH

If one could diagram the present examinations of costume and gender identity in the theatre of Renaissance England, it would appear as a dartboard. The chapters form a set of concentric rings, always moving inwards from more general cultural phenomena to the eventual goal of the actual stage itself. The outermost ring of the discussion concerned itself with the clothing worn by Queen Elizabeth, and the effects her garments had on her public persona as ruler of England. Her costumes evolved throughout her reign to culminate in a superhuman, mythological image, which in turn helped to resolve the cultural anxiety generated by a woman's body in a man's position of authority. Elizabeth's construction as a deity through her clothing excluded her from having to fit into a biological gender binary, where masculine and feminine characteristics were firmly anchored to the sexual body.

The Queen's transformation into iconographic status was successful (to some degree, at least) because the method only had to account for one violation of the gender binary. Elizabeth was a singular, unique example, and her female body and male position of power could be satisfactorily explained away by a process of exclusion. As we move in to our next dart circle, however, this manner of dismissal encounters serious difficulties. The second chapter dealt with the antitheatrical tracts written by Puritans as a response to
the moral indignities of cross-dressing on the public stage. Clearly, due to the sheer number of individuals involved with the theatrical phenomenon, as well as the antitheatricalists' ultimate aim of condemnation, inflating cross-dressers to the status of gods was not a feasible approach. Antitheatricalists therefore shifted the means of exclusion, but still retained the ultimate method of disqualification from the binary. Disease became the metaphor by which large quantities of the population could justifiably be removed from fitting into the gender binary. Since the cross-dressed body became diseased, deformed, and disfigured through the individual's shameful activity, he or she again became something other than the normal human being. Disease was a convenient vehicle to exclude significant sums of people from having to satisfy a biological understanding of gender.

The difficulty involved in the metaphor of disease springs precisely from its perceived strength. While disease allowed for larger groups of people to be excluded from the gender binary, it also necessarily allowed greater quantities of people to violate that binary. As the disease of cross-dressing was also described as highly communicable, the stability of the gender binary became threatened even further. The cure, so to speak, became the disease itself, as the method employed by antitheatricalists to protect a biological vision of gender ended up seriously undermining it.

Up to this point, then, two versions of exclusion can be ferreted out concerning the Renaissance's anxious assertion of a biologically oriented two-gender system: the deformed human and the superhuman or mythological goddess. Making the final move to the last of the concentric circles, this chapter will examine the actual theatre, and how it advanced both similar and unique exclusionary models to relieve anxieties about the threatened gender binary. Specifically, I pinpoint my site of study on a woman named Mistress Mary Frith, or Moll Cutpurse. Moll became a veritable nexus of discussion concerning gender divisions: she was not only an actual cross-dressed woman that lived
and died on the streets of London, but whose persona found its way into numerous plays, poems, and other stories. The most famous of these is the play by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton called *The Roaring Girl*, produced in 1611, which had the further result of coaxing Moll into appearing on the Fortune's stage after several performances. 6 *The Roaring Girl* was consumed with an exploration of the imaginary activities of this real-life woman, and society's depictions of and responses to her outlandishness.

An "autobiography" (its authenticity will be assumed for the purposes of this chapter, although its genuineness cannot be absolutely substantiated), entitled *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith* and published posthumously (1662; Moll lived from 1584 to 1659), similarly revolves around attempts to justify and explain Moll's deviant behavior and mode of dress.

Just as Moll's clothing was a confused mish-mash of ambiguous elements, so too were the heated arguments on how to classify her: for classification was of the utmost imperative for English Renaissance society. Not content to view her simply as a woman with a penchant for traditionally "male" clothing, playwrights, biographers, law officials, and even Moll herself were obsessed with the combination of female body and male clothing. All of these individuals were certain that it must somehow alter her body's gender and basic physical make-up, even if no one could agree precisely on what that change was or what to call it. Ultimately, both autobiography and play pass through several classifications of Moll, never entirely comfortable with any one definition of her, but relentless in their searches to pin Moll down finally into a recognizable and concrete category.

Playtext and book begin with a unique classification not clearly identifiable in the antitheatrical tracts or portraits of Elizabeth: they label her a sort of beast or monster. Moll becomes a subhuman deviance of Nature, a freakish and unforgivable combination of the

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6 Although Mary Frith had a multitude of names associated with her, I am choosing to call her "Moll" in this chapter in deference to Dekker and Middleton's name for her theatrical persona.
animal kingdom and human realm. Renaissance science and philosophy recognized a hierarchy of animals. Unlike modern, Darwinist conceptions of evolution, however, they made a strict division between humankind and everything else. There was no possibility that humans had developed from, or indeed had any relation at all, to any of the species of animals found on earth. God created man "in His own image," and this image was necessarily separate and superior to the inferior animal realm. As an example, Adam was allowed to name all of the other animals as a sign from God of his special, blessed state. Humans were not just at the top of the hierarchy, but an entirely separate category altogether. For the various texts centering around Moll to demote her to the animal realm, then, is extremely significant. This is an exclusionary tactic taken to its logical extreme, for it not only serves the purpose of defending the binary, but defames Moll's cross-dressed body as a sight offensive to God Himself. Creating a beast or subhuman image makes cross-dressing an incredibly undesirable activity to emulate.

Unfortunately for critics of Moll and her lifestyle, the subhuman exclusionary method contained serious flaws within it. The immediate difficulty which destroyed the model's credibility was the contradiction between the deformed beast metaphor and Moll's actual physical body. The texts describe Moll in hideous terms, but, as will be seen, no one could really assert that there was anything wrong with Moll's body. Moll was a perfectly formed female from head to toe, and her normal physical appearance simply negated all of the deformed, subhuman animal images thrust onto her. The disease metaphor failed for the exact reasons already discussed in chapter two. Finally, the mythological model, while appropriate for a queen, proves to be disastrous in explaining away a lower-class, sometime bawd and thief. The difficulty with inflating Moll to superhuman status rests in the undeniable signal of approval it sends about her behavior. Elizabeth's goddess-like clothing could be accepted and encouraged because it could also be contained by the unique social position she occupied. Moll, on the other hand, was
"common" in every sense of the word. To glorify Moll's cross-dressing tendencies through mythological metaphor, then, was paving the way for disaster. If it was acceptable, and indeed esteemed in one individual, then other women of all classes would also want to emulate the style, which could result in the absolute overthrow of the biologically determined gender system.

Ultimately, of course, no real solution is obtained by Moll's contemporary critics. The binary gender system is left in as great peril as before the tactics of exclusion. Moll's unique position as the nexus between the worlds of the actual streets of London and the public stage reveals the intimate particulars of a Renaissance two-gender system that was only recently formulated, and in serious danger of collapse.

An Examination of the Real Moll Frith, the "Autobiography," and Dekker and Middleton's Play

Moll--also known to her contemporaries as Mary Frith, Mrs. Mary Frith, Moll Cutpurse, Mary Markham, and Mary Thrift--was obviously a complex individual. Her various names give some indication of her lifestyle. As Andor Gomme mentions, she was skilled using both sword and cudgel, and was widely known as "a whore, bawd, cutpurse [pickpocket], and receiver, a female Moriarty keeping a gang of thieves in her service" (xiv). What we know of the actual flesh-and-blood Moll, as opposed to her many figurations in the popular literature of the time, comes from a meager spattering of sources. Firstly, there are several court records which make note of various charges brought against her. Paul Mulholland reprints in his article "The Date of The Roaring Girl" a court case against Moll taken from The Consistory of London Correction Book. This book records Moll's appearance before the court:
She voluntarily confessed she had long frequented all or most of the disorderly and licentious places in this city, as namely she hath usually in the habit of a man resorted to alehouses, taverns, tobacco shops, and also to playhouses...and namely being at a play about three-quarters of a year since the Fortune [Theatre] in man's apparel, and in her boots, and with a sword by her side.... And also sat there upon the stage in the public view of all the people there present, in man's apparel, and played upon her lute and sang a song. (30-1).

In one fell swoop, we find proof that Moll not only habitually cross-dressed, but even made her way onto the public stage. Her very appearance on the Fortune's stage demonstrates the popularity and fascination she inspired in the population, for people had to pay to see her. Whether the crowd came because of a genuine love for Moll's eccentricities or simply gathered to see the current freak show is not the issue. Moll, as a cross-dressed female, moved easily through the society, even those portions of it (like alehouses and public stages) which traditionally excluded women. Furthermore, she represented a crux of interest and investigation to that society, which reproduced her image again and again for popular amusement.

The charges against Moll continue in the brief court document. Moll not only appeared on the public stage in her cross-dressed state, she "was since vpon Christmas day at night taken in Powles Church with her peticoate tucked vp about her in the fashion of a man with a mans cloake on her, to the great scandall of diuers persons who understood the same & to the disgrace of all womanhood" (31). Moll's fondness for male garments not only offend English law, but the law of God. Her activities are profanity: a deliberate desecration of a holy place. Already the threat of infection, so intricately tied to Puritan thought on cross-dressing, is surfacing. Moll, by dressing as a man, causes the dis/grace, or fall from God's favor, of all womankind. Just as the diseased are cast out from Renaissance society (as in the case of the leper houses), Moll is threatening the ostracization of half of the human population through her predilection for male clothes.

One other skirmish between Moll and the law is on record. In 1612, John Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton, recorded a penance Moll was forced to serve for
"wearing undecent and manly apparel" (Dawson 388). Anthony Dawson, in his article "Mistris Hic & Haec: Representations of Moll Frith," reprints this letter:

Mall Cut-purse a notorious bagage (that used to go in mans apparell and challenged the feild of divers gallants) was brought to [Paul's Cross], where she wept bitterly and seemed very penitent, but yt is since doubted she was maudelin druncke, beeing discovered to have tipped of three quarts of sacke before she came to her penaunce.... (388)

Moll's lack of remorse for her habit of cross-dressing is obvious. Once again, Moll finds herself on public display. Ironically enough, the authorities punish Moll's attention-attracting behavior (thoroughly non-"feminine") by making her the center of attention. Apparently there is a crucial distinction between "acceptable" and "nonacceptable" public appearances by women. Punishment or humiliation is not only acceptable but demanded; a woman demonstrating her own talents and personality is reprehensible.

By far, the greatest resource of information on the real Moll's life is the self-proclaimed autobiography entitled The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith. Published three years after her death in 1662, this work begins with an anonymous introduction that simultaneously attempts to sell Moll (and the book) to the reader, and hold her life up to a critical, disapproving moral eye. The rest of the book is devoted to a very different voice, supposedly that of Moll herself. This remaining segment of the book chronicles Moll's life from childhood up until the last faltering moments of her existence. The tone alters radically from the introductory section, becoming, as Stephen Orgel puts it, "racy and good-humored, with a sexual openness" (Impersonations 139). Although the blow-by-blow recounting of Moll's descent into death is hard to accept as genuine, there is no real evidence to suggest that the work was not, in fact, written by Moll herself. The short span of time between Moll's demise and the publication of the biography lend some further support to the possibility of Moll authoring the book. Of course, it is not possible to absolutely prove the authenticity of the book. However, given the quick publication, the widely varying voices of introductory author and biographer, and the general correlation in
description that exists between the autobiography and court records of Moll, I am accepting the book's claim as "autobiography" at face value for this chapter's purposes.

The autobiography gives us a great deal of detailed description about Moll's coming of age and her later career pursuits. Born in 1589, Moll came from a thoroughly middle-class family. The autobiography pegs her a tomboy from a very early age, describing her natural aversion to dolls, washing, sewing, gossiping, and any other feminine pursuit. Instead, she was notorious for her brash, bold, outspoken spirit, which sometimes swelled to the point that she beat up the neighboring boys (10-11). Women's clothes supposedly always hung oddly on Moll, and she quickly disposed of them in favor of the male attire she would keep with her the rest of her life. Her parents, at their wits' ends, decided to pack her off to America, in the hopes that some man would be so desperate for a wife in the new-found wilderness that he would not mind her incorrigible idiosyncrasies. Moll, however, not easily deceived, managed to escape from the ship they trapped her on, and instantly plunged into the underground world of crime. She spent many years as a cutpurse, receiver, fence, prostitute, and bawd. Her winning nature and extreme intelligence propelled her into a high position of authority within the criminal system. She lived until 1659, approximately seventy-five years of age.

Throughout her life, Moll's masculine dress and action kept her firmly planted in the public eye. Apart from the court records, Moll also had a rich degree of representation in the popular literature of the age. These constructions of Moll (ranging from the mildly to the wildly imaginative) ranged from poetry, to songs, to characters in plays. As early as 1614, Thomas Freeman published an epigram about Moll:

They say Moll's honest, and it may be so,
But yet it is a shrewd suspicion no:
To touch but pitch, 'tis known it will defile;
Moll wears the breech, what may she be the while?
Sure she that doth the shadow so much grace,
What will she when the substance comes in place? (Nakayama ix)
Moll is already so public a persona, such a household word, that it is sufficient to simply call her by her first name. Simply coupling "Moll" with "breeches" is enough to accurately indicate to any common inhabitant of London who this woman is.

Moll receives a less flattering portrayal in Alexander Smith's *A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen, Footpads, Shoplifts & Cheats of Both Sexes* (1730). Stephen Orgel points out the more dangerous, less playful, construction of her identity in this book (*Impersonations* 144). Moll is not merely a brash but ultimately good-natured prankster, she is capable of real violence: "She robbed General Fairfax, wounded him in the arm, and shot the horses of two of his servants" (Smith 386). Moll is a notorious underworld figure, remembered (in this case) not for her cross-dressing, but her rank as a "Highwayman," "Footpad," "Shoplift," and "Cheat." What makes her memorable in the public eye is therefore a shifting, elusive quality, or a combination of her eccentric dress and her devious ways.

Other works of literature which create more fanciful, even idealized, portraits of Moll include *A Booke called the Madde Prancks of Merry Mall of the Bankside, with her Walks in Mans Apparel and to what Purpose, Written by John Day*, as well as Nathan Field's play *Amends for Ladies*, and Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*. The *Madde Prancks of Merry Moll* has unfortunately not survived, but a record of the work exists in the Stationers' Register of August for 1610 (Gomme xv). Whether this was a play, or a prose work similar to that of the autobiography, the important point is that Moll was an influential and popular identity in circulation during the time period. *Field's Amends for Ladies*, written around 1612, is still available to us today. In many ways the play proves to be little more than Field's attempt to cash in on the popularity of *The Roaring Girl*: several speeches mimic those in Dekker and Middleton's play, and there is no strikingly original or surprising portrayal of Moll in the piece.
For this reason, I choose to focus my energies in this chapter on the more popular and influential work of Dekker and Middleton. Additionally, my decision to narrow my study down to *The Roaring Girl* and *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith* stems largely from practical concerns. While images of Moll continue to surface in Renaissance literature for a span of half a century, most are similar to those already discussed: short, tangential, plagiarized, or missing. The "autobiography" presents the researcher with the single most coherent, collected source of information about Moll's life. *The Roaring Girl* is the original theatre piece about this actual woman, and serves as a neat intersection between the real world and the world of the stage.

Paul Mulholland, in "The Date of *The Roaring Girl*," postulates that the play was most likely written and first produced in 1611 (18). As Mulholland states, *The Roaring Girl* is a comedy that combines romantic conflict with so-called "city comedy." The story follows multiple plots, among them the plight of two young lovers, Mary and Sebastian, who wish to wed but cannot gain the approval of Sebastian's father. Sebastian responds by pretending to fall in love with "mad" Moll in order to trick his father into accepting his first choice. Moll, in her cross-dressed state, was apparently such a disgrace that she could drive a father into fits of hysteria. Other plots radiate out as the play progresses, but all have the single unifying agent of Moll herself, "around whom the intrigues and various interests revolve," as Mulholland puts it (19). Moll learns of the plight of Sebastian and Mary, and is more than delighted to help them achieve their goal. Sir Alexander, Sebastian's father, devises a series of traps and pitfalls for Moll to fall into, ranging from a hiring a spy to shadow her, to hanging out all his jewelry in order to tempt Moll into crime when she visits his home. These plots all fail, as Dekker and Middleton present Moll as the one character possessed with a perfect and untaintable sense of virtue. The play ends with the lovers (Mary and Sebastian) united, Sir Alexander thoroughly abashed, and Moll triumphantly and unremorsefully single.

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The Roaring Girl is a rather conventional comedy. As L.C. Knights once commented, "We find--exciting discovery!--that gallants are likely to be in debt, that they make love to citizens' wives, that lawyers are concerned more for their profits than for justice, and that cutpurses are thieves" (258). Interestingly enough, however, the voice of morality and truth in the play is Moll: a cross-dresser, reformed thief, and still active swashbuckler. Although many modern feminists have become quite excited at the discovery of such a trailblazing female figure in Renaissance literature, this enthusiasm has to be tempered. Moll may be held up by Dekker and Middleton as the source of virtue in the play, but this admiration stems largely from her unequivocal support for the existing social order. Moll may be a unique example, but she herself wants to keep it that way. Mulholland elaborates: "To present Moll's stance as the model for all women...is to ignore contemporary traditions to which Moll herself refers as standards.... In rejecting marriage for herself...she does not adopt the stance of a rebel or reformer" (21;28). Moll does not encourage other women to follow her example, but instead does everything in her power to bind Mary into a marriage, and speaks of women as being weak, fallible creatures, especially in regards to sex. Moll notes:

'Tis impossible to know what woman is thoroughly honest, because she's never been thoroughly tried; I am of that certain belief, there are more queans in this town of their own making than of any man's provoking. Where lies the slackness then? Many a poor soul would down, and there's nobody will push 'em. (338-344)

Although she herself does not fit into the status quo, Dekker and Middleton's Moll is all in favor of folding other women into the system. 7

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7 There have been a number of articles in recent years dealing with Moll's so-called "protofeminism." Anthony Dawson, in "Mistris Hic & Haec: Representations of Moll Frith," examines the persona of Moll in the various manifestations it took in the plays, poems, and other literature of the day. He too is reluctant to term Moll an early feminist. Jo Miller agrees to a point in her article, "Women and the Market in The Roaring Girl." She notes that Moll, while stubborn in her decision to disregard gender roles, is equally eager to reinforce the expected behavior in other women. Moll is a complicated type of protofeminist, and her value to women today springs from what she reveals about the commodification of gender. Susan Krantz, in "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's The Roaring Girl and in London," supports Moll's feminist possibilities, tracing out three separate sexual identities for Moll: the prostitute, hermaphrodite, and what she labels the "bisexual ideal." Moll serves, with her cross-dressed, very public persona, to recuperate transgression for Renaissance women. May Beth Rose, in her article, "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in The Roaring Girl," astutely points out that Moll's cross-dressing is unique in that it was not being used for the purpose of disguise. Moll thus breaks free from the typical device of cross-dressing virgins in order to unite them with their lovers, and ultimately, marriage. Marjorie Garber takes this line of thinking a step further in "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl." In her view, the play revolves around circulating "parts," where women acquire penises and testicles, and gender constructions of male and female are totally undermined. Moll is the celebration of the androgynous, free from the constraints of
In a similar vein, the characters of Laxton and Sir Alexander, whom I will refer to frequently in this discussion, are intended by Dekker and Middleton to be objects of ridicule. Laxton's very name (lack stone, i.e., testicles) instantly marks him as a laughable character, and Sir Alexander's inflexible, warped sense of justice quickly becomes intolerable to an audience. At the same time, however, that they seem to be farcical, deplorable creatures, Alexander and Laxton still reveal crucial information about existing attitudes of the age. Both men fiercely criticize Moll, even as they violently sexualize her. Dekker and Middleton attempt to cast this denigration of Moll as repugnant behavior to be made fun of and avoided, but the very frequency of their comments throughout the play works against this aim. *The Roaring Girl*, despite a few genuinely heroic speeches by Moll herself, is saturated with sexual mud-slinging, directed almost exclusively against Moll and her cross-dressed mode of living. Andor Gomme notes that Sir Alexander and "the thoroughly unlikable Laxton are the slaves of conventional opinion.... [It is] the 'common voice' against which Moll has constantly to fight" (xxv; xv). While Dekker and Middleton may indeed hope that their audience will laugh at Laxton and Alexander, and support their squeaky-clean Moll, the attitudes expressed by these farcical characters are certainly familiar ones. Precisely by attempting to alter perceptions about Moll, Dekker and Middleton give greater circulation and attention to the attacks on Moll already prevalent in her society. We may laugh, but we will not be surprised, by any method--be it metaphor, double entendre, or otherwise--employed to explain Moll's unique lifestyle.

Both male and female roles. Stephen Orgel and Jean Howard also contribute to the debate with two separate articles, "The Subtexts of *The Roaring Girl,*" and "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of *The Roaring Girl,*" respectively.
"Her Birth Began Ere She was All Made"

Moll as Subhuman: Beast, Monster, and Hermaphrodite

The Roaring Girl and the autobiography begin their examinations of Moll in a strikingly different way than the antitheatrical tracts discussed cross-dressing, or Elizabeth's portraits crafted a persona. Playtext and autobiography cycle through a series of descriptions which fashion Moll as a subhuman entity. These figurings of Moll begin by equating Moll with animals, and more specifically, animals with uncontrollable sexual lusts. As mentioned previously, labeling Moll an animal was a considerable insult, because the animal kingdom and the human realm were seen as entirely separate entities. Religious explanations of the story of creation and man's rightful place as ruler of the world--as he was created in God's image--account for this perception of the world. Furthermore, Moll is not just seen as a sex-crazed beast, but a product of the sexual union of a human and an animal. Helkias Crooke, the most famous and influential anatomist of the Renaissance, discusses in his A Description On The Body of Man the monstrous offspring that such conjoinings produce. His descriptions match well with those used by the autobiography's introductory author and Dekker and Middleton's play to explain Moll.

The discussion of Moll as subhuman beast does not end with simple animal comparisons, however. Through a close examination of the medical treatise of Helkias Crooke, one sees that admission into the realm of humanity depends upon the individual's ability to fall into one of the two biologically determined genders--male or female. If the creature in question lacks any or all of the physical markers of a human male or female, or appears to be a mixture of the two sexes, that individual cannot be considered a human being. Hermaphrodites fall into this subhuman category, and Moll, who is discussed as a possible hermaphrodite, also is stripped of her human title. However, ultimately the
classification of Moll as monster or subhuman fails. The exclusionary tactic depends exclusively upon physical proof that the body is deformed. Moll could not be shown to have any physical defects, and as she herself boasted to a large theatre crowd, she could easily prove that she was a perfectly formed human female. This first attempt to exclude Moll from having to fit into the gender binary proves to be exhaustively tested, but unsatisfactory.

*The Roaring Girl* abounds in creative, descriptive phrases for Moll that reduce her to the status of subhuman monster. Some of the more benign phrases simply relegate her to the animal world, rather than locating her somewhere beyond all tolerance and description. In the play, Sir Alexander labels her a "she-fox," who will ravage "what lambs enter" her den (I.ii.240). Trapdoor, the scurrilous thief Sir Alexander hires to bring Moll to her ruin, dubs her "a duck that has eaten a frog," calling to mind a similar insult Moll herself recalls in her autobiography (III.i.5). There Moll relates the story of one Mr. Drake, who rejected her jesting advances by retorting that, "I looked as if some toad had ridden me and poisoned me into that shape, that he was altogether for a dainty duck, that I was not like that feather, and that my eggs were addle [rotten]" (67). Moll is not just an animal (and thus, inordinately lower than human), she is a horrendous mixture of two unfortunate beasts in one.

The anonymous author of the introduction to the autobiography also makes several references to Moll's excessive love for animals that collapse together simple affection and sexual attraction. He notes, "so that by this odd dress it came that no man can say or affirm that ever she had a sweetheart, or any such fond thing to dally with her. A good mastiff was the only thing she then affected and joyed in.... She was not wooed nor solicited by any man" (16). An odd sense of logic propels the sentence from its inception: the masculine attire itself was proof positive that no human male ever touched her. The sentence then further progresses from the sense of love in the chaste sense
(a "sweetheart"), to physical love ("dallying"), to the mention of the dog, to a reaffirmed denial of any human male interest. A short while later, sexual desire and an interest in animals are again conflated: "Her nuptials and wedding grew to be such a proverb as the kisses of Jack Adams, any one he could light upon, that is to say, as much design of love in one as in the other: all the matches she ever intended was at bearbaiting" (17).

Scientists and other philosophers of the Renaissance had strong beliefs regarding sex and the animal nature. Helkiah Crooke, a doctor and philosopher who penned the monumental and extremely influential anatomical and medical treatise *A Description On The Body of Man* (1633), refers to acts of bestiality among humans and animals. He writes, "Monkies...are of all creatures the most lascivious, as we....have also seen by the great Baboons which were here to be seen among us...It is therefore a very wicked and inhumane thing for Gentlewomen to cherish any kind of them in their bosoms yea in their beds, as I have seen some do with mine own eyes" (209). In addition, Crooke also comments on birds as sexual symbols. "Those Creatures sayeth Aristotle, whose Testicles are hidden within the Abdomen are more given to lustfull appetites than others, [such] as Birds" (204). Linking this back to the texts about Moll, the very frontispiece to the autobiography connects Moll indelibly with beasts. On Moll's right a baboon explores his nose and anus with two fingers, and to her upper left, just above her shoulder, a bird stretches forth a bald head (figure 30). Although these continual references to animals may seem innocuous or random in themselves, the sheer number of allusions indicate the sensibilities of the time. Later in his work, Crooke goes on to write about the potential for humans to be born with "a prone or declining Figure like a brute Beast...the face of a Dogge, of a Wolfe, a Fox, a Toad, or such like...if there be a confused permixtion of the Seed...as upon Sodome and unnatural copulations of Men and Beasts horrible Monsters have been brought into the World" (299-300). Moll, surrounded by representatives of the animal kingdom, is firmly inscribed into the animal, rather than human, family. Her past
(parents), present (current form), and future (offspring), are firmly segregated away from any connection to human bloodlines. Moll is a perversity and defamation of Nature that could only couple with other beasts.

Crooke also provides a further connection to *The Roaring Girl* and the autobiography, specifically in terms of their discussions of Moll's sexuality and basic humanity. Both sources imply that Moll's exclusion from humanity rests upon the inability to successfully apply one of the two essential sexes to her own body. Since Moll appears ambiguous in her sex, having clear female bodily components, but wearing male clothes, she is immediately associated with something not fully formed. Moll falls somewhere between a gross deformation of the human species and another one entirely. Fitting into only one of the categories of male or female, clearly, and with no confusion, thus appears to be a prerequisite for basic humanity. There is no clear sense of a "third sex," but an incessant need to divide everyone into two essential gender categories (that is, absolutely reliant upon biological sex). Crooke makes an interesting transition from actual animal qualities to the subhuman attributes also attributed to Moll when he discusses other philosophers' understandings of what constitutes a woman. He comments that:

Aristotle saieth, the Female is...the first monster in Nature.... [Galen adds.] If [Nature] erre from her scope and cannot generate a Male, then bringeth she forth the Female which is the first and most simple imperfection of a male, which therefore he calleth a creature lame, occasionall, and accessory, as if she were not of the mayne, but made by the bie.... But this opinion of Aristotle and Galen we cannot approue.... It is vnworthily said that she is an Error or Monster in Nature.... The female sexe as well as the male is a perfection of mankinde: some bee that call a woman *Animal occasionatum*....barbarous words to express a barbarous conceit; as if they should say, a Creature by the way, or made by mischance. (271;258)

Although Crooke is clearly denouncing these past conceptions of woman as an imperfect male--or a substandard human, as it were--the point remains relevant. The ideas and works of both Aristotle and Galen were circulating during this time period, so it is very likely that such conceptions of gender were upheld in certain circles. Stephen Orgel, in his book
Impersonations, makes this point. He notes that many of Helkias Crooke's ideas and arguments either stem from, or take as their original point of contention, the theories of Galen and Aristotle.

Writing for an audience of physicians, Crooke presents a detailed discussion of the homological sex thesis, which he accepts with minor reservations, and then follows it with an entirely contradictory thesis in which women are not inverted versions of men at all, but are genuinely different and have their own kind of perfection. Both [theories] derive ultimately from Aristotle, though the homological argument was associated principally with Galen. (21) 8

Dekker and Middleton, through the mouths of their characters, label Moll as "a Creature/ so strange in quality," and "this wench...who strays so from her kind,/ Nature repents she made her" (I.i.100-1;I.ii.17-18). Such comments create a strong resonance with Crooke's explanation of the Ancients. In this way, even if Moll had been a regular, properly dressed, properly behaved young woman, she probably still would be considered of imperfect quality. The fact that Moll draws attention to her own body specifically as sexual being through assuming male attire simply aggravates existing opinion regarding her worth.

Moll did not use her male attire for disguise; this is evident both in life as well as the play. In The Roaring Girl, she is well-known throughout the town, immediately addressed as "Moll!" "Moll!" by those who know and love her as she makes her first entrance. Additionally, Sir Alexander and others continually note her high visibility in the society: "Why, as good marry a beacon on a hill,/Which all the country fix their eyes upon,/As her" (II.i.144-5). In the autobiography, Moll relates a tale in which she once attempted to ride across the town on horseback disguised as a male page. The result: "a plaguey orange wench knew me, and no sooner let me pass but she cried out, 'Moll

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8 Orgel makes the larger point that, in his opinion, Crooke is the perfect example of a gender system plagued by confusion during the Renaissance. I disagree, as I see Crooke's arguments as overwhelmingly in favor of a biologically determined, two-gender system. Orgel maintains that Crooke hopelessly vacillates between a one- and two-gender system. I, however, see Crooke as coming down firmly in favor of the two-gender system. Crooke brings up the various arguments and fables related to a single-sex gender system (including the now-famous instance of the girl shepherdess, who, in chasing a stray animal, tripped and caused her vagina to fall outwards, turning her into a fully-functioning man), and systematically discounts them. While Crooke does not dismiss the example of the girl as outright falsehood, he is careful to point out that there may be other explanations for her seeming transformation of sex. Ultimately, Crooke is the first influential scientist to support the two-gender model; I believe this is no accident, but indelibly related to his time period.
Cutpurse on horseback!' which set the people that were passing by and the folks in their shops a hooting and hallowing" (autobiography 46-8). Random people on the street immediately know Moll, even if they needed that initial nudge to focus their attention. Moll could not hope (nor attempts, under normal circumstances) to maintain anonymity even in the large city: there will always be a "plaguey orange wench" who can read her visual signs and decipher her identity.

So the wider public does not see Moll as a man as a result of her costume. Instead, it finds its attention drawn to her sexuality, precisely because of the contrast between masculine attire and essential female form. Moll's sexualized cross-dressed identity gets expressed as a different sort of subhuman entity: the "Monster." In Dekker and Middleton's play, Sir Alexander has the harshest words for Moll, as his son threatens to marry this "abnormality." He declares, "It is a thing/ One knows not how to name; her birth began/ Ere she was all made," to which Sir Davy chimes in, "A monster! Tis some monster!" (I.ii.130-135). Again, Sir Alexander adds a short time later, "this wench...strays so far from her kind,/ Nature repents she made her" (II.i.217-218). Here, again, the deep-seated fear of Renaissance society to not be able to "name the thing"--that is, use essential biological sex to put that individual person into a category that must be male or female--rears its ugly head. These descriptions of Moll differ somewhat from associating her with the animal kingdom, although the two impulses originate from similar roots.

Crooke provides a medical definition of a "Monster." He devotes a large section of his chapter on "Generation" (that is, reproduction and the development of the fetus/infant) to "Monsters and Hermaphrodites." He describes Monsters in this way:

To depraued and illegitimate Conceptions must Monsters be referred.... Monsters Aristotle calleth Excursions and Digressions of Nature, taking his Metaphor from Trauellors, who wander out of their way yet goe still on their intended journey. For when Nature cannot accomplish and bring to perfection that which she intendeth, least she should be idle...she doth what she can.... A Monster is a fault, error, or preuarication of Nature working for some end of which she is frustrated because of some principle corrupted. (299)
A tension occurs in this definition, as well as in the characters' descriptions of Moll. Monster vacillates between being a natural, unavoidable birth defect and a creature that willfully accelerates its own debasement. In Crooke's version, the active principle comes from the metaphor of the traveler, for it suggests that the person has deliberately left the path, bringing the resulting chaos on him or herself. In Dekker and Middleton's version, Moll becomes both a victim of "a birth began ere she was all made," as well as her self-willed need to "stray so far from her kind" (l.ii.130-1;I.iii.217-18). In both medical and theatrical discourse, the deformed monster is a being who is a strange and ambiguous mix of tragic fate and self-inflicted freakishness. Taken one step further, Moll's male costume accrues an uncertain sort of power. It may indeed have the capacity to warp the body, but probably could not affect that change without some sort of defect already in existence for it to aggravate, as it were.

Crooke goes on in this passage about monsters to discuss the hermaphrodite, a topic much poured over in recent years by Renaissance scholars. In the smattering of articles concerning The Roaring Girl and Moll Cutpurse, the term "hermaphrodite" is frequently employed, often in clouded or uncertain ways. Marjorie Garber, in her article "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl", asserts that, "the roaring girl is a play about the circulation of parts, about women with penises and testicles and men who lack them" (223). Anthony Dawson, in "Mistres Hie & Haec: Representations of Moll Frith," pushes the hermaphroditic concept even further, using it as a symbol for the actor's doubleness in playing a woman playing a man, the play's tension between fiction and reality, as well as the conventional sexual meaning, where she "ceases to be a woman, and becomes a kind of unknowable hermaphrodite" (388; 399). In "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's The Roaring Girl and in London," Susan Krantz repeatedly uses the term "hermaphroditically attired" (all three authors are equally guilty of this fuzzy transference of the term), and deems Moll to be perceived by her society as "the
monster...a social outcast with no gender identity of its own" (12). There are difficulties
with all three scholars' interpretations of Moll and the term hermaphrodite. Getting back to
Crooke, a simple medical definition (upheld in the courts of law), was:

In the Sex, when they are of an vncertaine Sex, so that you may doubt whether it be
a Male, or a Female, or both, as Hermaphrodites.... In Males that commeth to pass
three manner of wayes. When in the...place between the Cod and the Fundament,
there appeareth a small Womans Priutie: againe, when the same happeneth in the
Cod but without any auoyding of Excrement by it: and thirdly, when in the same
place the Vrine issueth. In Females there is but one manner, when a Yard or Virile
member beareth out in the bottome of the Share-bone aboue the top of the Genitall
in the place of the Clitoris. (299;emphasis mine)

The most important consideration to be gained from this definition is that it deals
exclusively with biological sex: it cannot be applied to a person's costume, a person's
manner of living, or temperament. It comes down to whether, if Moll's clothing were
removed, one could see both sexual organs present. This is clearly not the case for Moll,
both in the play and in real life. Krantz, Garber, and Dawson do indeed get their cues from
the Dekker and Middleton text, which can be interpreted as viewing Moll as
hermaphroditic. Sir Alexander, for example, says of her, "Tis woman more than man,/Man
more than woman," Mrs. Goshawk claims, "Some will not stick to say she is a man,
and some, both man and woman;" and Moll adds, "I love to lie o' both o' th' bed myself,"
and later calls herself, "as good a man as your son" (l.ii.132-3;II.i.219
20;II.ii.39;V.ii.154).

However, the text, the autobiography, as well as court records regarding arrests of
Mary Frith all indicate quite clearly that, despite the banter, no one seriously believed that
Moll had any sexual defect. In The Roaring Girl, Sir Alexander, in the same breath that he
accuses her of being doubled-sexed, decries her as "A creature....Nature hath brought
forth/ To mock the sex of woman" (I.ii.129-130). The essential point is that she is being
clearly associated with the female sex: her ugly shape may cause people mirth or disgust,
but ultimately, she has been placed firmly back into that category. When Moll herself
appeared on the Fortune stage after a performance of *The Roaring Girl*, she did not resist the sexual binary--she was a woman. As a court record of the event points out (she was arrested for being a woman on a public stage "in the publique viewe of all the people"), she was quick to bellow out to all present that, "she thought many of them were of the opinion that she was a man, but if any of them would come back to her lodging they shoulde finde that she is a woman" (quoted in Mulholland 28). Moll's apparent willingness or acceptance of provocation to exhibit her genitalia demonstrates that she was in no way sexually abnormal, and also demonstrates her own anxiety (or cultural impulse) to explain her gendered identity through essential biological sex.

In the autobiography, Moll brings up her own hatred for an actual hermaphrodite she knew which kept many of the same paths as herself. She speaks of him very degradingly, noting:

There was also a fellow, a contemporary of mine as remarkable as myself, called Aniseed-Water Robin, who was clothed very near my antic mode, being a hermaphrodite, a person of both sexes; him I could by no means endure, being the very derision of nature's impotency, whose redundancy in making him man and woman had in effect made him neither...being but one step removed from a natural changeling [idiot], a kind of mockery...of me, who was then counted for an artificial one. And indeed I think Nature owed me a spite in sending that thing into the world to mate and match me, that nothing might be without a peer.... It begot in me a natural abhorrence of him with so strange an apathy that what by threats and my private instigating of the boys to fall upon and throw dirt at him, I made him quit my walk...that I might have no further scandal among my neighbors, who used to say, "Here comes Moll's husband." (45-6)

This despisal points to both Moll's loathing of his deformity, and a desire to propel such an image of sexual misshapenness away from herself, both for her own sense of self-worth as well as society's perceptions of her. She dismisses him from her league by labeling him a mere idiot (thus adding another unfortunate defect of Nature to his already existing condition), impotent and pathetic of both form and character. Moll goes so far as to physically assault him, expressing to herself and those around her her total disassociation with his sort of being. In other words, Moll is quick to use him as an example of what she
is not. She does note where parallels can be drawn between himself and her, and she is quick to pick up on her society's insinuations. Furthermore, although Renaissance English doctors defined the hermaphrodite as a biological mix of both sexes, they would even place the hermaphrodite back into the binary gender system. Note that Moll will always refer to Robin as "he," despite her attempts to write him off as a type of "nothing." Society, too, views him as predominately male, which appears to be enough to count for the whole being, as they label him "Moll's husband." This is particularly crucial because it implies his male sexual functions have not been impaired: as a play like Jonson's *Epicoene* points out, if the man was unable to "perform his duties as a husband"--that is, maintain an erection and ejaculate inside of his wife--the marriage could be made null and void by the wife.

This creates an immediate link back to Crooke's original definition of the hermaphrodite, where once again one can see the apparent difficulty inside of the Renaissance mindset to work outside of a binary gender system. Crooke categorizes these sexual "monsters" as male or female hermaphrodites--the only classification system he uses for this type of birth defect. In this way, even the biological hermaphrodite (which Moll assuredly is not) never falls into the category of "nothing," but accepts the role of male or female as determined by the prevalence of the genitalia. This serves to counter Dawson's argument that Moll "ceases to be a woman," for society and Moll herself both steadfastly refuse to seriously contemplate the notion that she could be anything but. Moll may be a "defect," she may indeed be a horrific, unthinkable creature because of her shameless acquisition of male attire, but she remains nevertheless a steadfastly female monstrosity.

As for Garber's assertion that Moll has acquired testicles and a penis, both of these can be shown to be false. First of all, Garber makes note of Sir Alexander's cry, "What, will he marry a monster with two trinkets [testicles]?", during the extended joke concerning Moll's new extra "yard" (a slang term for a penis) when her tailor discusses her new
breeches with her. The tailor notes, "Your breeches, then, will take up a yard more... It shall stand round and full, I warrant you" (II.ii.81;90-92). However, she fails to comprehend two essential points. Firstly, Moll's response to her tailor: "Well, pray, look it be put in then," reassures the listener that the so-called penis is nothing more than fabric after all; it may serve as a phallus, but it is quite obviously an external addition and not a new component of Moll's anatomy. Secondly, Garber appears to be unaware that, according to medical beliefs of the time, women too were thought to possess testicles (what are actually the ovaries; they are described as testicles which lacked the heat to push them outside of the body). Crooke comments, "The Testicles which because of the in-bred coldnes of women are included within the lower venter... doe lye one on either side at the sides of the matrix [womb].... We know assuredly that those women whose testicles are disposed are barren & vnfruitfull: for women as well as men do yeeld seed, but cold" (218-9). In other words, there are no genitalia in circulation in this play, hopping from surprised man to smug woman.

It therefore appears that Dekker and Middleton, Moll herself, and the greater London society briefly embraced the notion of explaining away Moll's cross-dressing as evidence of a subhuman quality. Beast or animal comparisons were tried out, as was the notion of Moll as Monster or Hermaphrodite. Ultimately, however, the subhuman explanation did not hold up to scrutiny, even for those living during that time period. As Moll was easily proven to be a perfectly formed woman (at least in terms of genitalia), the subhuman label could not dispel the anxiety Moll, as a stubborn anomaly defying clear classification, stirred up. Both play and biography thus change their tactics midways through the courses of their stories, and begin to focus more on Moll as extremely human, but infected with disease and illness generated through her outlandish clothes and "masculine" habits. Moll now is explained away as being all too human, but hopelessly diseased.
"Wrought Upon the Weakness of Thy Blood"; Moll as Diseased Human:

"The Permixtion of the Seedes," Body vs. Spirit, Communicable Threat

Just as religious discourse makes a strict division between the animal and human kingdoms, scientific discourse draws an uncrossable line between the human male and female. Crooke's discussions of embryonic development assert that men and women are irrevocably divided from one another even in the earliest periods of gestation in the womb. Using Crooke's model of human generation, Moll is basically an unfortunate "permixtion" of a female body and masculine spirit. When her parents' seeds mingled in the womb, a devastating combination of traits won out. Moll is essentially the victim of what we might label a "spiritual" birth defect: a man's soul trapped in a woman's body. There is no hope for Moll to live a "normal" human life, because her very being is diseased, and this illness will escalate in potency as she grows older until it consumes her body and causes total degeneration. Moll's behavior--her predilection for sword-fighting, drinking, and male attire--can only be labeled as "masculine" by the society. Since the traits are located within a "feminine" body, however, they have to be accounted for. A discourse of disease appears to be the easiest way of doing so.

Both autobiography and Dekker and Middleton's play abound in descriptions of Moll as a diseased human. Moll's friction against the gender binary is explained away as an incurable illness that will destroy the unfortunate victim. A discourse of disease runs into immediate difficulties, however. Crooke, the introducer to the autobiography, and Dekker and Middleton all inevitably admit the dangers inherent in Moll's disease. The problem with a discourse of illness to exclude Moll from the gender binary is that it raises the question of communicability. All the authors describe Moll's habit of cross-dressing through metaphors of highly contagious disease--the pox, syphilis, and so forth. If Moll
has the potential of transmitting this illness to others in the society, the tactic of exclusion begins to work against its own interests. Moll is excluded from the binary, but she creates a whole host of other individuals to be accounted for. Excluding one person can keep the binary safe, but the more exceptions that have to be made, the greater the threat to the stability of the existing gender system. The process the authors go through to reach this understanding, however, reveals a great deal about Renaissance attitudes towards gender.

Examining the medical discourse of the age does reveal a possible explanation for Moll's "strange" amalgam of so-called "feminine" and "masculine" qualities. Crooke, in his chapter on "Generation", spends a good deal of time dissecting how male or female children are created, what sure warning signs of a certain sex can be detected while the child is still in the womb, and how the different temperaments of both sexes come to pass. Crooke's discussions of the tell-tale signs of a fetus's gender are relevant in themselves, because they again point to the continuing need of Renaissance society to divide and classify. Boys and girls, Crooke argues, are so different in form and nature that their very development must take different paths. So, for example, Crooke insists that a woman "that goeth with a manchilde is well coloured, she that goeth with a womanchild is swarthy or pale coloured. Again, in the same place, Male children are borne on the right side, Females in the left" (263). Furthermore, male children begin to move and kick earlier, consume more blood, and are typically born one to two months earlier than female babies. There is a literal line drawn within the mother's womb which boys and girls must not step over, the supposedly perforated tissue in the womb dividing it "into the right and left bosome" (233). For Moll to then begin to dress and act like a man, with her pipe smoking and sword-play, becomes an unthinkable proposition, and an unexplainable enigma.

Moll's autobiography has an anonymous introduction to it, and within these short pages, the author manages to neatly crystallize the concern expressed again and again by Dekker and Middleton's play, the court system, and her general society. The author
writes, "She was the living description and portraiture of a schism and separation.... It was impossible to make one piece of so various a subject as she was both to herself and others" (3:5). Once again, Moll represents a frightening chasm, a unexplainable paradox which is not quite male and not quite female, but will be forced into one of those categories by society. Moll's "maleness" comes first and foremost from her attire, which would vary from either full man's dress (that is, breeches and doublet or jerkin), or, especially as she grew older, a hodgepodge of male and female articles (as, for example, in the play The Roaring Girl, where Moll first enters in "a frieze [wool] jerkin and a black safeguard [overskirts to protect the skirts underneath from filth]" (II.i.)).

It is important to notice the degree to which clothing acquired a gender of its own during this period. The clothes of one sex became equated with that sex, in a very literal sense. In The Roaring Girl, Dekker and Middleton write at one point in the stage directions, "Enter Moll, like a man" (III.i.). The clothing has collapsed into gender in a short phrase: "like a man" has the double meaning of both "in male attire" and "as a male would enter, walk, sit, or fight." At the same time, the same stubborn gender binary reasserts itself, for, by using "like," Dekker and Middleton signal to the reader that Moll has not become a man, but only imitates one. Sir Alexander displays this odd logic even more strikingly as he spies on his son Sebastian seemingly attempting to woo Moll, lamenting, "I have brought up my son to marry a Dutch slop and a French doublet" (II.ii.97-99). Moll's male clothing completely overwhelms and eradicates her entire entity, and Sir Alexander gives us the impression his son will be marrying scraps of fabric rather than a flesh-and-blood human. His mind cannot simultaneously locate two genders on the same body, so he removes the female body from the equation. He further demonstrates this binary, either/or mentality in his very next breath, where he asserts, "If the wife go in breeches, the man must wear long coats like a fool" (II.ii.83-4). In this case, the clothing's
gender swallows the woman's gender, and as a result, the man must also submit himself to being sexually debased by his attire.

But the introducer of Moll's autobiography cannot emulate Sir Alexander and dismiss Moll through her clothing. The author knows he is introducing a woman, whose sex is well-known by his audience, and so he is forced to take a different approach to solving the enigma that is Moll. Instead of equating her with her clothes, the introducer devises the concept of the "mannish" woman, who picks out her male clothes in order to downplay her female form as much as possible, because of its imperfect beauty. She is a fully formed human female, the author argues, but that is more to be pitied, because she is such an ugly and undesirable specimen of that sex. He relates:

General we are so much acquainted with ourselves, and so often do dislike the effect of too familiarity, that though we cannot alter the inside, yet we diversify the outside with all the borrowed pomp of art in our habits; no doubt Moll's converse with herself (whose disinviting eyes and look sink inwards to her breast when they could have no regard abroad) informed her of her defects, and that she was not made for the pleasure or delight of man: and therefore since she could not be honored with him she would be honored by him in that garb and manner of raiment he wore--some wenches have been got with child with the only shaking of the breeches; whereof having no great hopes, she resolved to usurp and invade the doublet, and vie and brave manhood, which she could not tempt nor allure. (15)

Moll is presented as a classic case of penis envy: since her body and face are such that she cannot get a man in the traditional manner, she will become one herself to compensate. Of course, as the author points out, there is no real hope for her to achieve this aim, since she can only become pregnant, not impregnate. She will always lack that crucial part.

At the same time, however, that the author is particularly keen to point out Moll's inability to acquire a penis through any route, he also focuses on her "masculine spirit and manners." He makes an extensive list of all of her unfeminine ways, including: "she could not endure that sedentary life of sewing or stitching; a sampler was a grievous as a winding-sheet," "she could not endure the bakehouse, or that magpie chat of the wenches...washing, wringing, and starching were as welcome as fasting days unto her,"
and "above all she had a natural abhorrence to the tending of children, to whom she ever had an averseness in her mind equal to the sterility and barrenness in her womb" (10;13-4). Each one of these listed items makes reference to a physical ailment: death, starvation, and barrenness. The author associates the schism in Moll's bodily gender and mannered gender with disease, illness, and torment. Although Moll was not born a deformed sexual creature (although she may have been fashioned as a less fortunate one, in terms of looks), there is something in her spirit or temperament which is causing her depravity. It is as if the spirit of a man has been hopelessly trapped inside an unavoidably female body, to the eternal detriment of both parts.

Helkiah Crooke concurs with the autobiography's introduction. In the aforementioned chapter on "Generation," Crooke delves into the complexities of what is termed the "temperament," or spiritual/emotional make-up of the person. He provides a detailed list of all of the different possible combinations of types of males and females, based on the temperature and concentration of both the mother and father's seeds:

If both the Parents yeeld a Masculine Seed they breed Male Children of a noble and generous disposition.... If from the Man issue Masculine Seed from the Woman Feminine and the Masculine preuail a Male will be generated, but lesse generous & strong than the former. If from the Woman there issue Masculine Seed, from the Man Feminine and the Masculine ouercome a Male will be generated, but womanish, soft, base, and effeminate. The verie like may be said of the generation of Females: for if from both Parents doe issue Feminine Seed a Female will be procreated most weake and womanish...if from the Woman proceed a Feminine Seed and from the Man a Masculine, and yet the Feminine ouercometh, Women are begotten bold and moderate. If from the Man proceed Feminine Seed and from the Woman Masculine and the Womans Seed preuaile, Women are begotted...fierce and mannish. The Temper therefore of the Seed and the victorie in the permixtion are the causes of the similitude of the Sex. (308; emphasis mine)

Crooke believes that the temperament and the bodily sex do not always coincide. Instead, with every conception, a battle ensues amidst the seed, and depending on the particular combination and which parent's seed finally triumphs, children are produced whose manners mesh to varying degrees with their bodily gender. In other words, a person might be a body/spirit sexual duality, and still be completely biologically normal (and still be
forced into the gender category that matches his/her essential sex). In Moll's case, she would fall into the last category Crooke lists: the fierce and mannish woman created as an unfortunate, but unavoidable mixture of her parents' seeds. The case sounds very much like a contemporary explanation of a genetic birth defect, keeping in mind that it was a spiritual deformity, rather than a physical one.

Spiritual disease makes the transition to a bodily one (though not a question of genital defect) through the relationship between temperament and what was known as the "humors." The term temperament actually comes from the inaccurate, but influential belief of Greek, Roman, and Renaissance physicians that the essential life property of a human being was heat (temperament=temperature). Heat was the essential element in reproduction and all other life-sustaining activities. Additionally, temperature played a key role in differentiating men and women, as men were naturally hotter and women more cold and sluggish, because:

His body was made to endure travel, as also that his mind should be stout and invincible to undergo dangers, the only hearing of whereof will drive a woman as we say out of her little wits. The woman was ordained to receive and conceive the seed of the man...women's pulses are more frequent and swift...for the Arteries being small and narrow, and oppressed with abundance of crude and cold humors, could not be so extended and dilated as in men.... Their end is nearer, for that their principles of life are weaker. (Crooke 274-6)

However, individual men could be colder than average and some women were much hotter than normal. This difference in heat could strikingly affect the person's mannerisms and behavior, making them appear to act in a manner traditionally reserved for the opposite sex. Adjectives like "womanish" or "mannish" demonstrate the cross-over in temperament that occasionally occurred. Temperament was closely associated with the "humors" of the body, which consisted of four different types of fluids that needed to be in balance in order for the person to be healthy: blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm. When one of these four elements was found to be in greater proportion than the others, the result was one of an infinite number of illnesses. Interestingly enough, as temperament was tied to
gender, disease became similarly differentiated between men and women. Women were understood to be far more susceptible to illnesses of all kinds, due to the coldness and weakness of their blood; these ranged from "the green sickness, that epidemical disease of maidens," to melancholy, to "fits of the mother," or hysteria, thought to be caused by the unseasonable movements of the uterus.

Having acquired this background knowledge about the prevailing beliefs concerning temperament and illness, it is perhaps not altogether surprising to locate a considerable amount of discourse in Moll's autobiography and in Dekker and Middleton's play which connects Moll's cross-dressing to disease and bodily harm. Moll herself describes her tendency to exhibit a "masculine spirit" as a result of her being "so wholly distempered and so estranged...I was taken," she continues, "for a woman of a single and strange humor" (22;28). Moll is viewed as a woman by society affected by an imbalance of humors, leading to an excessive and extraordinary temperament. Shortly thereafter, Moll affirms this position further, noting that, "I was in no way difficult or curiously cautious in my conversation, but with all freedom...allowed myself in my humors" (32). Instead of exhibiting the "feminine" virtue of modesty and parsimony in speech, Moll allows full rein to her distemperment—that is, the "masculine" tendency to speak out, and speak often. Precisely because her body is seen as unmistakably female, any actions or predilections that do not match up with expected female norms become justified through medical discourse as an expression of imbalanced humors. Moll's masculine tendencies are thus taken entirely out of her own conscious control; both she and the larger society deny her (as it is a masculine property) the will to act in a distinctly "unfeminine" way. Just as a high fever can induce a person to spew forth sentences her or she cannot control or understand, so Moll's humors push her unremittingly into these masculine displays.

Once again, the most curious aspect of these humors is the absolute gender binary they create. Once Moll's temperament begins to display "masculine" predilections, she
must forgo any "feminine" pleasures. As mentioned by the introductory author to her autobiography, "a quarterstaff was fitter to her hand than a distaff, stave and tail instead of spinning and reeling" (13). It appears to be absolutely incomprehensible to the Renaissance imagination that a person might be able to enjoy both sewing and swordplay. When Moll's humors were out of balance, she lost her femaleness; this does not mean she became a man, but rather that she was a woman who could not control her pleasure in "male" activities. This coincides well with the concept of a disease, for it is reminiscent of a cancer, which, once begun, simply multiplies and multiplies its mutant, malignant self to the destruction of the host body. Moll's body, having the unfortunate mixture of seeds which destined her for a mannish spirit, finds after her birth that that masculine entity grows and expands and destroys her being in the process. The result, as the introductory pages say, is Moll's "virility and manliness" (14).

Moll's descriptions of the last years of her life in the autobiography also reveal the same discourse of disease related to cross-dressing and unwomanly behavior. She describes how both her body and mind have become ravaged by illness:

Being grown crazy in my body and discontented in my mind, I yielded to the next distemper that approached me.... It was a dropsy, a disease whose cause you will easily guess from my past life, but it had such strange and terrible symptoms that I thought I was possessed and that the devil was got within my doublet.... I was forced to leave off that upper part of my garment and do penance again in a blanket...as for my belly, from a withered, dried, and wrinkled piece of skin, it was grown the tightest, roundest globe of flesh that ever any beauteous lady strutted with, to the ostentation of her fertility and the generosity of her nature. I must tell you I could not but proud myself in it, and though nature had reserved that kindness for me at the last, insomuch that I could have almost been impregnated...with my own fancy and imagination.... But this belly of mine, the certain forerunner of my dissolution; for there was no blood that was generative in my belly, but only that destructive of the grape, which by my excesses was now turned into water. (92-3)

Moll's female body has finally caught up with her, punishing her with a sort of false pregnancy. Moll's last disease is one connected with procreation, appropriately enough, and the normally lucrative and essential mother's blood has been replaced by a sickly, waterish ill humor. Through the autobiography one finds that Moll's only child is her own
destruction, for the mixture of female form and masculine spirit has wasted away her original flesh. The metaphor of cancer has become literalized in this tumor mistaken for a child that will not just seek nourishment from Moll, but will suck her very life-force from her. The image is proof that Moll never had a chance as a hermaphrodite, for she was not only barren in life, but the very mixture of male and female has brought about her demise.

In Dekker and Middleton's play, disease figures just as largely in connection to Moll. Firstly, Moll's very name becomes indelibly linked with a sort of sickness: she is repeatedly referred to as "Mad Moll." Dekker and Middleton note in the prologue that "the subject being mean;/ A roaring girl...Shall fill with laughter our vast theatre" (Prologue 8-10). This sentence has, of course, the double meaning that the audience may be laughing at Moll, just as families would gather at Bedlam to observe the insane, and modern day families might visit a zoo. Conversely, it has the more subtle implication that Moll may indeed be laughing at us, whether out of madness or scorn. Looking back to Crooke's treatise, this very duality is discussed through the example of the distinction between Wrath and Anger. Throughout the play, Moll is excessively prone to aggressive moves and quick to draw her sword at the slightest provocation. Crooke notes:

> Anger and Wrath are two different things. Anger is a disease of a weake mind which cannot moderate it selfe but is easily inflamed, such is in women, children and weake and cowardly men...but Wrath...belongs to stout hearts.... The Temper of these two sorts is very different; for those that are angry, pettish, fretfull, or wantle...are cold; but those that are wrathfull are hot. If therefore women be...easily mooued off the hindges, that they haue from their cold Temper and from the impotencie and weaknes of their mind...that is rather to be accounted woodnes [madness] then fortitude. (276)

Moll, then, clearly falls into the category of a madwoman, rather than a disdainful superior. Crooke's use of terms like "a weake mind," an inability to "moderate it selfe," "impotencie" of mind, and "woodnes" all link any woman's tendency to exhibit so-called "masculine" assertive behavior as a type of mental illness. It is seen as something necessarily opposed
to their own bodies, and, by extension, their true gender, and, being in conflict, forces that body to undergo stress and damage.

Dekker and Middleton do not draw the line at mental illness, however, which can legitimately be claimed an ephemeral and poorly defined illness during this time period. A thief in the piece does not stop at just one sickness, but flings them all on her in an epitaph, hoping one will prove true: "All the diseases of sixteen hospitals boil her!" he cries (V.i.310-11). Sir Alexander hurls many types of illnesses at Moll throughout the play. Early on in the piece, he tells his son she is "a scurvy woman," just after his son has scornfully mocked his father's rants by calling Moll, "a flesh-fly" (l.ii.126). Sir Alexander continues to press the metaphor, informing Sebastian, "Thou'rt sick at heart.... What gentleman but thou, knowing his disease/ Mortal, would shun the cure!" (l.ii.150-152). Moll is not just a danger to herself, but appears to possess a type of sexually transmitted disease which can leap from her to any man she comes into intimate contact with. Most importantly, the disease will prove just as fatal to Sebastian as to herself, demonstrating the incredible level of anxiety about cross-dressing circulating through the society at this time. The practice takes on the frightening scale of the plague, or perhaps "the French disease" (syphilis).

Moll's association with communicable disease deepens as the play progresses. Trapdoor directly connects Moll to the plague at one point, when Sir Alexander asks him if he is sure Sebastian and Moll are to meet, and, it is implied, have sex: "As of the pox after the term," Trapdoor responds (III.iii.35). Sebastian himself questions his father's repeated warnings and pleas, asking, "Why, is the name of Moll so fatal, sir?", implying that it does not even take her physical presence to corrupt another's body, but just the mere mention of her name, which is so packed with meaning that it alone has the same noxious qualities as the person herself (II.ii.158). Closely related to disease is the continual reference to poison and the tainting of blood which also attaches itself to Moll in the play. Sir Adam asks
Sebastian, "Will you love such a poison?" (I.ii.149). Sir Alexander echoes the sentiment somewhat later when he demands of his son, "What devil or drug/Hath wrought upon the weakness of thy blood?... Oh, wake from thy drowsy and enchanted shame,/Wherein thy soul sits...Flattered and poisoned!" (II.ii.1126-131). Just as the combination of masculine spirit and female body has ravaged Moll's body, her very presence has the capacity to instigate the same humor imbalance and devastation in others. One final reference to poison neatly links Moll's autobiography back to the play: Openwork speaks at one point about his hatred of the fashion of women's masks, making an exception only in the case of "bad ones.... Hide none but bad ones, for they poison men's sights" (IV.ii.130). One is reminded of the introductory author's diligent explanations of Moll's unfortunate ugliness, and the way that her masculine spirit only compounded her difficulties. Moll's homeliness, combined with her cross-dressed, diseased form, is not only unpleasant to the eye, but corrodes and putrefies those that choose to look on her as well. This Medusa-like effect attributed to Moll is a bit of foreshadowing into my next section, which explores how mythical, superhuman figures were applied to Moll in a third attempt to make sense of and categorize once and for all her strange, ambiguous gender.

Both Dekker and Middleton's play and Moll's autobiography evidence real similarities to the anti-theatricalists' views on cross-dressing in the theatre, and the extensive discourse of disease they used to frame their opinions. According to antitheatricalists, the end result of laying the opposite sex's clothes on the wrong gendered body did not result in an alteration of sex, as many modern scholars have proposed, but rather a degeneration into a sort of "nothing:" that is, a body twisted and deformed so far as to annihilate gender and sex altogether. In Moll's case, a similar, though not exact, phenomenon occurs. Moll's contemporaries, on first viewing her confused sexual symbols, try to categorize her as subhuman, that is, a beast or a hermaphrodite. Finding neither of these classifications truly fit, as her bodily sex is irrefutably female, the next
metaphor put in place is a model of disease: both "spiritual" and physical, in its communicable nature. Moll is a human being now, but isolated from the rest of the society by the unfortunate disease that has struck her in her very generative state: the wrong combination of seed won out, and produced a woman in body but masculine in spirit. In this slightly altered sense from the antitheatricalists, then, Moll becomes another example of a "nothing," because her male spirit and female body simply cannot coexist with one another. The result is a diseased and dangerous nature which accelerates in its destructive properties on the body as she ages and has the very real potential to leap from her body and infect those surrounding her. Moll defies the sexual classification system Renaissance society insists upon, and in so doing, she incurs its persistent and inexhaustible attention, as the court, playwrights, and even Moll herself labor to come up with a satisfactory label for her, once and for all.

The model of disease thus proved to be only partially successful in explaining Moll's strange and unique status as a cross-dressed woman. Within its discourse, she has managed to preserve an element of both sexes within her singular nature. This results in a violation of the discrete binary sexual classification system maintained in legal and medical discourses. Finally, another categorization of Moll emerges which would leave the binary system intact: the creation of Moll as superhuman, that is, mythical in scope and thus removed from "normal" human beings. Moll is thrust outside the bounds of humanity for a second time (and, in a sense, a third, for like lepers and other victims of serious disease, society had no qualms in thrusting such individuals outside their circles of living), but on the other end of the scale. Instead of being reduced to the pitiful state of lowly beast or cruel joke of Nature, Moll is inflated to goddess status. In this way, in a manner parallel to, though not equivalent to Queen Elizabeth's elevation to cult-like status, Moll no longer resides among human beings, and thus, can be successfully released from the sexual binary
code. If Moll is not human, her deviation is no longer threatening to the traditional classification.

Moll as Superhuman: Goddesses, Idols, and Demons

One final attempt is made in The Roaring Girl and the autobiography to successfully account for Moll's violation of the gender binary. Moll is formulated as a goddess, not only by others seeking to explain her cross-dressing and "masculine" behavior, but herself as well. Moll is a product of her society, and she is fully aware that she does not fit in to that society's understanding of gender. Moll therefore tries to account for her oddity using the same method of exclusion as the playwrights and her introductory author. As biological divisions of gender are so intricately tied to notions of sex, it is not surprising that Moll's goddess identity gets equated with a sexual nature. Allusions to Venus, mermaids, and other lusty beings saturate the works. Dekker and Middleton are careful to show their disapproval of those that would violently sexualize Moll. They present characters such as Laxton, Alexander, and Trapdoor as men so dishonorable they would profane a god(dess).

Despite all of the mythologizing that is occurring, Moll still remains little more than a false god or idol. Just as no one really believed she was a real hermaphrodite, neither Dekker and Middleton nor the autobiography's introducer are genuinely asserting that Moll is a bona fide goddess. The label is used simply to exclude her from the gender binary. The ultimate goal of her mythification is not to hold her up as a shining example to all women, but rather to explain her mannerisms as being unique, and existing in an isolated realm. Moll excluded as a superhuman does not create the same potential for contagion as Moll as diseased human. Making Moll a goddess is an easy, convenient way to solve the
quandary of how to simultaneously explain her and maintain the biologically determined
gender binary.

However, just as in the other two attempts at exclusion, mythologizing Moll has its
own difficulties. Most important of these is the malignant, dangerous power that casting
her as a goddess allows. The depictions of Moll in her various goddess-like forms all
begin to turn demonic. Moll gets figured as witch, doppelgänger, demonic spirit: in short,
a potentially unstoppable and destructive force. While the "superhuman" model of
exclusion may limit the contagion of Moll's example, it invests her with an unsettling
degree of power within her society.

In Moll's autobiography, the author of the introductory section clearly spells out the
leap from the model of disease to mythic status. He writes of Moll:

I have thus traced from her originals to show in what proportions she differed from
and approached to them, and that neither the derivations of the same blood, the
assimilation and resemblance of parts, can conform the mind and the faculties
thereof or endure it with the like qualities, but that there is a prevalent power of our
stars which overrules all, and resists and subdues the additional and auxiliary
strength and reserves of education: and this I have said to be Mercury in
conjunction with, or rather in the house of Venus at her nativity. (11)

The author openly rejects the discourse of disease which he has toyed with, in favor of an
influence which comes not from Earth, but somewhere in the heavens, thanks to the
"power of our stars." This may appear to be nothing more than a simple reference to a
belief in horoscopes, but it is interesting how closely Moll's actions and manner of life
emulate those of the two gods. The author continues, "Mercury you must know...is of a
thievish, cheating, deceitful influence...for the other of Venus...she has dominion over all
whores, bawds, pimps" (12). During her life, Moll was involved both in pickpocketing
and prostitution, thereby conjoining the qualities of these two gods, as if she were the
literal offspring of them. Indeed, one of the myths concerning Mercury is that he was the
sexual companion of Venus, and the father of Hermaphroditus [Hermes being Mercury,
Aphrodite being Venus]. In this way, Moll is not a literal hermaphrodite, but she is the
combination of the qualities of both gods, and, as their offspring, she transcends human affairs.

The mythical references to Moll continue in the introduction, impressive both in number as well as variety. She is further called, "her nymphship," "virago," "mad Cassandra," "this Sybilla Tyburnia," compared to Hercules and Sardanapalus, as well as "the Colossus of female subtlety" (1;3;15;20). The growing list of mythic figures evidences the inability of the author to settle on one. This, in turn, recalls previous frustrated attempts at categorization. Multiple levels of exclusionary metaphors have been tried out and rejected: subhuman, diseased human, superhuman. Within the last category, Moll begins to take on a unique omen-like status. The author of the introduction argues that Moll is something so special, so unique, that she must be a portent. "We are not always bound to look upward in the air, as hogs do against windy weather, for prognostics and revelations of future occurrences and events," he comments. "Our angry fates do sometimes dispense and afford us more familiar and near hints and omens of their displeasure...in the strange yet ridiculous corruptions and indispositions of humors, which they perspicuously manifested in this epicoene wonder" (2). Like cauls over babies faces, or two-headed calves, Moll serves as symbol of the gods' anger. This provides a tie back to the subhuman category: she is seen as a kind of freak which people gawk at and take comfort from in their own relative perfection. Moll is more than a defect, though: she is a sign from God, and, as such, placed outside of normal human boundaries.

Moll occasionally represents herself as a mythic figure. During the ride across town when she is disguised as a trumpeter, and after which she is discovered by the orange wench, the town takes chase, threatening to "pull her down" from horseback. Moll recognizes the real threat in the situation, but her mind begins to wander, and she explains, "In my own thoughts I was quite another thing...Squirex to Dulcinea of Toboso, the most incomparably beloved lady of Don Quixote.... Presently I had other representations.
Methought those about the door were the very people that gazed at Jane Shore [the mistress of King Edward IV] in her scornful and unpitied misery when she laid herself down to die" (47-8). Moll recognizes some component of herself which simply cannot be described by ordinary human representations, and so she relies on figures of legend to construct herself and her actions. Of course, this sort of imagery reveals a degree of self-deception, since Moll could not deal with the situation as Moll Cutpurse threatened by an angry horde. However, as Moll had not only Dekker and Middleton's play written about her, but a whole series of poems and another play entitled *Amends for Ladies*, all of which tend to address Moll in this heroic manner, it is not surprising that Moll's mind should follow the same pattern of thought. Moll was not just a product of her own actions. Very literally, she was the product of her society, and it benefited from exploiting her image in plays, ballads, and poems.

Moll does not end her mythic comparisons there, however. Her visions become more extravagant as she progresses through the telling of her life. Not only does she become the "Queen Regent of Misrule," but, in describing the period of her life where she was a prostitute, Moll describes her home as "a double temple of Priapus and Venus, frequented by votaries of both sorts, to whose desires my answers (the oracles of a couch chair where I sat as chief priestess) were always favorably accommodated" (70). Moll is not quite willing to commit herself to the same hubris the author displayed in identifying her with various goddesses. Instead, she is content to sit one short step below immortal status. Even the furniture takes on a new sacred quality, becoming the holy seat where knowledge is imparted by Moll, the oracle and priestess. Although she is not a true goddess, her status as high priestess is still enough to disassociate her from humanity (just as the oracle at Delphi was an isolated woman completely shut off from the outside world and not considered a woman, but rather a mouth for the god).
Greek and Roman gods were, of course, in great circulation in the various arts during the Renaissance. It is important to remember, however, that they merely symbolized the epic power of classical eras. They made great stories, and served as a way to exalt a person without encroaching on the Judeo-Christian sacred turf. In other words, the Greek and Roman gods were simultaneously beyond humans and yet nothing: the epic and the minuscule mixed into one. By identifying her with gods that had retained their epic qualities but lost their true power, Moll's aberrant behavior and ambiguous sexuality was dealt with without truly tackling the problem. Calling her a goddess was a subterfuge--a way to relieve the pressure of fitting her or appropriately excusing her from the gender binary without having to truly explain or make sense of her. It was a quick fix, in other words.

The same epic style of description carries over to Dekker and Middleton's play. The overall tone of the piece is strongly in support of Moll, rather than an effort to mock or degrade her. The playwrights must have done a satisfactory job, for, as is not only promised in their epilogue but actually recorded as fact in the Consistory of London Correction Book (apparently the authorities were far less taken by Moll!), Moll appeared on the Fortune stage after several performances of the play. Dekker and Middleton assure the audience, "The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence,/ Shall on this stage give larger recompense" (Epilogue 35-36). The court records elaborate: "Being at a playe about 3 quarters of a yeare since at the ffortune [theatre] in mans apparell & in her boote & with a sword by her syde, she told the company...some other imodest & lascivious speaches.... And also sat there vppon the stage in the publique viewe of all the people there...& played vpon her lute & sang a song" (quoted in Mulholland, 28). For Moll to come and actively endorse the play reveals some amount of approval, or, at least, not her total outrage at the attempt.
In the introductory epistle to the play, Middleton sets up the mythical model for Moll, giving the audience a vivid visual picture to remember as the play progresses: "For Venus, being a woman, passes through the play in doublet and breeches." This is a complicated sentence, revealing all of the nagging problems of gender already discussed in this chapter. There is an immediate identification with a goddess, placing Moll outside of human bounds, but the very next phrase, "being a woman," attempts to reinstate her inside of those boundaries. Additionally, the choice of Venus once again displays the paradox of superhuman/asexuality with a highly sexual quality. Indeed, throughout the play, Moll is constructed as a very sexually aware being, both by herself and others. Moll delights in spewing out double entendres; she seems to be as adept at euphemisms as swordplay. During a scene late in the play, Moll enters a bedchamber and finds a viol hanging on the wall. Sebastian urges her to play for him, and she replies, "I'll play my part as well as I can; it shall ne'er be said I came into a gentleman's chamber, and let his instrument hang by the walls" (IV.i.86-89). Not of least importance in this passage is the change Dekker and Middleton have made in Moll's musical tastes. In real life (as the court report states), she plays the lute, but the playwrights have given her a much "ruder" instrument to work with—one that must sit between her legs in order to be played.

In addition, two of the characters in the play see Moll as an exclusively sexual being. Laxton, whose name has its own interesting gender resonances (lack stone=testicles), has sexual fantasies about Moll the moment he first lays eyes on her, and spends the first portion of the play trying to bed her. He comments, "Heart, I would give but too much money to be nibbling with that wench.... I'll lay hard siege to her; money is the aqua fortis that eats into many a maidenhead; where the walls are flesh and blood, I'll ever pierce through with a golden auger" (II.i.192-206). Laxton's desires are extremely violent in nature, framed in terms of war, rape, and bodily mutilation (acid). Trapdoor, the thief and all-around villain that Sir Alexander hires to stop Moll from marrying his son
Sebastian also sees her as a sexualized creature, and uses similar terms of violence to construct her. Sir Alexander deems her a "mermaid [that] has toll'd my son to shipwreck," to which Trapdoor responds, "I'll cut her comb for you" (I.ii.218-220). While he may indeed be speaking of the ivory object that brushes her hair, comb also draws a link back to Crooke's descriptions of the female anatomy. He notes of the lips of the vulva, "they are very like in colour and shape to that part of a Cockes combe which hangs under his throat" (237). Given Laxton's already brutal description, it is not a spurious consideration that Trapdoor may be thinking in the same mode of discourse. A short time later, Sir Alexander, in describing her appearance to Trapdoor, comments, "they say sometimes/ She goes in breeches....", to which Trapdoor cracks, "And when her breeches are off, she shall follow me" (I.ii.229-231). If Trapdoor can just get her out of those male clothes, he reasons, her voracious female nature will reassert itself and the power of his penis will rule her.

However, Dekker and Middleton are very careful to counter these impressions with reassurances of Moll's chastity and moral fortitude. In the case of her own bawdy jokes about the viol, Sebastian does not even blink at the possible impropriety of the jest, but steadfastly reaffirms her good, honest nature: "There be a thousand close dames," he answers, "that will call the viol an unmannerly instrument for a woman, and therefore talk broadly of thee, when you shall have them sit wide to worse quality" (IV.i.97-100). Moll might let the viol have its way with her, but she knows better than to part her legs to an actual man, which is more than he can say for the majority of the sex. When Trapdoor begins to make his lewd comments in her presence, Moll's immediate reaction is to trip up his heels and bring him crashing to the ground (II.i.388). Moll rejects both him and his insinuations. As for Laxton, Moll responds in a similarly scornful manner to his advances.
He begs of Moll, "When shall thou and I go out o'town together?"

".... What to do there?"
"Why, nothing but be merry and lie together. I'll hire a coach with four horses."
"I thought it would be a beastly journey. You may leave out one well; three horses will serve, if I play the jade myself." (II.i.290-301)

In addition, it is particularly crucial that in Laxton's vicious fantasy about Moll, her "maidenhead" is simply assumed to be intact. This non-questioning acceptance of her purity even as he degrades her in his mind well evinces Dekker and Middleton's ultimate message about Moll's sexuality. It appears that the only figures in the play that dare to sexualize Moll are the same that would profane a god: they know of her chastity, but cannot help but attempt to soil her. The same tension between asexual myth and sexualized female has reappeared in this quandary. Certain figures see the sexual female body she possesses, but come to understand that, due to the ambiguous masculine element contained within her (and on her back), it cannot be realized. Dekker and Middleton approach the topic of sex and Moll, and skitter away from it again, hiding behind the easy defense of chastity. Since we know from Moll's own mouth that she was anything but chaste, at least for a portion of her life, the argument that the playwrights are ducking the issue gains even more support.

Besides the early reference to Moll as "Venus in doublet and breeches"--an image that Marjorie Garber points out in her article "The Logic of the Transvestite" as connotative of a whole host of mythic figures, from Diana, to a Spartan or Thracian girl, to an Amazonian--Dekker and Middleton play with a variety of other goddess-like figures (223). Hearkening back to the introduction of Moll's autobiography, Trapdoor at one point refers to a supposed tryst between Sebastian and Moll in this manner: "Your son and her moon will be in conjunction, if all almanacs lie not" (III.iii.26-27). Sebastian and Moll are not simply going to have sex, they are literally going to move the heavens in the process, and like eclipses or comets, the activity will be a public event. Various characters also bandy about a lot of adjectives which lift Moll above the common man or woman and into
legendary or mythic status: "my invincible mistress," "she flies/ With wings more lofty,"
"a whole city takes/ Note of her name and person," "no blazing star draws more eyes after
it," and "your historic spirit and masculine womanhood" (V.i.120;Prologue 25-6;I.i.101-
2;I.ii.136;II.i.377).

Along the same lines, but with an interesting double meaning, Moll is often termed
a "strange idol," to which Sebastian is "bowing" (see I.i.119 and I.ii.154, for example).
Idol is a particularly apt word for Moll, because it carries with the connotation that it a false
god. Moll's society, in trying to come to terms with her ambiguous mixture of male and
female, but beleaguered by a vision of gender exclusively linked to biological sex and the
body, uses superhuman or goddess-like status in order to explain Moll, by simply
excluding her from all human categories. The fact that this move is problematic at best
evinces the falseness in her mythological status. No one really believes Moll is a goddess,
any more than they felt she was a beast or actual hermaphrodite, but as they had no other
terms to relieve the pressure of having to name the "thing," exclusionary status in mythic
discourse was one of the best choices they could devise. Moll is a false idol, because
Dekker and Middleton, as well as the introducer of her autobiography, pay her lip service
in this manner, but do it not to exalt her, but simply have done with her.

The falseness of Moll's "idolship" becomes more evident through one final
phenomenon associated with her mythical status. In both Moll's autobiography and The
Roaring Girl, these heroic terms of goddess-ship gradually begin to turn malignant and
reinvest her with a frightening power. At one point in her work, Moll turns to a description
of her home, which garnered a very different mystical quality to it from the oracle's seat.
"Nor were the ornaments of my house less curious and pleasing in pictures than in the
delight of looking glasses, so that I could see my sweet self all over in any part of my
room. This gave occasion to folks to say that I used magical glasses...as is very credibly
and consistently reported of your African sorceresses" (49). Moll becomes equated with that quintessential "exotic Other": the black "witch."

Dekker and Middleton also find their mythic metaphors spinning out of their control. Sir Alexander begins the treacherous decline when he demands of his son, "Who has bewitched thee, son?", to which Sebastian responds, "Sh's as a bold spirit that mingles with mankind,/ But nothing else comes near it" (II.i.182-183). Laxton echoes the sentiment a short time later when he exclaims, "Heart, I think I fight with a familiar!" (III.i.135-6). Goshawk comes to conceive of Moll as a type of doppelgänger, able to alter her physical form at will. In attempting to reassure Sir Alexander that his son cannot marry Moll, he unwittingly heightens the anxiety of the situation: "No priest will marry her, sir, for a woman/ Whiles that shape's on" (V.ii.105-106). Moll has reached the ultimate logical conclusion of all of the mythical metaphors; the best way to remove her from having to fit into a gender category is to assert that she lacks a real body altogether, and is but a evil shape-shifter or demon wreaking havoc on London. The difficulty then encountered, of course, is what to make of the enormous power and strength this necessarily invests her with. Just as Moll as diseased human provoked concern, because of the power to corrupt others it provided her, so too Moll as ethereal demon terrifies because she attains an even more potent potential for destruction.

* * * * * *

Dekker and Middleton, Moll herself, an anonymous author, and the courts of London, provoked by the integral need (itself a product of its time) to categorize, work through a variety of metaphors in an attempt to explain Moll Cutpurse and her sexuality. Renaissance society had an absolutely rigid conception of gender that could not be divorced from one's biological sex; the seminal medical treatise of Helkiah Crooke illustrated this
inflexible sexual binary in a variety of ways. Because viewing Moll as a beast or hermaphrodite was easily disproved, this initial discourse was rejected in favor of a model of diseased humanity. This solution was an uneasy victory at best, and so a third discourse of superhuman mythology was introduced, which had the potential to remove Moll from human affairs altogether, and thus eliminate the need to categorize her gender at all. However, this mythological status, just as the concept of disease, invested her with an unwanted influence to corrupt other members of the society, which could in turn have the disastrous consequences of creating further examples of gender ambiguity threatening the very fundament of accepted gender categories. Ironically enough, the theatre, which depended on such cross-dressed specimens (albeit males) to maintain its existence, participated fully in this attempt to reinscribe or explain away Moll. Failing to come up with an adequate solution for Moll, Dekker and Middleton were content to exploit her controversial character, both as a character in their play and as a real-life incentive to come and see that piece. Although Moll was a cross-dressed woman, the issues raised both in theatrical texts and the wider society held a great deal of resonance for the theatre itself, which grappled especially closely with gender issues (both in terms of textual content and the cross-dressed boys themselves). Moll Cutpurse provides an excellent thread to neatly stitch up the strikingly similar gender issues surrounding Queen Elizabeth, the antitheatricalists, and the theatre itself.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has begun a critical discussion about the effects that costume had on Renaissance constructions of gender identity. Specifically, by examining the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, the Puritan antitheatrical tracts, and finally, a play about a real-life crossed dressed woman of London, I attempted to piece together an understanding not just of the perceptions prevalent in the theatre, but pervading the wider society as well. The very nature of the inquiry demands a broad, seemingly disparate, range of sources. Not only are there no existing costumes from the Renaissance, but records and engravings of what actors actually wore are sparse. In addition, the fluidity between the denotations of "costume" and "clothing" existing during the period demands that the scholar steer away from overly rigid boundaries of study. The best methodology a researcher could employ in studying costume can be likened to a series of concentric circles, beginning with an extremely broad, but culturally significant and influential phenomena, and moving slowly inwards towards the limits of the theatre itself.

Queen Elizabeth's portraits began my inquiry into the nature of costume and gender identity for several crucial reasons. First of all, these portraits represent one of the single largest resources of evidence about costume from the Renaissance. Thanks to the existence of careful records kept by those in charge of the Wardrobe of State, it can be proven that the clothes painted in Elizabeth's portraits are in fact actual gowns, not flights of painterly fancy. An extremely detailed, accurate visual record therefore exists of the clothing of the most influential woman of the time. Secondly, Elizabeth is a perfect example of the
disruptions and conflicts occurring within the Renaissance's shifting gender boundaries: a female body located within a "masculine" position of authority. Elizabeth serves as the most visible loci of crisis for Renaissance society's understanding of gender divisions. Through the Queen, the society's attempts to solidify a fledging (but already threatened) socio-sexual order appears most prominently.

In earlier societies, the Galenic single-sex theory was accepted as a way of explaining the biological and social differences of men and women. Under this system, women were understood to be nothing more than underdeveloped men. Women had colder, more sluggish temperaments, and this lack of formative heat kept their sexual organs inside their bodies. In this view, then, the uterus was simply an inverted penis. Women's "deformed" or "stunted" development was used as the justification for their social inferiority: the men, graced with the "hotter" temperaments, were destined to be independent, free-ranging creatures, while women's "cold" natures made them passive, docile, and sedentary. Not coincidentally, clothing was largely undifferentiated between men and women: both sexes wore "cottes" or "bliauts" with minor modifications depending on the sex.

Beginning with the Renaissance, however, this view was successfully challenged. A new understanding of gender, based on a biologically determined two-sex model, came into the foreground. The emergence of the two-sex system can be attributed to the Renaissance's explosion of new scientific interest and inquiry. Not only were past masters like Galen and Aristotle read, but, for the first time, were challenged by individuals conducting their own experiments and dissections. Women were no longer perceived as substandard, defective males, but rather, an independent, fully formed sex vital to reproduction. Women's supposed lack of heat was still used against them as a justification for their inferior social positions, but, for the first time, women belonged to an autonomous category, and were perceived as having an important function in the world.
This two-sex model came into competition with the single-sex theory, and rapidly took precedence over the old Galenic theory. It is important to note here that the Renaissance did not distinguish between biological sex and gender roles. Unlike today, in a media-saturated world where figures such as Boy George, Madonna, and RuPaul speak volumes about the impossibility of conflating biological sex and gender, people living during the Renaissance linked the specific traits of a sexual body to specific behavioral characteristics. In a manner that strikingly echoes the "sex/gender" system elucidated by Gayle Rubins, a woman's physical form was used to justify her inferior social and economic position in the world. Men were strong, active, brave, independent, silent; women were weak, passive, squeamish, dependent, and chatty.

Not surprisingly, with the schism between the male and female sex, men and women's clothes were differentiated. Nearly every article of clothing evolved its own specific, sex-determined construction. Men wore slops, women farthingales. Men showed off their legs, women covered every part of the body except a falsely flattened chest. Men carried swords, women had to settle for ostrich feather fans. The further the biologically determined gender binary marginalized the single-sex model, the more divergent the costumes became between the sexes.

As this battle of ideologies had only recently been won by the two-sex model, however, the gender binary was in an exceptionally vulnerable position. Not yet solidified by years of social entrenchment, the model had to be rigorously defended against any possible point of attack. Returning to Queen Elizabeth, the scholar finds the first major instance of such a threat in her unique combination of female body with the highest position of Renaissance authority. Elizabeth was an embarrassingly high profile violation of the new gender binary: a supposedly weak, passive, sluggish female body successfully occupying the masculine realm of rulership. The biologically determined gender binary--
and all of its social and economic ramifications—would be severely compromised if a suitable explanation for Elizabeth could not be found.

But an ingenious loophole was discovered. As the portraits of Elizabeth throughout the course of her reign gradually reveal, the Queen's identity became carefully molded, shoring up the gender binary. Originally, marriage was seen as a perfect solution, for if Elizabeth did wed, she would be returned to her proper subordinate position, and her husband would assume the position of power. It became clear by the 1580s that the Queen would not permit such an easy resolution, however. A new campaign was begun: the Queen's public identity was slowly reshaped. Elizabeth was cast as a mythological figure, a goddess to be worshipped by adoring cults, and a superhuman figure who could do no wrong. Super/human is the key phrase here, as a subtle disqualification of Elizabeth from the gender binary was occurring. If Elizabeth was something greater than a human being—and especially a human female—then her apparent inconsistency with biologically determined social and sexual roles no longer mattered. Elizabeth's female body could safely inhabit a masculine position of power because, in fact, that body was not actually female after all. It was not even human, and by not being human, biological gender roles become a moot point. In essence, Elizabeth was disqualified from the gender binary. This kept the fledging system safe from a highly visible inconsistency.

Queen Elizabeth serves as the outermost or broadest strata from which to gather information about Renaissance costume and its influence on gender systems. Moving inwards through the society, the next significant area for study is the Puritan antitheatrical tracts. These diatribes, more specifically directed at the theatres than the clothes of the Queen, still cannot be considered equivalent to actual stage conditions. These writers considered the influences of the public stage so vile that they rarely attended the theatres themselves; this significantly detracts from the validity of any of their comments on theatrical practice. At the same time, however, these tracts make up a significant percentage
of the contemporary writings about the Renaissance theatre. In other words, a scholar has few options, besides a scattering of letters and journals from visitors to England, by which to construct a picture of Renaissance England's stages. As well, one can justify examining these admittedly biased Puritan writings on the basis that, although the tracts may in fact be inaccurate depictions of actual stage practices, the writings are shaped by ideological assumptions in heavy circulation in the society at the time. Stephen Gosson, William Prynne, and other anonymous Puritan writers all express rigid condemnations of the stage's practice of cross-dressing boys to play female parts. The concurrence of views between these authors demonstrates a clearly defined understanding and support for a specific, immutable gender system.

The reaffirmation of the gender binary through Elizabeth's elevation to mythic status was not an isolated incident. The antitheatricalists also employ exclusionary tactics in order to defend the new socio-sexual order against inconsistency and attack. In the case of the Puritans, they expose the threat that theatres inflict upon the gender binary. Theatres promote cross-dressing, and cross-dressing, by virtue of placing the wrong gendered clothes upon the wrong gendered body, threatens the security of a social system based upon a rigid division of the sexes. The implication is, that if a woman inhabits a man's clothing, there is nothing to stop her from inhabiting his other "spaces," including his superior social and political positions. A system of inequalities justified by biological sex threatens to crumble when clothing—a primary means of sexual division—is used to blur, instead of promote, such boundaries. These antitheatrical authors therefore perceive costume as having the same immutable differences as biological sex: there are male clothes and there are female clothes. There is no such thing as a gender-neutral article of clothing.

Cross-dressers need to be excluded, for, by mixing the wrong gendered clothes with the wrong gendered body, they question all of the assumptions posited by the biologically determined gender system. Elevating them to mythological status, as was done
in the Queen's case, is no longer a viable solution; labeling them as superhuman simply glorifies their active choice to undermine the system and thereby encourages the insurrective behavior. Instead, antitheatricalists view cross-dressing as a debilitating disease, which hopelessly disfigures and corrupts the body. Placing the wrong gender's clothes on one's body becomes a debilitating act, or a violence against the self. In this way, cross-dressers are no longer fully human, but the pathetic, wasted remains of a once healthy body. Just as lepers were physically banished from human society, cross-dressers are metaphorically denied access to true humanity. Once again, the threat to the gender binary is explained away by disqualification. Cross-dressers are not technically human, and so, it is no longer disruptive or threatening for them to violate the gender binary.

Of course, the major difficulty with employing a discourse of disease to control a possible threat to the biologically determined two-sex system is that disease, by nature, is an uncontrollable force. Unfortunately for the Puritans, labeling cross-dressers as victims of disease invested them with an unwanted power. If the cross-dressers were infected, they had the ability to pass the "disease" along to other unwitting individuals. Cross-dressing, under this explanation, would jump from person to person until it overran the whole society. That which was intended to protect the fledgling gender binary ends up having the potential to entirely undo it.

Clearly, a different approach was needed to protect the biologically determined gender system. Moving into the last of the concentric circles, the scholar finally reaches the Renaissance stage itself. One woman in particular provides a neat intersection between the wider society discussed in the previous chapters and the final goal of the theatre. Moll Frith, a real-life cross-dressed woman, as described in an autobiography entitled *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, and her counterpart in Dekker and Middleton's play *The Roaring Girl*, demonstrate the mirroring of attitudes occurring in the theatre and the wider society concerning gender and costume. Just as the portraits of the Queen and the
antitheatrical diatribes demonstrated, Moll Frith's threatening behavior as a cross-dresser is explained away by a process of exclusion. Multiple attempts are made to exclude Moll from humanity, in order to also relieve the pressure her actions placed upon the gender binary.

Autobiography and play begin with a new tactic: they construct Moll as subhuman. By alternately labeling Moll an animal, a monster, or a hermaphrodite, the texts seek to place her firmly outside the bounds of the biologically determined sex/gender system. By the simple evidence of her fully formed, normal female body, however, the subhuman category must be discounted. The texts then take up the tactic of the antitheatricalists, and condemn Moll as the victim of a particularly virulent disease. Just as in the case of the Puritan tracts, however, a discourse of disease invests Moll with an unwanted amount of power, and justifies the proliferation of cross-dressing. The discourse plainly worked against its own intentions of fortifying the gender binary, and so, it too was discarded.

Finally, the texts attempt to exclude Moll in much the same manner as the Queen's portraits exclude Elizabeth. Moll is elevated to superhuman or goddess status: no longer a human being, the gender binary no longer even applies to her. Unlike in Elizabeth's case, however, the shortcomings of the mythic discourse become rapidly evident through Moll. Although the comparisons begin innocently enough, Moll is soon compared to black sorceresses and other symbols of feminine evil. Not only do the myths reinvoke the female body, they invest that body with a frightening amount of entirely sexualized power. Moll is not simply superhuman, but superwoman, and, as such, poses the most significant danger to the gender binary of all. Moll as goddess implies that the gender binary, and its social and economic inequalities, is entirely backwards in its ordering of men and women. There may indeed be two distinct sexes, but it is the female sex (as evidenced in the omnipotent power of Moll) that is destined to dominate the male. Moll dons the clothes of the male just as she will take on his position of authority.
Ultimately, what all of these attempts at exclusion and protection reveal is the fundamental weaknesses of a biologically determined gender binary. Gender and sex are simply not the same thing, no matter how hard one attempts to justify the conflation of the two. However, because the gender binary was such a recent development in the time of the Renaissance, it had to be defended in such vigorous ways in order to cement its influence over the social order. Galenic theory was on the way out, and costume, as the most visible sign of demarcation between bodies, was immediately taken up as the most effective and succinct way to support a two-sex system. Those individuals who refused to accept the gender roles assigned to clothing became serious threats to a precarious belief system. Cross-dressed actors or stubborn women had to be explained away so as to maintain the struggling gender binary's new, uncertain influence over the structure of the society.

This thesis is far from an exhaustive study. I frequently refer to the paucity of evidence concerning Renaissance costumes. While this is indeed the case, there are engravings, letters, and memoirs existing, that, due to pressures of time, money, and availability, I have not considered within these pages. Additionally, I chose to focus on only one actual play-text of the period to draw my conclusions from. There exist a wide range of plays which specifically revolve around issues of cross-dressing: Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* jump foremost to mind. Other play texts, while not making overt reference to cross-dressing, also include descriptions of what the characters were said to be wearing.

Most importantly, I have stressed the necessity of examining the wider society in order to be able to draw any conclusions about the theatre at all. While I have done this in several crucial areas, there exists a plethora of areas within Renaissance society that this thesis has not touched. For example, an extensive study of the church and its impact on sumptuary laws could prove enlightening. An examination of the professional lives of tailors and seamstresses during the period would also add a new dimension of
understanding. To learn in detail about the construction of the clothes could greatly assist one in drawing conclusions about how the clothes then shaped understandings of gender. Further inquiry into how the costumes affected body posture, movement, and childhood development would also be extremely telling. Since Renaissance understandings of gender were so intricately connected to the body, understanding how the body was aided or deformed by the clothes could reveal volumes about the attitudes of the society.

Renaissance conceptions of gender, as indicated through costume, cannot be diluted down to one impulse. At least two sex/gender models were in circulation simultaneously. The Galenic, or single-sex theory, was on its final decline, while a biologically determined two-sex model of gender was quickly gaining authority. Costume became clearly differentiated as well, in order to help bolster the fledgling gender binary. In all strata of society, "difficult," or non-adaptive individuals (including cross-dressers or women in positions of authority) were excluded from human categories in order to keep the gender binary intact. Looking back on such attempts to protect the biologically determined two-gender model reveals the utter impossibility of such a rigid, constrained ideology ever coming to terms with the complexities of gender.
The Roaring Girl.

OR

Moll Cut-Purse.

As it hath lately beene Acted on the Fortune-stage by
the Prince his Players.
Written by T. Middleton and T. Dekker.

Figure 1: Frontispiece to Dekker and Middleton's play, *The Roaring Girl*, 1611
Figure 2: Frontispiece to Thomas Kyd's play, *The Spanish Tragedy*
Figure 3: The "Rainbow" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, 1600-1603
Figure 4: Drawing of Richard Tarlton by John Scottowe, 1588
Figure 5: Engraving for Thomas Middleton's play, *A Game at Chess*, 1624
The Maides Tragedy.

AS IT HATH BEENE
divers times Acted at the Blacke-Friers by
the Kings Maiesties Servants.

LONDON
Printed for Richard Higgenbotham and
are to be sold at the Angell in PAVES
Church-yard. 1619.

Figure 6: Frontispiece to Beaumont and Fletcher's play, The Maid's Tragedy, 1619
Figure 7: Engraving for John Cooke's play, *The City Gallant*, 1614
The Tragical Histoy of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus.

With new Additions.

Written by Ch. Mar. A.

LONDON.
Printed for John Wright, and are to be sold at his Shop without Newgate, at the sign of the Bible. 1616.

Figure 8: Title page for Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, 1616
Figure 9: Detail of Elizabeth, from *The Family of Henry VIII*, c. 1543-7
Figure 10: Early portrait of Elizabeth by William Scrots, c. 1546-7
Figure 11: Elizabeth soon after her succession, unknown artist, painted c. 1560-1565
Figure 12: Another early portrait of the new Queen, unknown artist, painted c. 1565-1570
Figure 13: The "Pelican" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1572-1576
Figure 14: The "Phoenix" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1572-1576
Figure 15: *Elizabeth I as Sovereign of the Order of the Garter*,
unknown artist, c. 1575
Figure 16: The "Darnley" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by Federigo Zuccaro. 1575
Figure 17: The "Sieve" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by George Gower, 1579
Figure 18: The "Ermine" portrait of Queen Elizabeth, painted by William Segar, 1585
Figure 19: Portrait of the Queen in the middle of her reign, by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder, 1585
Figure 20: Allegory of the Tudor Succession, unknown artist, c. 1590-1595
Figure 21: The "Armada" Portrait of Queen Elizabeth, by George Gower, 1588
Figure 22: Portrait of Elizabeth late in her reign with a radiating moon on her bodice, artist unknown, c. 1600
Figure 23: The "Ditchley" Portrait of Queen Elizabeth, by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, c. 1592
Figure 24: Iron corset from the late sixteenth century, in the Victoria and Albert Museum
Figure 25: Engraving showing padded Venetians (left figure),
by George Turberville, *The Book of Falconry*, 1575
Figure 26: Portrait of a young man by an unknown artist, showing the peascod doublet, 1577
Figure 27: Portrait of a tailor by Giovanni Battista Moroni, showing an example of middle-class clothing, c. 1571
HIC MULIER:

OR,

The Man-Woman:

Being a Medcine to cure the Collyria Dilects of
the Staring in the Sex-Men, in the Weekes of
our Time.

Expost'ed in a briefe Description.

Not to be performed.

In this will bee underright the

Figure 28: Frontispiece to Hic Mulier, or The Man Woman, 1620
HAEC VIR:

The Womanish-Man:

Being an Answer to a late Booke intituled Hic Mulier.

Express in a briefe Dialogue betweene Haec, Vir the Womanish-Man, and Hic Mulier the Man-Woman.

London printed for I.T. and are to be sold at Chrift Church gate. 1620.

Figure 29: Frontispiece to Haec-Vir. or The Womanish-Man, 1620
MOLL CUT = PURSE.

See here the Preside'se oth pilfring. Trade
Mercury's second Venus's onely Mayd
Doublet and breeches in a Uniform dresse
The Female Humurist a Kicke or may be
Here no attraction that your fancy greets
But is her Features please not read her FEATS

Figure 30: Frontispiece to The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith, 1662
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