

MORE THAN ALCHEMIC REACTIONS: PLAYING WITH GENDER NORMS
IN *FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST: BROTHERHOOD*

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I explore the ways in which several characters in the anime *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* play with gender, and what impact that gender play has on larger social structures within the narrative. I use a close reading of the text, and of four characters in particular (Lust the Lascivious, Envy the Jealous, and the Armstrong siblings), to deduce how hegemonic patriarchal powers influence and control gender performance for those characters closely related to them, and spur on gender play in characters defying said powers. These characters occupy a liminal space between generations that is vital to their gender play. I argue that views on gender in this particular series are a symptom of shifts in generational understandings of the world overall, not just in relation to gender performance.

“I can’t put up with playing it safe.”

–Yui, “Again”

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MORE THAN ALCHEMICAL REACTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

“The soul has no gender.”

—Clarissa Pinkola Estes (qtd. in Johnson)

I was first introduced to the anime *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* shortly after it aired in America in 2011. The anime club I was a member of at my undergrad college watched the series at five- to six-episode intervals in order to finish it in a timely manner, as it totals sixty-four episodes. While the plot itself was engaging and the animation was beautiful, what really struck me about *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* was the characters, particularly the way they performed gender. Although I lacked the ability to articulate what exactly it was about the gender performance of these characters intrigued me so, it stuck with me as I began graduate school and started considering potential topics for my thesis. With a new set of descriptive and academic tools under my belt, I am finally able put into words what is so intriguing about the characters in this series: they represent a shift in generational views on gender. I argue that through a series of characters, both antagonists and protagonists, who exhibit various levels of gender play, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* serves as a commentary on changing views on gender.

As a relative newcomer to the realm of Japanese popular culture, I am constantly amazed by the gender play that such texts employ. While obviously not always the case, gender roles and gender performance in anime and manga—Japanese animation and comic books, respectively—are often much more fluid than in similar forms of American popular culture. Girls can do things boys are traditionally expected to do, such as work as engineers and hold prominent ranked positions in the military, and vice versa. Such characters who play with gender have always appealed to me much more than characters in American popular culture that

usually conform much more strictly to traditional gender norms. I find these characters more relatable than those in American popular culture largely because of my own relationship with gender and gender performance. My older brother, eight years my senior, had always wanted a younger brother, so when I was born he decided his plans for his younger sibling wouldn't change: he did all the same things with me that he would have done with a younger brother. I grew up doing things boys typically did, like playing tackle football with my brother and younger sister or watching *Batman: The Animated Series*. At the same time, I wore dresses to recitals and family gatherings around the holidays. My personal performance of gender throughout my life has been mixed to the point that I now identify as genderqueer. Because of this, I have always been drawn to characters like me who perform gender atypically. Growing up in the 1990s, it was difficult to find female characters in American popular culture that I could relate to like I now relate to many anime characters whose gender performances are more fluid, hence my aforementioned interest in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*.

Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood is an anime that follows the adventures of Edward and Alphonse Elric. These teenagers become affiliated with the military of Amestris, a fictional country in the series, in order to gain access to information and other resources to help them recover their bodies, which they lost in a failed attempt to bring their mother back from the dead using alchemy. As they search for the philosopher's stone, a legendary artifact supposedly capable of transcending the laws of alchemy, they are hindered by creatures called Homunculi, or artificially created humans; each Homunculus represents one of the seven deadly sins. The Elric brothers also uncover a larger plot to destroy Amestris and virtually everyone in it. This plot is orchestrated by a nearly all-powerful creature that appears human and calls himself Father, the First Homunculus and creator of the seven previously-mentioned Homunculi.

Ultimately, the Elric brothers defeat Father and his Homunculi and retrieve their bodies through teamwork between the two of them as well as with dozens of secondary characters in the series.

While this is a watered-down summary of the plot, it is clear to see that this series follows a relatively typical main plot for a *shōnen* anime: the protagonists set aside their personal goals in favor of a more altruistic end. More interesting than the plot itself, though, is the way in which characters within the narrative play with gender. While the majority of the characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* conform to gender norms, a handful of them do, in fact, play quite extensively with the concept of gender. This gender play ranges from a character subtly adopting traits typically associated with the opposite gender, to a shapeshifter attempting to perform both genders, to siblings who constantly employ opposite gender roles. To clarify what I mean by “gender norms” (and, for that matter, whose gender norms I am referring to), the intersection between the Japanese and American concepts of gender roles needs explanation. When Japan opened to the West in the mid-1800s, becoming a “modern Western nation” meant, among other things, beginning to align gender roles to those of the West (Brenner 92). Japan combined Western concepts of gender with their previous Confucian teachings to create hybrid gender norms which mainly, in the public sphere or on the surface, are quite similar to Western ideas of gender. Thus, when I discuss gender norms, gender roles, or gender over-all, I refer to Western (mainly American) concepts of gender, as most of the theorists I use are from the West, including (but not limited to) Susan Bordo, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and Laura Mulvey. Occasionally, for the sake of contextualizing *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* and its characters, explanations of particularly Japanese views may be included, such as those put forth by Shinichi Saito, Yumiko Iida, and others; however, the main lens will remain a Western one.

The scholarly research done on anime and manga (in Western study, at least) is widely uneven, focusing more often than not on the *shōjo* category—those anime and manga intended for girls ages ten to eighteen. While it goes without saying that Western culture finds comics intended for girls to be an interesting phenomenon, and while there are some fascinating aspects of this category (such as the *yaoi* and *shōnen-ai* genres, both focusing on romantic relationships between two boys or men), research on other categories of anime and manga would also be beneficial. The other category that tends to get at least some academic attention is anime and manga that fall under the *josei* category (intended for adult women). Those categories intended for demographics considered more “normal” in the West—that is, anime and manga intended for boys ages ten to eighteen (*shōnen*) and adult men (*seinen*)—have received far less academic attention.

Additional clarification of the *shōnen* category is essential in order to understand the point from which I begin this thesis. It should first be noted that, although *shōnen* is targeted at a demographic of adolescent boys, this category of manga and anime draws the greatest number of readers and viewers from the widest base; boys, girls, young men, and adult men all tend to read manga from this group. *Shōnen* is generally action-packed, featuring either physical fighting of some kind or sports events. Several genres are often included in this category, including historical drama, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, and more. Major themes in this category center on training, friendship, and victory (Brenner 31). *Shōnen* stories are generally predictable in narrative and reinforce traditional values and stereotypes, although they occasionally portray characters and situations that may deviate from the norm.

I begin my analysis in the first chapter of this thesis, “Lust the Lascivious, by Name Only: Policing Gender in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*,” where I explore the character Lust,

one of the seven Homunculi and one of the major villains early on in the series. While Lust is overtly sexualized, she portrays many masculine traits, mainly in her personality; I discuss both of these assertions in detail in the chapter to follow. I also explore the idea of Lust being “out of control” due to her somewhat masculine personality and actions, particularly her violent tendencies, using Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight* as a foundational text for this part of my argument. I end the first chapter with an analysis of Lust’s death, which helps reinforce her gender as feminine (not least of all because she is killed by a man). This analysis segues into the second chapter, as it involves discussion of the next character I focus on: Envy.

Another villain in the series and brother of Lust, Envy is a shapeshifter; because of this, he technically has no sex and can choose his gender, but is commonly considered to be a man by other characters in the series. While Envy also self-identifies as a man, he is very androgynous, both in body and attitude. I discuss his androgyny at length in “Beyond ‘Green with Envy’: Shapeshifting, Androgyny, and Gender Performance Reflected in Envy the Jealous,” along with topics of shapeshifting and transformation in anime and manga in general. As with the previous chapter, I discuss Envy’s death in relation to the reining in of gender portrayals within the show.

The third and final chapter of this thesis, “These Gender Practices Have Been Passed Down the Armstrong Line for Generations!”: Subverting Gender Norms in the Armstrong Family,” deviates slightly from the previous two in that I focus on a pair of protagonists rather than villains. The Armstrong family is a family that wholly challenges gender norms: the men are generally more emotional than the women, who are cold, calculating, and often condescending. This chapter focuses on Major Alex Louis Armstrong and his sister, General Olivier Armstrong, and how they play off of each other (often for comedic effect) in their transgression of gender norms. In my conclusion, I tie all three chapters together by discussing

the ways in which this collection of characters relates to the generational views on gender I have mentioned.

It is worth noting that the characters I will focus on in this thesis are mainly supporting characters. Although Lust is originally portrayed as an integral villain, she is quickly shown to take orders from a higher authority (Father) and her death comes relatively early on in the series. Similarly, while Envy is involved in several key occurrences within the plot, he also answers to his Father and is not the main villain. The Armstrongs, likewise, are not the main protagonists of the series and each provide only supporting help to the main characters. I argue that the liminal space these characters inhabit as not only supporting characters, but also as characters that live between the older, more traditional generation and younger, more open-minded generation, allows them the wiggle room to play with gender. Particularly notable, as I highlight in the chapters to follow, are the ways in which the hegemonic patriarchal powers of Amestris (namely, Father) try to rein in the gender play these characters exhibit.

There is a very specific reason that I am focusing on characters in this thesis, rather than the plot itself or other aspects of this anime. An extremely important aspect of anime and manga is character. Both Ian Condry (56) and Roland Kelts (91-100) discuss the importance of characters in anime and manga in relation to economics and marketing. Condry takes it a step further, though, explaining that character is *so* important in these media that there are books written on the subject of creating characters. While characters in anime are inextricably linked with the story itself, the characters are what viewers gravitate toward. As an anime progresses, “the characters become like friends, and you want to spend time with them” (Condry 71-2). Because there is such a large focus on character within the anime industry itself, it only seems fitting for me to focus on characters for this thesis.

The central plot of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is a relatively predictable and conservative story. However, through several characters who both help and oppose the Elric brothers, the main characters of the series, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* serves as a commentary on changing views on gender. I explore the ways in which this happens, ultimately concluding that these changing views are a symptom of a larger generational change from more traditional ideas to more open-minded, fluid ideas about not only gender, but also race, class, nation, and other social categories.

CHAPTER I: LUST THE LASCIVIOUS, BY NAME ONLY:
 POLICING GENDER IN *FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST: BROTHERHOOD*

“A particularly beautiful woman is a source of terror.”

—Carl Jung (“Carl Jung”)

A trope of female characters in anime is that they are unrealistically depicted, often with huge, round, shining eyes with long eyelashes, cute thin lips, large breasts, thin waists, and long thin legs. They are “definitely idealized and exist in a male ‘fantasyland’” (Ito 84). Often times *shōnen* anime depict female villains as violent and out of control in numerous ways. Usually it is female *villains* only, and not female *heroes*, who are portrayed in such a way, as if to imply that such out-of-control-ness is prohibited. This fits in with what Susan Bordo discusses in *Unbearable Weight*: that women must always be in control; in control of their weight, in control of their eating habits, in control of their sexuality (189-190). In contrast, men in *shōnen* anime, especially heroes, are allowed to be as violent and out of control as they need to be in order to accomplish their goals, particularly if their goals relate in some way to these female opponents. A definite gender disparity exists in such anime relative to violence, masculinity versus femininity, and out-of-control-ness. In this chapter, I focus on the character Lust and her attempts to play with gender roles, only to be ultimately punished for her deviation from gender normativity largely due to her ties with the older, more traditional generation through her familial relationship with Father, the ultimate patriarch.

Lust, one of the villains in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, is the only female out of the seven Homunculi, artificial humans created by Father, the secret ruler of Amestris. It is notable that she fills this role as token female character while also being the one of them representative of the sin of lust—intense sexual desire or, to use Bordo’s apropos terminology,

sexual *appetite*. However, the audience must take the anime's word for it that she really *is* Lust the Lascivious—other than her overtly sexual appearance of large breasts, thin waist, wide hips, long thin legs, and full lips, the closest she gets to doing anything truly sexual is going out on a date with Jean Havoc, one of the secondary characters in the anime (“Footsteps of a Comrade-in-Arms”). Still, perhaps her appearance alone is enough to illustrate that she is sexually out of control. She wears a tight-fitting dress that shows off her curves and cleavage, the latter of which is constantly displayed whenever the focus of the camera is on her Ouroboros (dragon eating its own tail) tattoo located just above her breasts. All of the Homunculi have a similar tattoo somewhere on their bodies as a visible symbol of what they are—virtually immortal, ultimately non-human creatures. Whenever Lust crosses her arms, which is often, she does so beneath her breasts, simultaneously pushing them up and drawing more attention to them, creating a certain sexual aura about her. Even other characters in the anime comment on her breasts, a not altogether uncommon occurrence in anime itself. For example, in episode nineteen, one character comments to another, while focusing on Lust's breasts, that he can tell why Lust tricked him into dating her: “You've always been a sucker for big boobs” (“Death of the Undying”). Her eyes are fixed in a seductive look—at least as seductive as a cartoon character can possibly be. Only rarely do her eyes convey any emotion other than seductiveness; even when she is angry, her eyes continue to express seduction along with her anger.

Interestingly enough, Lust's tight-fitting dress may serve as an attempt to keep her out-of-control-ness actually *under* control. Especially in the case of her breasts, the tight dress attempts to restrain her bodily bulges to try to create an “ideal...body that is absolutely tight, contained, ‘bolted down,’ firm” (Bordo 190). While this goal might not be accomplished when it comes to her breasts, the rest of her body *is* quite restrained by the dress. Walking seems unnatural with

how tightly the dress fits around her legs, restraining them so that she must take small steps and keep her legs practically fused together. Her arms are covered with gloves that reach nearly to her shoulders, further restricting her movement and hiding her body. The attempts to contain her out-of-control-ness are obvious. It is necessary for her to be somehow reined in as she is female and, as Bordo points out, slender female bodies represent the “correct management of desire” since “[w]omen’s desires are by their very nature excessive, irrational, threatening to erupt and challenge the patriarchal order” (205-206).

The Sexualization of Lust

The fact that Lust is nonhuman arguably makes it easier to sexualize her. This overt sexualization not only helps cement her position as Lust the Lascivious, since there is no other explicit indication of her desire, but also ties in to the idea of her being an out-of-control woman. Thomas Lamarre suggests that there are several kinds of nonhuman women, such as “goddesses, female robots or gynoids, alien women...animal girls...woman cyborgs, magical girls, [and] cat-eared female cops” (45). Because this list is not exhaustive, it is not surprising that Lust does not fit snugly into one of these categories, although she might be considered a woman cyborg. As they are artificially created and possess abilities that humans do not, the Homunculi in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* can be considered machines; however, they are crafted to *look* and, to an extent, *act* human—some of them (Greed and Wrath) are even created using human bodies. Possessing “extra-human powers of some kind or another”—in Lust’s case she does not age, she can extend her fingers into sharp “spears,” and she can regenerate from practically any injury—is another nonhuman quality that implies a relation to materiality, leading to objectification and fetishization (Lamarre 46).

Nonetheless, as most cultural studies scholars are aware, even human women are often objectified and sexualized in popular culture through Mulvey's cinematic gaze. Lust is no exception to this rule and, in fact, often seems to fill little more purpose than to be viewed as an object. As I have pointed out, her only true lustfulness is conveyed through her appearance; this fact makes her a perfect example of what Mulvey calls a woman's "to-be-looked-at-ness" (346). She fills this role both within her fictional world and without—obviously she is *meant* to be viewed erotically, as she embodies the sin of lust. The main aspect of the spectacle of to-be-looked-at-ness that Lust personifies, especially in relation to the gender dichotomies generally associated with Mulvey's work, involves the male whole versus female parts. What I mean by this is that in film, advertisements, and other visual media, men are generally pictured as whole and women are often pictured in parts, with only sections of their bodies visible. In the case of Lust, this sectional viewing occurs quite often. For example, the very first shot the audience sees of Lust is of her lips ("Fullmetal Alchemist"). Her second appearance is a full-body shot, but from afar. From this point on, the vast majority of her appearances are sectional shots like her first appearance, focusing on her eyes, her lips, parts of her face, or her Ouroboros tattoo—and subsequently her breasts. Her fourth appearance in the series is the first example of a scene in which every shot of her is a full head shot, rather than sectional shots of her face or body ("Hidden Truths"). The first close-up, full-body shot of Lust occurs in episode fourteen, during her eighth appearance in the series ("Those Who Lurk Underground"). The fact that it takes eight appearances, eight separate scenes, for a close-up, full-body shot of her proves that most attention is paid to *parts* of Lust.

This focus on the parts of Lust rather than Lust as a whole also plays into the gender dichotomies I have mentioned in another way: the focus of these sectional shots is generally on a

specific part of her body—her lips, her breasts, etc.—rather than on her face. The gender dichotomy shown here is the difference between male/mind and female/body. The sectional shots of most male characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* are generally head shots. However, if the focus is on a male character's mouth, for instance, the shot quickly pans up to focus on the eyes and the forehead, shifting the focus from body to mind through implication. In contrast, sectional shots of Lust are almost always of her breasts or lips, without the camera panning up to concentrate on her forehead and imply a focus on the mind.

Remarkably, very few of the other female characters in the series get this sort of sectional-shot treatment. This may be because, in order to embody the sin of lust without explicitly being lustful, Lust's appearance must be objectified and sexualized. Sectional shots objectify her by making her seem less than human through focusing on parts of the human body rather than the whole thing. She fulfills a "traditional exhibitionist role" in which she is "simultaneously looked at and displayed" through her physical attributes (Mulvey 346). She is eroticized by her large breasts and full lips, the latter of which is the focus of twenty shots in the thirteen scenes in which Lust appears. Not only is this fragmenting by the camera an example of objectification, but through this objectification it is also a compensation for the "lack" of a phallus, to borrow terminology from psychoanalytic theory.

The Masculine Woman

While Lust is overtly sexualized physically, making her appear very feminine, she possesses many masculine traits. In Japan, much like America, traits traditionally considered masculine include being "active, intelligent, courageous, and able to think, plan, and control" (Saito 515). Many of these traits agree with the male side of gender dichotomies I mentioned

above: the mind (intelligent, able to think, plan, and control), being active, and being powerful, to name a few. Lust embodies many of these masculine traits, especially the ones having to do with the mind. Beginning with her first appearance at the end of the first episode, she appears to be the mastermind behind a massive conspiracy; she mentions that she “had high hopes” for the criminal that died in the episode and that “it all begins very soon,” but does not get more specific than that, foreshadowing the larger plot to destroy Amestris that the Elric brothers eventually uncover (“Fullmetal Alchemist”). Countless times throughout the next few episodes, her appearances include cryptic statements much like the aforementioned quotes, talk of planning her next move, discussions with other villains about orchestrating riots, and admitting to burning down a library to keep Edward Elric from gaining information that might lead to his uncovering the details of the conspiracy. To highlight her ability to control, as of her sixth appearance in the show, she is clearly in charge of the other Homunculi seen up to that point (Envy and Gluttony). The other villains defer to her, ask her for permission to take certain actions, and follow her orders (“The Fifth Laboratory”).

Lust is further masculinized through her eyes. This may seem like a trivial example, but the eyes are an important aspect of anime, especially in relation to gender dichotomies. Anime and manga have a style influenced by Disney animation, “especially the use of large eyes for communicating emotions” (Davis et al. 284). In the case of female characters, the eyes are usually even larger than those of male characters, since women traditionally show more emotion than men. Lust, however, rarely conveys emotions through her eyes, which are also comparatively smaller than those of other female characters in the series. Instead, her eyes are generally cold and focused and usually lacking emotion, which is common in many adult male

characters in anime. Even when she is dying, her eyes fail to show emotion, instead displaying, at the very most, placidity and seductiveness (“Death of the Undying”).

One of the most apparent ways Lust plays with gender, adopting masculine traits rather than feminine ones, is best explored through a psychoanalytic approach because it opens space for an analysis of castration anxiety and phallic symbolism. As previously mentioned, Lust has the superhuman power to extend her fingers into long, sharp blades; this ability is called the “Ultimate Spear,” as it is capable of piercing anything. Obviously, the Ultimate Spear functions as a phallic symbol, as any knife or blade generally does. This phallic imagery, according to psychoanalytic theory, is a response to the castration anxiety males feel, but at the same time “obviates that threat by inventing a replacement for the missing penis” in a female character like Lust (Chanter 49-50). I call this Ultimate Spear a phallic object, rather than simply long nails or something similar, as the Spear is Lust’s most frequently employed weapon throughout the narrative. Such inclusion of phallic objects is especially prevalent in media created for adolescent males, being customary in horror films like the *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises (among others) and seems to occur quite frequently in *shōnen* anime. Another example, almost identical to Lust’s Ultimate Spear, is the character Kaoru Koganei, best known as Lady Diamond, in the anime *Speed Grapher*. She can alter the composition of her body to that of diamond and is able to extend her fingers into long, sharp spears, much as Lust can. Also like Lust, she is overtly sexualized and quite masculine in her activity and violence (“Whore of Diamonds”). Giving these female villains phallic objects and fetishizing them physically helps male viewers escape castration anxiety through “Complete disavowal of castration” (Mulvey 348).

In addition to these examples of masculinity embodied by Lust, she is quite active, a trait which I have mentioned is generally associated with masculinity. Most simply, she is active in that she travels quite extensively, almost as extensively as Edward Elric himself, the main character of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*. She travels all over the eastern and southern parts of Amestris, following Edward to keep him from learning too much about her Father's plans. (It is worth noting that Lust rarely uses her overt sexuality as a distraction to Edward, although this may largely have to do with the fact that he is relatively young at the time the series takes place, somewhere in his early teens. Lust, on the other hand, is at least four centuries old, and appears as an adult woman; in a series intended for adolescent males, it would be problematic to depict an adult woman making advances toward a young teen.) Lust finally becomes truly active in episode ten when she attempts to kill Maes Hughes, a semi-main character in the anime; she delivers a near-fatal wound to him that eventually leads to his death, although he finally dies at the hands of her brother Envy ("Separate Destinations"). She is even more active in episode nineteen, in which she mortally wounds Jean Havoc (who, as I have previously mentioned, she was dating), gravely injures Roy Mustang (a main character), attempts to kill Riza Hawkeye (Mustang's subordinate), and injures Alphonse Elric ("Death of the Undying"). These examples of being active also play into the depiction of Lust as a violent woman, as violence more often than not is associated with masculinity.

The Violent Element

Shōnen anime often depict women and girls as violent. The levels of their violence, their motivations to be violent, and their modes of violence vary greatly due to their origins, their races, and their situations. Such violent women illustrate the anxieties, and sometimes the hopes,

men have about real-world women. Lust is definitely, as I have explained above, a violent woman—she attempts to murder at least five protagonists, and succeeds in killing two of her fellow antagonists, albeit minor ones. One type of violent woman traditionally used in *shōnen* anime is the cyborg, which is a type that, as discussed earlier, Lust can be considered. To explain better how Lust fits into this category, an explanation is needed of what I mean by “cyborg” in relation to anime. A cyborg in this regard is a partially robotic (however, not necessarily in the purely mechanical sense) woman who still, for the most part, looks human. Like Lust, cyborgs can be created from virtually nothing; she was created with a philosopher’s stone at her core infused with part of her Father’s soul. (A sufficient explanation of her origin would take far too long and is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this thesis.) Cyborgs are an ambiguous mixture of mind, body, and tool in which information and knowledge are key (Haraway 327-328). As the most visible mastermind of the villains for the first fourteen episodes of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, Lust is obviously focused on information and knowledge, especially on keeping most of it secret. Generally, cyborgs are stronger, faster, or smarter than the average human or have other abilities that the average human does not, like Lust’s Ultimate Spear and ability to regenerate. As Haraway points out, “machines are disturbingly lively, and [humans] are frighteningly inert” (317). Because of these advantages, cyborgs are often in situations that would ordinarily be too dangerous for normal humans to handle. Lust, for example, is able to withstand a barrage of bullets and regenerate without skipping a beat. In episode ten of the anime, Hughes pierces her forehead with a push knife, but she is barely fazed (“Separate Destinations”). This role as cyborg not only makes it easier to sexualize Lust, as it fetishizes her and virtually makes her into an object rather than a human,

thus making her seem more feminine, but also allows her a greater ability to be active, which is a masculine trait.

As I explained earlier, Lust is active in many ways, the primary one being through her demonstrations of violence, usually involving her Ultimate Spear. In her second appearance in the anime, Lust kills a man by piercing his skull using this ability (“City of Heresy”). Her next appearance shows her watching a bloody riot with her brothers Gluttony and Envy, apparently taking pleasure in the bloodshed. While this particular example does not specifically show Lust being actively violent, the fact that she enjoys watching the bloodshed indicates that she thinks about violence and relishes seeing it. She gravely wounds—but fails to kill—three protagonists, again with her Ultimate Spear: Maes Hughes who, as I mentioned before, is then killed by Envy; Jean Havoc, after she dates him to obtain information (as a cyborg is wont to do) about the protagonists’ plans; and Roy Mustang. Focusing on the second character mentioned, Jean Havoc, displays just how violent Lust truly is. When she wounds him, the injury is so bad that “the nerves in [his] lower spine are completely severed” and the injury is utterly inoperable (“Advance of the Fool”); he ends up paralyzed from the waist down. This is the obvious result of Lust’s love of violent activity. It is worth mentioning that these violent encounters are not due to passion, as might be assumed when it comes to a female villain; rather, they are more business-like assassination attempts, calculated in an effort to keep the protagonists from learning too much information or from hindering Father’s plans. Again, these *calculated* acts of violence illustrate Lust’s masculinity, as they require thinking and planning.

To focus on another one of these near-fatal encounters a character has with Lust, a look at Roy Mustang’s encounter with her is in order. To return to psychoanalysis, consider once more the idea of Lust’s Ultimate Spear as a phallic object or a “replacement for [her] missing penis”

(Chanter 50). Taking that idea into account, plus the fact that, in the scene in which they meet, Lust is far more active than Mustang and clearly in control of the situation, it is easy to argue that Lust is the more masculine of the two characters in this particular scene. On top of that, Lust pierces Mustang with her Ultimate Spear, a symbolic penetration of the man in question. It is notable that, just moments before, Mustang had ripped the philosopher's stone (which is practically her heart) from Lust's chest in the hopes of using its powers to heal Havoc; Lust's penetration or "rape" of Mustang, then, can be considered a retaliation of the rape of her body ("Death of the Undying").

This penetration can be further correlated to a metaphorical rape through the amount of dominance, power, and control Lust exhibits in this scene. According to Zurbriggen, "[t]he need to control others and hold power is a risk factor for aggression in general and for rape in particular" (542). Many rapes occur due to this desire to hold power over another person. Lust not only displays quite a lot of power in the initial penetration of Mustang, but continues to take more and more power as the scene progresses. She penetrates him deeper with her Ultimate Spear, causing him an increased amount of pain in order to display her dominance. She holds his wrist to pull him closer to her as she mocks him for thinking he might have killed her already. When she removes her Ultimate Spear from his body, she keeps her grip on his wrist and removes his glove, without which he is powerless to fight back against her at the moment, in an almost sensual manner—this symbolic stripping is also reminiscent of rape. The control aspect is highlighted even more when Lust then shreds his glove, leaving him completely defenseless. Once all of this is accomplished, she leaves Mustang lying next to his dying friend, himself bleeding profusely, discarded like so much garbage as many rape victims are discarded by their rapists ("Death of the Undying"). Because rape is an act usually associated with male

perpetrators, this act of symbolic rape not only masculinizes Lust, but also illustrates her incredible violence.

The Feminine Mystique

The aforementioned masculine traits exhibited by Lust make her out of control, to return to the previous discussion of Bordo's work. In both Japan and America—the two main audiences for *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*—traditional gender roles are still embraced in which men are in charge and possess the traits listed above in the section on masculinity, while women are “supportive of, obedient, and subordinate to the men in their lives—husband, boyfriend, lover, boss, brother, father, etc.” (Ito 86). That Lust displays many masculine traits in contrast to traditional feminine traits of dependency, submissiveness, warmth, and others goes against the status quo and is thus unpredictable and out of control.

However, there are many ways in which the anime tries to tone down Lust's out-of-control-ness by policing gender roles and making her seem more feminine. The fact that she dates Jean Havoc for a time, even if she is only doing so in order to obtain information, plays in to traditional feminine gender roles mentioned above: she at least *acts* supportive of and subordinate to her boyfriend, and what are gender roles but performance? Similarly, Lust is constantly deferring to her Father, making her subordinate to him. She mentions numerous times that Father will not be happy, or that something is messing up Father's plans, or some similar objection to an occurrence. Since she frequently defers to her Father, her status as the apparent mastermind behind the happenings in the anime—the riots, the burning of the library, etc.—is greatly undermined so that she conforms at least partially to traditional feminine gender roles.

Another way that Lust fits into the customary idea of what is feminine is her relationship with her brothers, particularly Gluttony. In Japanese culture, family is one of the most important sources of happiness and ethics. This helps to explain why it is so important that Lust defers to her Father: it is expected of her—not just as a woman, but as a younger member of the family—to defer to her elders, according to Japanese ethics (Terjesen 58). This is likely an attempt to make Lust and the rest of her family at least partially redeemable; Japanese culture is more open to moral ambiguities than American culture, and so has much more trouble with purely-evil characters (Terjesen 64). The fact that Lust and her brothers follow the typical chain of respect in which elders are given more veneration than younger members of the family is a redeeming quality, even if it is one of the only positive things about them. More specifically, in relation to family, Lust fills the role of *onēsan* (“big sister”) when it comes to her brother Gluttony. This role of *onēsan* generally entails being maternal in the absence of a mother and being supportive of one’s younger siblings. Lust is maternal toward Gluttony numerous times throughout the anime, telling him to chew more quietly or not to eat certain things to avoid indigestion, to point out some specific examples. She is also quite supportive of her other brothers, most notably Envy, who asks her permission to implement plans or take action against the protagonists. Perhaps the only brother she is *not* supportive of is Greed, who is basically estranged from the family; she mockingly acts maternally toward him when he is being punished by Father for his insubordination (“Those Who Lurk Underground”).

While Lust is a violent, out-of-control woman, she nonetheless rarely manages to kill anyone in this series, implying that she is basically powerless in this respect, which fits in with the traditional thought that women are generally not able to commit murder. As previously mentioned, she actually kills only two characters, both of whom are villains and her

subordinates. By contrast, her attempts to murder five protagonists all fail or are undermined and later accomplished by other, notably *male* villains. For a better understanding of the gender disparity illustrated by the ability or lack thereof to commit murder, here is a list of the number of kills of named characters some of the Homunculi accomplish: Lust has two under her belt; her brother Envy has three (including his own suicide), one being a protagonist and the other two being antagonists; and her brother Wrath has five, all of which are murders of protagonists. All of this fits in with the gender stereotype that women are not fit for battle, while men are accomplished in such tasks.

These attempts to feminize the rather masculine character of Lust, as well as the aforementioned objectification through sectional shots that focus on parts of her rather than her whole body, work together to police Lust's gender and rein in her out-of-control masculinity. The attempt to control the gender roles that make her outside the norm ties in to Shinichi Saito's observation that Japanese television tends to encourage traditional beliefs among its viewers (527). What is perhaps more effective at illustrating Lust's femininity is not the traditional gender roles assigned to her, but the fact that many of the male characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* are much more masculine than she could ever hope to be. They are more violent, more likely to lose control, more adept at killing, and better able to punish those characters whose actions may deviate from traditional gender roles.

The Joining of Masculine and Feminine

As Lust is the embodiment of the deadly sin of lasciviousness, so her brother Envy is the embodiment of jealousy. Envy is somewhere between masculine and feminine due to how androgynous he appears; he dresses and acts in a way that makes it difficult to determine his sex

the majority of the time. However, since other characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* refer to Envy as male, it is clear that this must be the case. This androgyny leads Envy to take on gender roles usually assigned to both men and women: he holds sway over his younger brothers, but is subservient to his Father and his older siblings Lust and Pride. He is both looker and looked at, voyeur and exhibitionist, whole and in parts, contained and leaky. What aids in this androgyny is the fact that Envy's "extra-human power," using Lamarre's terminology, is the ability to shape shift (46).

The specific ways in which Envy is androgynous will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter of this thesis. However, his androgyny is important for this discussion when comparing the level of violence he exhibits and his out-of-control nature to these same traits in his sister, Lust. As mentioned earlier, Envy finishes Maes Hughes off when Lust fails to kill him. What is notable about this murder, however, in relation to Envy's androgynous nature, is that he is only able to kill Hughes after he has *already been injured* by Lust ("Separate Destinations"). A less androgynous, more masculine man would be able to kill an enemy utterly alone, without any assistance; since Envy is androgynous, though, he is only able to accomplish this task with help. That being said, he kills Hughes after shape shifting into the man's wife—in other words, he kills Hughes while in a female form, playing with the gender roles as previously discussed.

While Envy is capable of accomplishing the murder of a protagonist, that is one of the few truly masculine traits that he possesses. He *is* capable of thinking, planning, and controlling, but he generally defers these tasks to his sister, his brothers, or Father. He clearly enjoys violence as much as his sister Lust does; as previously mentioned, they are both seen at one point watching a riot that they orchestrated, and Envy's first kill in the show—that of a subordinate

villain—is a slow kill, Envy smirking all the while. While Envy is a decent example of a more masculine character in distinction to Lust, a more drastic difference is represented in Roy Mustang.

The True Man, the Dangerous Man

Roy Mustang is a colonel in the army of Amestris and an alchemist who specializes in flame alchemy. He activates his alchemy by snapping his fingers while wearing gloves made of “spark cloth” that allow enough friction to create a flame. What is most important for this discussion, though, is that he is a very masculine character and one associated to the hegemonic, patriarchal powers of Amestris through his military service. Using the list of masculine traits I have previously discussed, he is active both in the military and in helping the Elric brothers try to achieve their main goal of getting their bodies back; he is very intelligent and able to devise plans to uncover the conspiracy being perpetrated by Father and the Homunculi; and he is incredibly courageous, risking his life countless times for his subordinates and friends. Aside from all of these masculine traits, Mustang loses control numerous times throughout the anime. Here I will focus on two specific instances of losing control.

The first instance occurs in episode nineteen, after Lust injures Havoc. Mustang reaches into her chest and rips out the philosopher’s stone, literally ripping her heart out. However, because bits of flesh are still clinging to the stone, Lust is able to regenerate and inflicts upon Mustang the metaphorical rape I discussed earlier. After Lust leaves the room in order to hinder the efforts of Riza Hawkeye and Alphonse Elric to discover more about the conspiracy of the military, Mustang cauterizes his wound using Havoc’s lighter. Pairing the lighter with his alchemy, he attacks Lust with his flames to keep her from killing Hawkeye and Alphonse. As

previously mentioned, Lust has the ability to regenerate from nearly any injury, including burns; she is nearly immortal. As such, Mustang's first attack merely hinders her, rather than killing her. Throughout the incredibly one-sided battle that ensues, Mustang incinerates Lust eight times, completely engulfing her in flames each time. It is during this scene that Lust shows emotions through her eyes for the one and only time: they are wide with agony as she is incinerated by this out-of-control man. Finally, Lust is unable to regenerate and, instead, disintegrates into nothingness ("Death of the Undying").

There are a couple of interesting points to make about this scene in relation to masculinity and femininity, out-of-control-ness, and retaliation. First of all, the out-of-control woman deviating from traditional gender roles has been punished for her sexuality, her masculine traits, and her violence through dismemberment—her heart is ripped out, and later she disintegrates completely—and a literal death, similar to the "cultural backlash" against feminine appetites Bordo mentions (117). Additionally, it is notable that Mustang, a man, loses control in order to dispatch this out-of-control woman. Men are clearly allowed to lose control more, to embrace abandon and indulge their desires (Bordo 133-134). The killing of Lust can be seen as Mustang retaliating for his metaphorical rape, as well. He is clearly angry with her, both because of his damaged pride and because she had threatened people close to him: "You told me I couldn't kill you, but I'd like to try and prove you wrong! So let's see: how many times is it going to take?!" ("Death of the Undying"). He then proceeds to incinerate her until she dies. Mustang is able to kill the unkillable Lust because he is a man and she is a woman; no matter how out of control she is, how masculine she is, or how violent she is, she can never be as out of control or masculine or violent as a man, especially not in the eyes of a traditional society. This fact plays into the notion that stories in *shōnen* anime, like those in manga for boys and men,

“establish and reinforce the male ego, man’s traditionally superior social status, [and] norms of sexual behavior,” both in Japan where these anime and manga originate and in America where many people watch and read them (Ito 91). Gender norms, after all, are not very different between Japan and America.

Moving away from Lust as the receiving end of Mustang’s violence, a much later example of him being out of control occurs in episode fifty-three. This instance is comparable to Lust’s death, but also divergent from it in several ways that I will discuss momentarily. At this point, Mustang has finally tracked down Maes Hughes’ killer, Envy, a goal he has been trying to accomplish since the murder occurred near the beginning of the anime. Once Envy confirms that he indeed killed Hughes, Mustang attacks him with a blast of fire, burning his tongue to stop him from speaking. As all of the Homunculi can regenerate, like Lust is able to, Envy does just that. Mustang incinerates him again and again, chasing him through a labyrinth of underground tunnels like a game of cat and mouse. He manages to corner Envy and completely loses control, snapping his fingers in quick succession to burn Envy time and again in a vengeful effort to torture the creature that murdered his friend. By the time he stops, he has incinerated Envy twenty-five times (as opposed to the eight times he incinerates Lust), and the Homunculus is still not dead (“Flame of Vengeance”). In the following episode, Envy commits suicide rather than face the humiliation of being killed by “puny humans.”

Again, many interesting conclusions can be drawn from this case of an out-of-control, violent man. Most notable, perhaps, is the difference in the number of incinerations in this scene and the one I explored previously. It takes Mustang only eight incinerations of Lust, an out-of-control, violent, often-masculine woman, before she dies. It takes him *twenty-five* incinerations of Envy, a sometimes-out-of-control, violent man, to even come close to killing him. This again

relates to Bordo's idea about the difference in levels of indulgence between the two genders: men are allowed to indulge, to lose control, but women are not (134). Because Envy is a man, albeit an androgynous one, he is punished, but notably not *killed*, for his deviation from gender norms or his violence. Similarly, men are allowed to lose more control around other men, who are also permitted to lose control, than they are around women, who are *not* allowed this privilege. Mustang clearly loses much more control when it comes to Envy than when it comes to Lust, the latter of whom symbolically raped him. One would think he would feel more anger toward the woman who threatened his masculinity; however, he clearly feels more rage—and loses much more control—toward the man who killed his friend. Not only does this illustrate that men can lose more control around men, but it ties back into Terjesen's insights about friendship's importance in Japanese ethics, since social relationships like family and friendship define a person; because “the self is a network of relationships,” Envy killing Hughes, Mustang's closest friend, is a personal affront to Mustang that is far worse than Lust's symbolic rape of him (61). Thinking about this fact, it makes sense that Mustang would lose more control in relation to Envy than Lust.

What is perhaps most telling about Envy's demise for this particular discussion, though, is the fact that it does *not* come at the hands of Roy Mustang. While Mustang gravely wounds Envy, that does not in itself lead to his death. Envy, instead, chooses to commit suicide, a fact which I will explore in further detail in the next chapter of this thesis. Lust has no such choice when her death comes; as mentioned before, she is *punished* with death for being out of control, for deviating from gender norms, and for being violent. Envy, on the other hand, as a *man* who occasionally loses control, is violent, and is androgynous, is allowed options, and *chooses* his own fate. Once again, the gender disparity between men and women is illustrated: men may be

out of control and, still accepted by traditional society, be allowed options; women, on the other hand, may *not* be out of control and, if they are, they are punished, usually by men.

Policing Gender...Or Is It?

As I have clearly illustrated above, there is an obvious gender disparity between men and women in *shōnen* anime, despite how much some characters may be able to play with traditional gender roles. This disparity exists between protagonists and antagonists, as is rather conventional, but is also visible between male and female villains. Consider, for example, the differences in the levels of violence between Lust and Envy. Lust appears very violent, but is never able to succeed in killing anyone other than her own subordinates. Envy, on the other hand, kills a main protagonist, stimulating the plot for practically the entire series. Lust is killed by a violent man in punishment for her masculine traits, her overt sexualization, and her out-of-control-ness. Conversely, Envy, while punished for his androgyny and violence, is injured yet *not* killed by this selfsame man, but is allowed to choose to commit suicide instead. This illustrates the clear disparity between genders, at least when it comes to the character Lust and the men around her, in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*.

As I have illustrated in this chapter, there is a clear double-standard when it comes to out-of-control-ness and gender in this anime. However, more striking is the relationship between Lust and the hegemonic, patriarchal powers of Amestris (mainly, Father), and thus to the older generation with more traditional views on gender roles. I argue that Lust's punishment ultimately comes because of this relationship with the older generation. Her gender play is reined in by Roy Mustang, who is also associated with hegemonic power through his ties to the military and his ambitions to one day become ruler of Amestris. Because her gender play is

threatening to the status quo, it cannot be allowed to continue. This is likely part of the reason Mustang faces little retaliation from the other Homunculi for his assassination of Lust: he has upheld the status quo by ridding Father of a character who could potentially jeopardize the existing patriarchal state of affairs in Amestris.

CHAPTER II: BEYOND “GREEN WITH ENVY”: SHAPESHIFTING, ANDROGYNY,
AND GENDER PERFORMANCE REFLECTED IN ENVY THE JEALOUS

“Gender can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived.”

—Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (180)

Androgyny, especially in relation to males, has been a trope in Japanese popular culture for quite some time. Kabuki and Noh theatre actors would often play cross-gender roles, particularly after the banning of women from public performance in Japan in the 1600s. Beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present, young men with a feminized image have become more popular in Japan, largely due to fashion magazines, beauty industries, and the pop-culture media collaborating together to create a “highly sensitized aesthetic consciousness in the minds of young men,” causing them to focus more on their appearances (Iida 59). In popular culture, this new aesthetic consciousness is often reflected in *bishōnen* (beautiful boys) in anime and manga, which help consumers “imagine romantic relationships moving beyond the boundaries of currently dominant constructions of gender roles based on compulsory heterosexuality” (Darling-Wolf, “Male Bonding...” 79). But this is usually a trope associated with protagonists within a given Japanese popular culture text—the “second” or “effeminate male star” in a play, manga, or anime is often the androgynous one, rather than the main male character (Roden, qtd. in Darling-Wolf, “Male Bonding...” 79). What happens, then, when a villainous male character is portrayed as androgynous? Does this portrayal serve as a subversion of gender roles, or an attempt to rein them in by having an antagonist exhibit androgyny only to be punished for it later? In this chapter, I explore these questions by studying how Envy the Jealous, another villain in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, is androgynous in various ways, culminating in his torture and near-death at the hands of a more explicitly masculine man.

Furthermore, I discuss how Envy's association with the older generation and the status quo leads to his ultimate demise, based on the threatening nature of his gender performance to the hegemonic, patriarchal authority.

Recall that *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is a *shōnen* anime. Anime geared toward this demographic tend to be quite conservative when it comes to social norms, especially in relation to gender. This is in contrast to the *shōjo* demographic intended for young girls, in which gender is usually more fluid and sticks less stringently to traditional views. For example, *shōjo* genres often include ideas of “sex change (such as *Ranma 1/2*), of putative cross-dressing (*Rose of Versailles* or *Utena*), or of ‘love between beautiful boys (*bishōnen* ‘ai or yaoi)’” (Lamarre 48). While *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is a *shōnen* anime, there is some fluidity in relation to gender, as I began to highlight in the previous chapter with Lust the Lascivious. Envy is the younger brother of Lust and the embodiment of jealousy, a fact that is played with in his appearance: his hair has a green tint to its normally black hue and his “natural” form is that of a giant green creature. Envy is somewhere between masculine and feminine due to how androgynous he appears; he dresses and acts in a way that makes it difficult to determine his gender the majority of the time. However, since other characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* refer to Envy as a man, and he never corrects them in any way, it is clear that he at least allows others to identify him as male. This androgyny leads Envy to take on gender roles usually assigned to both men and women: he holds sway over his younger brothers, but is subservient to his Father and his older sister Lust and brother Pride, as I mentioned in the previous chapter. He is both looker and looked at, voyeur and exhibitionist, whole and in parts, contained and leaky, all of which I will highlight throughout this chapter. What aids in this

androgyny is the fact that Envy's "extra-human power," using Thomas Lamarre's terminology, is the ability to shape shift (46).

Shapeshifting and Gender-shifting

Shapeshifters have a long and rich history in Japanese folklore that, unfortunately, is largely outside the scope of this thesis. By way of brief explanation, as Michael Bathgate discusses, "the figure of the shapeshifter changes roles as easily as it changes form...[a]nimal, demon and divinity, political power and force of nature, it eludes all efforts at simple categorization" (7). Often times, shapeshifting in Japanese tradition is associated with animal metamorphs, mostly fox spirits or raccoon spirits who act as deceptive creatures or tricksters, respectively (Foster 7). Animal-related shapeshifting actually plays quite a prominent role in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*; several (mostly male) characters are chimeras that have the ability to shapeshift from human to human-animal hybrids. Even Envy, while he normally takes on a human form, plays into this animal-related shapeshifting, occasionally choosing to appear as a dog or, when showing his true form, a giant, green, almost dinosaur-like creature. Although I point out that most of these characters in this particular anime are male, shapeshifting is not an ability limited to one or the other sex. Furthermore, shapeshifters constitute a general behavior of duplicity, which relates back to Envy's androgyny quite well based on the shapes he chooses to take (Foster 7).

It is worth exploring shapeshifting in relation to gender in general. Shapeshifting, obviously, can be seen as a form of deception, especially when employed by Envy. More generally, though, shapeshifting is a form of masquerade in which the shapeshifter plays the part of another person. In order to convincingly portray another person, a shapeshifter must be able

to perform that person's gender accurately, making shapeshifters both masculine and feminine. However, the act of shapeshifting itself definitely leans closer to femininity than masculinity. Masculinity is traditionally linked with "solidness, consistency, and certainty," while femininity is generally considered unpredictable, dynamic, and unbound (Iida 63). Therefore, shapeshifting may be considered a feminine trait, as it is inherently dynamic, unbound and, in Envy's case, deceitful. This, consequently, means that Envy, as a shapeshifter, is naturally feminine, at least to some extent.

Specifically in relation to this ability to shapeshift, then, Envy is incredibly androgynous. He chooses to take on a teenage male form (albeit a quite androgynous one) when he isn't acting as a spy or infiltrating the military's ranks. When he *is* in disguise, he does not discriminate between taking a male or female form, although he takes a male form almost three times more often than a female form. It is worth noting, however, that every female form (three in all) Envy takes as a disguise is that of a named character within the series, while only three of the eight male forms he takes are those of named characters. This fact is worth further discussion. Consider gender as performance, as Judith Butler posits (177). Every male form Envy takes is that of a soldier. His choice of mostly male forms is largely due to the fact that the military plays such a huge role in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, and most soldiers are male. By choosing to use the forms of various soldiers (and male ones at that), he is choosing the gender easiest to perform in the given situation. Even if he performs the masculine gender badly (which he rarely does while in disguise), it will be less noticeable among a crowd of other men than if he was in the form of a female soldier and performing the feminine gender badly. The fact that every one of the female forms he takes is that of a named character, however, puts more pressure on him to perform their genders well, especially when one considers that each of these forms is being used

as a type of emotional and psychological torture toward some character he is trying to hurt. For example, just before Envy kills Maes Hughes, a lieutenant-colonel who has pieced together the clues to a military conspiracy, the Homunculus shapeshifts into the man's wife. He uses this form to play on Hughes's emotions so the man will not attack him, a tactic that works remarkably well almost every time Envy employs it. Thus, he is able to kill Hughes without being damaged himself ("Separate Destinations"). What is important here, though, especially in this case, is that Envy must be able to perform the feminine gender incredibly well in this case in order to pass convincingly for Hughes's wife. His ruse would not have worked had he acted as boisterous, controlling, and cocky as he normally does rather than performing the meeker, warmer, more peaceful gender roles typically associated with women.

Envy's choice of form when shapeshifting into others or picking a disguise is not the only way he performs gender, however. The form he chooses to take normally (not to be confused with his true form, which he prefers to hide) is, as previously mentioned, that of an androgynous teen male. He appears thin with some curves (his hips occasionally appear quite feminine) and long, black hair with a green tint to it. His hair, though, is stringy, perhaps detracting from any possible feminine assumptions there. His choice of attire is particularly interesting: a black sleeveless shirt that stops just below his pectoral muscles, shorts with a sash that almost makes them appear to be a skirt at times, arm and leg warmers that keep his fingers and toes exposed, and a matching headband. What is notable about this attire is that through it, Envy shows more skin than any of the other Homunculi, *even his sister Lust*. Lust, as I mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, is the embodiment of the deadly sin of lasciviousness; one would assume that *she* would be the most likely Homunculus to show an excessive amount of skin. Envy, however, shows his midriff, his upper arms and legs, and even his fingers and toes through his

choice of attire, while Lust shows only her cleavage, even keeping most of her arms and all of her legs hidden beneath clothing. Showing skin through use of a skimpy costume like this is a trait Anne Allison associates with the *bishōjo hīrō* (beautiful girl hero) and constitutes a “fable of fierce flesh,” especially when the character in question also fights fiercely, which Envy occasionally does (137). Following this fable of fierce flesh, Envy might be considered feminine in his choice of attire, especially given the fact that his shirt covers his pectoral muscles (or, were he a woman, his breasts) while exposing his midriff and upper arms. Further, this exposure of flesh plays with Laura Mulvey’s cinematic gaze; in some ways, Envy’s showing off of skin encourages the audience to look at him in a scopophilic manner (344). One can derive pleasure from looking at Envy’s toned abdomen, arms, and legs, put on display by the clothing he chooses to wear. He has a certain “to-be-looked-at-ness” in this chosen form that encourages the viewer to scrutinize him as an object (the feminine position) rather than as bearer of the look (the masculine position) (Mulvey 346).

This chosen form is not only androgynous physically, but also in the way Envy chooses to *perform* while in this shape. His physical performance (the way he holds himself, the way he moves, the gestures he makes, the way he speaks) is at times very feminine and at other times quite masculine. In the first scene in which he appears in this chosen form, he is seen standing with his hand on his right hip and leaning with his weight focused on that foot—this stance is a generally feminine stance to take, with the body’s weight focused on one side and the hand resting firmly on the hip (“Rain of Sorrows”). In fact, Envy is often pictured standing like this, or standing with both hands on his hips. When he is shown sitting, it is often with his legs crossed. Both of these stances (hands on hips and sitting with crossed legs) are traditionally considered feminine. On another occasion, Envy stretches his arms above his head while facing

away from the camera, thus highlighting his bare back (“Cold Flame”). This focus on a specific *part* of Envy’s body, rather than on the body as a whole, fragments him in a way that women are most often fragmented by the male gaze (Mulvey 347). All of these examples show Envy taking up as little space as possible (focusing the body’s weight on one foot, sitting with legs crossed, and stretching his arms upward so as to take up as little space horizontally as possible), which is a typically feminine trait in relation to how one carries oneself and moves. However, there are other times when Envy stands or crouches in such a way that takes up much space. There are also instances where his movements and gestures are markedly masculine—jabbing at the air as though throwing a punch at a nonexistent foe, stamping his foot in frustration, leaning in close to mock an opponent. These challenging, aggressive, very *active* gestures and movements are generally considered masculine (Saito 515).

The Masculine Masquerade

Even given these masculine gestures, however, Envy is quite feminine in the way he speaks. In his first appearance, when his sister Lust asks him to shapeshift out of the form of an old man he has taken on, he agrees while commenting that “This time around, I’ll go with a younger, cuter model, what do you say?” (“Rain of Sorrows”). A focus on looks is generally considered a feminine trait, but it is one that Envy nonetheless carries with him throughout the entirety of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*. It might be argued that the form Envy chooses to take on the majority of the time is an attempt to emulate a *bishōnen* (beautiful boy), which are androgynous boys often appearing in *shōjo* manga and anime (Darling-Wolf, “Women and New Men” 287). *Bishōnen* often have long hair (which Envy has, although his is stringy rather than full and flowing as most beautiful boys have), thin frames (again, like Envy has in this form),

and are generally considered young and cute (which Envy himself says he is trying to pull off with this form). An attempt at looking like a *bishōnen* might explain why his appearance matters so much to him. He bristles when one of his brothers tells him to “get a new outfit” and calls him “ugly” (“Those Who Lurk Underground”). Similarly, at one point when he is speaking to his sister Lust, he calls her an “ugly hag,” which is patently untrue as she is meant to, once again, embody the sin of lust and does so quite well with her physical appearance of full lips, thin waist, long arms and legs, and large breasts (“Cold Flame”). This deprecation of others in an attempt to take their focus off the fact that he is performing the gender and appearance of a *bishōnen* rather badly continues on with others, as he is constantly demeaning his brothers and his enemies alike with digs at their appearances or reactions to certain situations.

This desire to be viewed as a *bishōnen* ties very closely into the cult of male beauty Yumiko Iida discusses in her article “Beyond the ‘Feminization of Masculinity’: Transforming Patriarchy with the ‘Feminine’ in Contemporary Japanese Youth Culture.” According to Iida, the growing trend of aesthetically-conscious young men in Japan has much to do with counter-hegemonic practices attempting to “configure new masculine ideals” (62). This counter-hegemonic movement is one in which the younger generations work against the older generations to do away with traditional gender roles and create new, less restrictive views of gender. In an effort to better deceive the protagonists, who are representative of the younger generation which is more flexible when it comes to gender roles, I argue that Envy is seeking aesthetic beauty in relation to his looks and actions. He chooses a “younger, cuter model” to be the form he takes most often so he can appear to have a more fluid view of gender.

In stark contrast to many of the feminine markers surrounding Envy are his attitudes toward many things. As a Homunculus, a so-called superior being, Envy is openly racist against

humans and chimeras (although his racism is usually directed at the former, mostly because he has no personal contact with any chimeras until the latter twenty or so episodes of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*). Much of this racism stems from a focus on logic over emotion, rational thinking over sentimental feeling; he believes that much of what makes Homunculi superior to humans is the fact that they are *not* hindered by frivolous sentiment. Logic and rational thinking are generally considered masculine traits, while focusing on sentiment and emotion are traits commonly thought of as feminine (and, it might be added, commonly considered detrimental). Envy is constantly berating his enemies for being too sentimental, pointing out that the logical course would be, for instance, to allow a single village to be destroyed in order to save an entire country (“Inside the Belly”). Likewise, whenever he tricks an opponent by shapeshifting into a loved one to catch them off guard, he mockingly comments that humans are such “morons” for falling for such a stupid trick based solely on emotional manipulation (“Flame of Vengeance”). It is revealed shortly before Envy’s death, however, that his racism toward humans is largely because he is jealous of the close emotional relationships humans can have, while he has never had anything like that. (His “familial” ties are not only merely invented by his “Father,” the creator of the Homunculi, but also more of a master/servants type of relationship than that of father/children. Most of these relationships are focused solely on individual gain or on loyalty to the father/master of the group, rather than on actual emotional attachment or sentiment in any way.)

The Feminization of Masculinity

This revelation is intriguing. Does it mean Envy is, in fact, a more feminine character deep down? If one accepts that being “emotional, romantic, cute, tender, [and] warm” are all

typically feminine traits, then it is easy to view Envy's jealousy of humans for possessing these very traits as a sign of his femininity (Saito 515). In fact, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Envy's eventual death does not come at the hands of another, not even at the hands of Roy Mustang, who tortures him by repeatedly incinerating him as punishment for killing Maes Hughes (and, to take it a step further, as symbolic punishment for his androgyny); rather, his death is a suicide ("Beyond the Inferno"). This is a key point, since Envy is definitely punished by Mustang, but not *fatally* punished by him as Lust is. His ability to choose suicide as an option gives him masculine agency, although his suicide in itself is a rather feminine act as it is a relatively tame suicide. Envy is reduced to an emotional, crying, feminine creature just before his death; he takes his own life by pulling his philosopher's stone out of his own mouth and withering away into nothingness. This suicide leaves no mess behind, and is much less violent than suicides usually performed by men such as gunshots to the head or face, or suicide by jumping from a roof. In fact, Envy's chosen method of suicide is in many ways quite similar to those typically associated with women, particularly cutting wrists, in which life slowly ebbs out of the victim.

If one takes into account the fact that Envy is clearly attempting to perform the masculine gender throughout the majority of the anime—by taking on more masculine forms than feminine ones, claiming to value logic over sentiment, and fighting fiercely or violently at times—then his suicide might be considered in a slightly different light. He claims to be committing suicide because a human (Edward Elric) is able to see through him and understand that he is jealous of what humans have that he does not. However, taking into account the aforementioned attempted gender performance and the fact that such sentiment is a traditionally *feminine* trait, I argue that Envy's suicide is an attempt to escape the fact that he is more feminine than masculine, this act

thus playing into views of traditional gender norms. Even if this is merely an implication of his suicide, it ties in to the fact that “television tends to...[cultivate] traditional views” among its audience, and *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is, when one gets down to it, an anime geared toward the generally conservative demographic of *shōnen* (Saito 527).

Whether or not this is a valid conclusion to be made in this respect, it is true that Envy is an incredibly androgynous character. While he acts in both masculine and feminine ways, he leans easily toward the latter in many respects. His physical appearance—body type, attire, the way he carries himself—is also a mixture of both masculine and feminine in various ways. One aspect of Envy’s character that has been mentioned previously but not yet expanded upon is his torture at the hands of Roy Mustang. Briefly, Roy Mustang is an alchemist who specializes in flame alchemy, activated by snapping his fingers while wearing special gloves. He was a close friend of Maes Hughes before his murder, and has spent the majority of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* searching for the culprit.

As previously mentioned, Mustang attacks Envy under the explicit pretense that the Homunculus was the one to kill his friend. However, it is interesting to look at exactly how this whole scene takes place. Even after Envy confesses to killing Hughes, Mustang does not attack him. It is not until Envy shapeshifts into the form of Hughes’s wife, a woman, and subsequently performs the feminine gender badly, that Mustang finally attacks him. Even more striking is the fact that Mustang does not incinerate Envy completely at this point, but rather boils his tongue (“Flame of Vengeance”). If one considers that women are traditionally expected to be quiet (to be seen and not heard, as the saying goes), it is quite salient that Mustang attacks Envy in this way while he is in the form of a woman, not least of all because Envy is performing feminine gender roles badly by bragging and mocking his opponent while in this form. Throughout the

remainder of the torture, Envy is running from Mustang, visually reminiscent of the female lead in a horror movie running from the psychotic killer. At the times when Mustang catches up to Envy, the Homunculus is brought to his knees (or even hands and knees) in a very submissive pose. While Mustang has only explicitly admitted to wanting to kill Envy (a goal he fails at when Envy commits suicide) for murdering his friend, the visuals associated with this torture can easily relate Envy again to a feminine creature. Thus, the torture could easily be associated with Envy's failed performance of *either* gender (as he attempts to perform masculinity constantly, but throughout his torture is actually performing femininity).

Much of this might seem like a stretch of the imagination, but it cannot be denied that Envy *does* perform (or at least attempt to perform) both masculinity and femininity. As Judith Butler points out, gender is *always* a performance, and is not a fact, nor is it real, nor original (180). The fact that Envy is so summarily punished for his "poor" gender performance, due to performing both genders often, again ties back into the fact that *shōnen* is a largely conservative demographic that sticks to traditional views of gender. Androgyny, in Envy's case, is not tolerated and eventually leads to his demise at his own hands.

The Self-Destroying Fear of the Feminine Other

Envy's death is worth another, closer look. In the previous chapter of this thesis, I explored in detail Envy's torture at the hands of Roy Mustang, looking at the number of times he is incinerated by the out-of-control protagonist and briefly explaining that Envy commits suicide rather than die at the hands of a human. What I would like to take a moment to explain here are the implications of this suicide. First, it is worth noting that Envy, along with the other Homunculi, is closely associated with the government of Amestris, and therefore the hegemonic

patriarchy, through his relation to his Father. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Father not only created the Homunculi, but also created the country of Amestris; he is, thus, the ultimate patriarch within this text. As one might imagine, being the ultimate patriarch, Father demands obedience to the hegemonic discourse of his country. His children (save Greed, the estranged son) all strive to uphold the hegemonic practices of Amestris, and the army in particular. Father, the Homunculi, and the army at large may be seen as an analogy for the older generation that continues to cling to the traditional patriarchal view of the world, to hold tightly to traditional gender roles and condemn things such as gender ambiguity and gender play.

Taking this all into account, it makes sense, to some extent, that Envy ultimately commits suicide. In attempting to emulate an aesthetically-conscious young man, Envy is going against the status quo. His feminine traits, speech, and activities seem almost inherent for Envy. However, whenever he takes a female form, it seems that he becomes hyper-aware of his feminine traits, and thus becomes overtly masculine as a defense mechanism. This happens every time he takes a female form in the series. All three times, he performs femininity well enough to fool whoever he is attempting to fool with his disguise, but then seems to realize he's successfully acting feminine and covers that fact by becoming cocky, boisterous, and aggressive—very masculine—which causes his ruse to immediately fall apart. He is hyper-aware of his occasional femininity because of his close association with the status quo, the hegemonic discourse, the traditional gender norms held by Amestris.

This fact is especially clear when looking at Envy's natural form. As I mentioned earlier, his natural form is that of a massive, green, dinosaur-like creature. If one considers the fact that it is generally considered masculine to take up space, and feminine to take up as little space as possible, this natural form of Envy's is clearly quite masculine. This form, though, is only the

form he takes when he is strong and at full power, so to speak. After Roy Mustang incinerates him twenty-five times, Envy is reduced to his *real* natural form: that of a tiny green creature, almost like a small lizard with a mouth that opens vertically rather than horizontally. Because of Envy's small stature, lack of presence, and vulnerability in this form, he can be seen as quite feminine while in it. This femininity is only heightened by the fact that he shows the greatest amount of emotion while in this tiny form, crying openly while speaking to the protagonists, attempting (unsuccessfully) to mock them or goad them into doing what he wants ("Beyond the Inferno").

In this scene, as I mentioned above, Envy claims he is committing suicide because Edward Elric has seen through him and understands that he is envious of humans (read: envious of femininity). I also suggested above that Envy is, perhaps, upset with himself for performing the masculine gender badly, and so chooses to commit suicide because of that. Taking this idea a step further, and considering the association between Envy and the hegemonic powers in Amestris, I argue that Envy's demise also has much to do with the fact that he is basically on the border between the older generation, reflected in Father and the country of Amestris, and the younger generation, reflected in the protagonists of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*. Because Envy inherently embodies feminine tendencies as a shapeshifter and an aesthetically-conscious young man, yet also displays many conventionally masculine traits due to his natural form's large stature and his aggressive personality, he is on the cusp between the young generation of feminized men and the old generation of traditional phallocentric men. It is clear, though, given Envy's pseudo-familial ties and situation within the hegemonic power in Amestris, that he *wants* to fit in with a traditional view of gender roles; he wants to fit in with the group that holds the most power. This is obvious when considering his views on Homunculi versus humans I

discussed earlier: Homunculi are logical and rational (read: masculine) while humans are emotional and sentimental (read: feminine). Therefore, Envy would rather be associated with the masculine group, the group in power in a phallogentric world, than with the feminine, subjugated group.

However, Envy's consistent return to femininity hinders that association with the patriarchal group. Because of this, Envy is punished by Roy Mustang, another character on the cusp between the older generation and the younger generation—he is a soldier in the army, but is striving to change the hegemonic powers from the inside out—as I discussed above. Once that punishment comes to an end, Envy is reduced to his natural form, the tiny lizard-like form that shows his ultimate femininity and shows that he is the “other” he has been trying desperately to suppress. This “outing” of Envy as the “other”, the feminine, along with his failure to perform masculinity as well as he would like, and his stated reason of being understood by a human, all play into his reasoning for committing suicide. Rejecting the other within himself leads Envy to take the ultimate step to put an end to it: death.

As I've shown in this chapter and the previous one, villains who play with gender in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* are ultimately punished for their gender play. Both Lust and Envy are closely associated with the phallogentric, hegemonic powers that rule Amestris due to their pseudo-familial ties with Father, and are thus less free with gender play than other characters, namely the protagonists of the series. This is not to say that they *cannot* play with gender, and in fact they *do* play with gender quite a lot; however, their gender play is reined in and punished by the hegemonic system in which they operate. They both stand on the cusp of the older generation and the younger generation, Envy perhaps more than his sister Lust, but due

to their position as antagonists are punished by a protagonist who also inhabits a liminal space between generations while being more closely associated with the hegemonic older generation.

Things change when the characters playing with gender are protagonists, however. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will explore another set of siblings, General Olivier and Major Alex Armstrong, both protagonists who, similar to Lust and Envy, are between the older and younger generation. Both Armstrongs employ rather fluid gender roles, but neither is punished as severely as Lust and Envy are for that gender play.

CHAPTER III: “THESE GENDER PRACTICES HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN THE
ARMSTRONG LINE FOR GENERATIONS!”: SUBVERTING GENDER NORMS IN THE
ARMSTRONG FAMILY

*“A sibling may be the keeper of one’s identity, the only person with the keys to one’s unfettered,
more fundamental self.”*

–Marian Sandmaier (“Brother and Sister Quote...”)

In the previous two chapters of this thesis, I have discussed a pair of antagonists from *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* who play with gender in various ways, yet are punished for that gender play. At the end of the most recent chapter, I suggested that Lust and Envy are associated with the older generation focused on phallogentric, hegemonic power and are thus punished for their play with gender. How, then, do things change when protagonists are involved? Here I will explore Alex and Olivier Armstrong, two protagonists who, like Lust and Envy, stand on the cusp between generations and play with gender. Where Lust and Envy are pseudo-siblings, both created from their Father’s unwanted vices, the Armstrongs are true biological siblings, which may also play a part in the smaller amount of punishment they receive for gender play. I will explore their family life briefly and their interaction as siblings, as well as the implications of their battle with another Homunculus, Sloth.

The Gentle Giant

First, though, a description of these characters and their gender play is in order. The first member of the Armstrong family we meet is Major Alex Louis Armstrong (hereafter simply Alex), a State Alchemist (like Roy Mustang, whom I have mentioned in the previous two chapters) whose signature alchemic style involves swiftly crafting projectiles and statues from

stone. He is the only male child in his family with four sisters: three older and one younger. His first appearance comes in the first episode while the military is chasing down a criminal, Isaac McDougal, a rogue State Alchemist attempting to take down the government single-handedly (“Fullmetal Alchemist”). At first glance, Alex appears very masculine. He fits the strong-man archetype, looking very much like a body builder given his impressive musculature that is often barely hidden beneath his military uniform—not that it matters, as he routinely removes his shirt to display his rippling muscles both in and out of battle. Muscles, as Susan Bordo points out, have long been associated with masculine power through physical strength, which is definitely highlighted in Alex’s striking physique (193). He is also incredibly tall at 7’3”, the tallest recurring human character in the series aside from Alphonse, one of the main characters whose soul inhabits a tall suit of armor. He often wears a stern expression, highlighted by his hairless, protruding brow and thick handlebar mustache that hides his mouth while accentuating his strong chin. All of these traits give him a rather imposing presence.

Despite his masculine appearance, though, Alex Armstrong is quite feminine in personality and mentality. Where men are generally expected to hide their emotions, Alex instead wears his emotions on his sleeve, a fact that is evident several times throughout the series. For example, at the end of the first episode, he goes to see Edward Elric, the main character, in the hospital, bringing with him a bouquet of roses as a get-well gift (“Fullmetal Alchemist”). In fact, Alex is associated with the symbol of the rose quite often. Almost every time he is shown removing his shirt, there is a brief cutaway shot of him surrounded by roses while displaying his body to the viewer. This association with roses is particularly interesting when considering the fact that the rose is a “signifier of male-male love and sexuality in Japan” and is often used in relation to effeminate male characters (Welker 859). Alex’s sexuality is

never explored in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, but the signifier of roses in conjunction with his character can easily be read as a connotation of his effeminate nature. Likewise, he is often pictured with another feminizing symbol, what I call *kawaii* sparkles: tiny yellow stars or sparkles that generally indicate cuteness. It is relatively rare in anime that big, burly, strong men are associated with this particular symbol, but they nonetheless appear around Alex often when he is showing emotion or displaying his body by removing his shirt.

These *kawaii* sparkles are also indicative of another feminine aspect of Alex Armstrong: his aesthetic consciousness. Like Envy, Alex is quite focused on aesthetics, although in a very different way. Due to his body type and facial hair and his inability to shapeshift, Alex cannot appear as an androgynous man as Envy can. Instead, he has focused on honing his body into a perfect example of the (male) human physique and on refining various artistic abilities. Consider that the humanities (art, English, social studies, etc.) are typically considered feminine, while the sciences are typically considered masculine. The fact that Alex is focused on honing his artistic skill seems a rather feminine pursuit, then. This seems especially feminine when considering the fact that, although talents like portraiture and sculpting alchemy have been “passed down the Armstrong line for generations,” Alex’s eldest sister Olivier, my second focus in this chapter, seems to have no desire to learn these skills. While most alchemical creations have slight cracks or lines on them that reveal their crafted nature, Alex’s creations are virtually *always* blemish-free and expertly crafted, looking hand-sculpted rather than synthesized on the fly. This is true from the actual sculptures he creates to the large, heavy-artillery-type stone spikes he uses when using combat alchemy. This is easily an example of what Yumiko Iida calls a “highly sensitized aesthetic consciousness,” as Alex is focused not just on the utility of his alchemical creations, but also on the aesthetic beauty in them (59).

Another example of Alex's feminine nature through his display of emotions comes in episode 18, after one of his subordinates, Maria Ross, seems to be killed in retaliation for her supposed role in the death of Maes Hughes. In this particular episode, Alex discovers that Roy Mustang actually faked her death, responding first with dumbstruck shock and before removing his shirt as tears of joy stream down his face, finally proceeding to attempt to hug her. What is interesting about this particular scene is that main-character Edward Elric is also just discovering the fact that Ross is alive, yet his reaction is much more reserved than Alex's. Although he is clearly happy that she is alive, and shocked that Mustang was able to fool them into thinking she was dead, his reaction is a simple smile rather than an attempt to assault the young woman ("The Arrogant Palm of a Small Human").

The most striking and poignant example of Alex's emotional nature, though, occurs in a flashback to a conflict called the Ishvalan Civil War. During this war, State Alchemists were viewed as human weapons, both empowering and objectifying them, and were subject to the orders of their superiors, virtually none of whom were State Alchemists but rather normal human soldiers. The Ishvalan Civil War was little more than genocide against the Ishvalan people, carried out mainly by the State Alchemists under their superiors' orders. In this flashback to the war, Alex is pictured holding the body of an Ishvalan child as tears stream down his face. He refuses to continue fighting, at which point he is dismissed from the battlefield ("Struggle of the Fool"). While other protagonists who were involved in the war have negative reactions as well, none are as visceral and openly emotional as Alex Armstrong. In fact, every other veteran of that particular war whose reactions we see does exactly the opposite; they all *hide* their emotions and, rather than breaking down to tears, get angry more than anything else. Alex's reaction is very feminizing, as is the trauma he carries with him after the war. After the flashback, he

laments his reaction, not in some macho I-wish-I-hadn't-shown-emotion way, but rather he regrets giving up and being unable to fight harder to protest the military's actions. I should point out that it is unclear whether this reaction would have been in character for Alex at the time (that is, whether or not he was so emotional before the war), as we know very little about him from before the war. However, given the way other characters react to his breakdown, it seems as though it is very likely in character for him, and that he has always shown more emotion than the average man.

The Ice Queen

Acting as Alex's foil is Major General Olivier Mira Armstrong (henceforth Olivier), his eldest sister. As with Alex, Olivier physically fits her gender quite well. She has long blonde hair, blue eyes, full lips (one of only three characters in the series with this trait), and full hips. Unlike her brother, who routinely removes his shirt to display his body, she is constantly seen wearing her full military uniform, a heavy black coat over it, and white gloves on her hands, which makes it difficult to determine her actual physical build; it can easily be assumed, though, that she possesses a muscular build, given her combative skill. When they first meet her, though, Edward and Alphonse Elric are amazed that she isn't quite as physically imposing as her brother Alex ("The Northern Wall of Briggs").

While she may not be as tall or quite as muscular as Alex, Olivier is nonetheless much more masculine in personality than he is. It is by no accident that she is the only female general in the Amestrian army; she is cold and calculating, focused more on ambition, knowledge, bravery, and loyalty than on sentiment or even her own personal life outside of the military. I've mentioned that Alex wears his emotions on his sleeve. Olivier, on the other hand, keeps her

emotions in check—except perhaps for her anger, which she uses as a motivator for herself and her subordinates. Those soldiers who follow her show her fierce respect, following every order she gives to a T. She is even able, more than once, to convince soldiers not under her command to follow her orders. On one of these occasions, she uses her overwhelming presence and leadership skills to convince soldiers, who moments before were attempting to kill her under strict orders from their own superiors, to instead follow her orders so they can defeat the Immortal Legion, a hoard of mindless mannequins that are virtually unkillable (“Beyond the Inferno”).

To be sure, Olivier is in many ways very similar to Lust, whom I discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. For instance, Olivier and Lust are two of the three female characters of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* with clearly-defined full lips. They both have relatively long hair that always hangs loose rather than being tied back, both have eyes set in a similar looks (for Lust it is a seductive look, for Olivier a determined one) that rarely convey any other emotion, and both act rather masculine. They are both focused on traditionally masculine pursuits such as being “active, intelligent, courageous, and able to think, plan, and control” (Saito 515). It is also worth noting that both Lust and Olivier’s weapons of choice are phallic objects: Lust has her Ultimate Spear, and Olivier uses a sword that has been “passed through the Armstrong family for generations” (“The Immortal Legion”). What is particularly interesting about Olivier’s use of her sword is that, more often than not, she uses it to inflict piercing damage rather than slashing damage. Several times, she pierces the arm or leg of other generals (most of whom have been corrupted by promises of immortality and continuing hegemonic power from Father) in order to basically take them hostage and get them to follow her orders for fear of pain. This constant use of her sword to pierce others, particularly patriarchal figures attempting to uphold the status quo

when it comes to gender roles, is a particularly masculine gesture that, as with Lust's Ultimate Spear, can help alleviate male viewers' castration anxiety. The fact that Olivier is always pictured with her sword on her person adds to this "complete disavowal of castration;" even if the sword is sheathed, it is still obvious that she always has it, and is thus more masculine than a woman without such a phallic object would be.

Redefining the Cinematic Gaze

Given their physical appearances and personality traits, Mulvey's idea of the cinematic gaze is flipped on its head when it comes to the Armstrongs. Because Alex is constantly removing his shirt to display his impressive physique, he is drawing attention to his body and virtually making himself into an object. He is "simultaneously looked at and displayed," embodying a certain "to-be-looked-at-ness" that is usually reserved for women (Mulvey 346). Olivier, on the other hand, is always pictured wearing not only her military uniform, but also a heavy black coat over that. As I mentioned above, it is difficult to tell precisely what her build is due to this constant covering-up. The audience's eyes are drawn away from her body and toward her face, and even half of *that* is usually hidden behind her hair. Not only is Olivier anything but sexualized, but she is masculinized, as mentioned above, by the phallic object she carries with her: her sword.

Alex, though, is subjected to a "controlling and curious" scopophilic gaze often throughout the series (Mulvey 344). Every time he removes his shirt, the audience's gaze is drawn to his rippling muscles, his chiseled abs, and the *kawaii* sparkles surrounding him. This is especially jarring, as Mulvey suggests that it is impossible for the male figure to "bear the burden of objectification" due to the "principles of the ruling ideology and the physical structures that

back it up” (347). This may be yet another way that the Armstrongs subvert gender roles: each of them takes the opposite of the traditional role in relation to the male gaze.

Consider that men generally identify with the main male protagonist of a film or series. In the case of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, then, the main identification would be with Edward Elric. Edward’s reactions to the Armstrongs are likely, then, indicative of those of the target audience of the show, adolescent males. His reactions to Alex are fairly comical, often displaying shock and unease at the fact that Alex has just removed his shirt to show off his muscles. At the same time, though, he clearly respects the older man, as evidenced throughout the series. It is very likely that viewers of the anime share Edward’s reactions to Alex’s constant stripping.

All in the Family

What is perhaps most interesting about Alex and Olivier Armstrong is that their learned gender roles seem to be typical when it comes to the rest of their family. In episode 45 of the series, we get a glimpse at the Armstrong family as Olivier returns home to demand leadership of the family and ownership of all family property. Their father, Philip Gargantos Armstrong, is as aesthetically-focused as his son is, with *kawaii* sparkles almost constantly surrounding his head as they often do with Alex. Their mother and middle two sisters have expressions fixed in a stern look, much like Olivier, although their lips are thin and undefined. The youngest sister of the Armstrong family, Catherine, is perhaps the one who fits best into traditional gender roles, with her innocent looks, thin frame, and cute face; however, she shows similarities to her brother Alex in that she is incredibly strong, able to lift a piano over her head with one hand (“Conflict at Baschool”). The entire Armstrong family is focused on tradition, although it should be noted

that they are focused on *family* tradition, rather than on the traditions of Amestris, the country in which they live. A common theme among their family is using the phrase (or some similar variation) “X has been passed down the Armstrong line for generations!”

There is a very good chance that Alex and Olivier’s learned gender performances can be tied not only to their family traditions, but also to theories of birth order and sibling relationships. For instance, Olivier’s position as first-born child in the Armstrong family has likely influenced her overt masculinity. Until Alex was born, the Armstrong family consisted of Olivier and her two younger sisters; in a study on sibling genders and childhood leadership, Brunello and Paola speculate that girls growing up in a family of all sisters may be less likely to take up traditional gender roles, and more likely to seek leadership positions (64). This also helps explain why she has moved up the ranks in the Amestrian military to become a Major General in charge of her own fort: seeking leadership positions. Brunello and Paola also cite studies that suggest brothers with older sisters are more likely to develop feminine characteristics, as Alex Armstrong has done (62).

Their relationship as siblings is quite interesting to look at specifically. When Alex and Olivier have their first interaction in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, their differing personalities are highlighted perfectly. Alex is polite and courteous to his older sister, while Olivier is critical and bullying, critiquing him with statements like “You’re just as gutless as I remember you being” (“Bite of the Ant”). She also bullies him physically, kicking him in the knee when he wonders aloud how she will ever find a husband given her fierce personality. Moreover, she refuses to truly consider him her brother after he broke down during the Ishvalan Civil War, another form of verbal bullying. Skinner and Kowalski, in a study of sibling bullying, found that there is a “perceived acceptability of bullying one’s sibling as opposed to one’s peers”

that is definitely evident in the Armstrongs' relationship (1730). I say it is evident because no one seems to have a problem with the ways in which Olivier belittles Alex: not their other family members, not their colleagues, not their friends. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Alex treats Olivier with a great deal of respect, and it is obvious that he truly respects her rather than simply showing her respect because he fears her or anything like that.

What's more, some friendly competition between siblings is actually a rather common occurrence, according to Victor Cicirelli. Siblings in what he calls "industrialized" nations are likely to be raised with an air of competition and independence, which is exactly how Alex and Olivier seem to have been raised (Cicirelli 13). Their competitive relationship is highlighted when their father suggests they engage in combat to determine who will become the new head of the Armstrong family. This suggestion leads to an admittedly brief battle in which Olivier soundly beats Alex, although it could be argued that the use of her sword gives her an unfair advantage, given that Alex refuses to use his alchemy against her ("The Promised Day").

Despite their competitive nature, though, Alex and Olivier clearly respect each other, as evidenced in a later battle they are involved in: one with the Homunculus Sloth, a massive, hulking brute. Perhaps more than any of the other Homunculi, Sloth is especially representative of the older, phallocentric, hegemonic generation. His intense apathy when it comes to literally everything—he claims that even living itself is a pain—is indicative of the older generation's reluctance to embrace change. In fact, his goal in attacking the Armstrongs is to kill Olivier, under Father's orders. This is a very clear sign that Father, the ultimate patriarch and hegemonic power, cannot handle the fact that Olivier, the only female general in his military, has taken out at least two of his corrupted generals at that point and is attempting to achieve the rank of Führer (ruler of Amestris). Throughout the battle with Sloth (which spans five episodes), Alex and

Olivier work together, synchronizing their attacks against the Homunculus. On two separate occasions, Alex protects Olivier outright: once when he blocks Sloth's charge using his body, stopping the monster with his own shoulder; and a second time when he uses his alchemy to impale the monster on a stone spike, once again stopping him in his tracks. During this fight, when an unnamed soldier demands that he and the other surrounding soldiers help Alex against Sloth, Olivier stops him by openly displaying her faith in her brother by saying, "Leave him! That's my brother! He's trained better than to be killed like this!" (Beyond the Inferno"). Together, aided by a husband-and-wife team who also challenge traditional gender roles, the Armstrongs manage to finally defeat Sloth, symbolically stopping yet another obstacle put in place by the hegemonic powers of Amestris.

The synergy between Alex and Olivier in this battle is significant. One of the main themes of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is the importance of positive sibling relationships; the main characters only manage to accomplish their ultimate goal of retrieving their bodies by working together and believing in one another, after all. This theme extends beyond the main characters, though, and into other sibling relationships, as well. Many of the Homunculi reach their ends due to a lack of teamwork with their siblings, and one even at the hands of his own brother (Gluttony is consumed by Pride in an ironic end). Likewise, the implication in this particular fight is that neither Alex nor Olivier could have won the battle against Sloth on their own. Alex protects his older sister more than once, as I have already highlighted, and their synchronized attacks are a large part of what eventually killed the Homunculus. Indeed, Alex only gains his second wind after Olivier praises his abilities, clearly feeling more influenced by his eldest sister's praise than in the criticisms she generally gives him, a commonplace reaction to older siblings by younger siblings (Whiteman, McHale, and Crouter 967).

Row! Row! Fight the Power!

In the previous two chapters of this thesis, I have explored the ways in which Lust and Envy are ultimately punished for their play with gender. Both Homunculi are subjected to torture at the hands of Roy Mustang, a protagonist who stands on the cusp between the older and younger generations. Alex and Olivier Armstrong, on the other hand, are not punished quite as severely as their antagonist counterparts. I have already indicated that their teamwork as siblings is largely part of this lack of punishment. However, they do both earn some punishment at Sloth's hands. It is important to note that this punishment goes beyond their position as soldiers fighting in a war. It is telling that, despite the fact that other high-ranking military personnel (such as Roy Mustang) are fighting back against the government of Amestris, and thus the hegemonic, patriarchal powers of the country, the only one expressly targeted for assassination is Olivier, the only woman holding such a high rank. I argue that the fact that she alone is targeted in this way by the older generation and Father, the ultimate patriarch, is in large part due to her refusal to adhere to traditional gender norms. Roy Mustang is *never* targeted for assassination, even though he arguably gives Father more trouble by fiercely attacking two of his children and successfully killing one of them. While Olivier also kills characters associated with the hegemonic order, three generals to be precise, none of them are as closely associated with Father as the other Homunculi are, and none of them truly matter to Father in any real sense of the word. To call for her assassination simply based on that, then, seems like overkill unless, as I argue, this attempt at fatal punishment has to do with her gender performance threatening the status quo.

Both Alex and Olivier are badly injured by the end of their battle with Sloth. Olivier is nearly crushed by Sloth and loses consciousness at one point during the fight due to her injuries. She is beaten and bloody by the end of the fight, with her arm in a sling. Alex's shoulder is dislocated at one point (but popped back into place unwittingly by Sloth), and he is also beaten and bloodied by the end of the battle. Their injuries are serious enough that their allies insist that they refrain from continuing to fight anymore, although Alex, at least, continues on. The punishment they both endure comes from Sloth, an agent of the hegemonic patriarchy, but is nonetheless far less severe than the punishment inflicted on Lust or Envy by Mustang.

I argue that the Armstrongs' subversion of traditional gender roles is punished less severely because they are paving the way for the new, younger, more open-minded generation. Alex and Olivier, although both members of the Amestrian military, are tied less to the older, more traditional generation than Lust and Envy, whose Father is the ultimate patriarch of that generation. In fact, Alex indicates at one point that he would rather fight back against the hegemonic powers of the military and its rulers than run away from the fight ("Struggle of the Fool"). Likewise, Olivier's assassination of three generals and refusal to back down when the hulking Homunculus Sloth is attempting to kill her are indications of her fierce determination to undermine traditional views of gender, as well. They both reject the current hegemonic workings of the military, in turn rejecting the patriarchal, overly traditional Father who runs that military and the country itself. As I have previously pointed out, Alex Armstrong in particular has voiced his frustration with the military and with his inability to fight back against its hegemonic ideals in the past: "That decision has haunted me every day since then. It makes me sick that I abandoned my beliefs. Now that I face the military again, I *have* to fight. I couldn't live with myself if I ran away now" ("Struggle of the Fool"). The end of this quote is important,

as it illustrates Alex's determination to oppose the hegemonic authority rather than hide from it as he did in the past. Along with resisting the hegemonic powers of Amestris, both Alex and Olivier fill non-traditional gender roles and display open-mindedness when it comes to new ideas of gender. They play with gender openly, largely because their family's traditions differ from their culture's traditions. In fighting back against traditional views of gender, the Armstrongs help usher in a younger generation that can change the way we think about gender.

CONCLUSION

“Every generation needs a new revolution.”

–Thomas Jefferson (“Thomas Jefferson Quotes”)

I have mainly explored the gender play employed by Lust, Envy, and Alex and Olivier Armstrong within the fictional world they inhabit. All four of these characters occupy a liminal space between generations; they are not quite part of the older generation with more traditional views on gender, yet they have not quite reached a space completely void of those traditional views that the younger generation inhabits. Lust and Envy, because they share pseudo-familial ties with Father, the ultimate patriarch and hegemonic power of Amestris, are more closely associated with that older generation and are thus ultimately punished for their gender play by another character between generations, Roy Mustang. Alex and Olivier Armstrong, while tied to the older generation through their military affiliations, both openly reject the military and the hegemonic worldviews associated with it, thus becoming targets of the wrath of Father and his subordinates. However, because the Armstrongs have a more progressive worldview themselves, they ultimately are able to overcome these threatening hegemonic powers.

I argue that these in-between characters, particularly the Armstrongs, are paving the way for the younger generation. Characters from *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* who would be representative of the younger generation are the main characters, Edward and Alphonse Elric, as well as a few others like Winry Rockbell, their childhood friend, and a handful of young visitors from Xing, a neighboring country to Amestris. By way of brief explanation, Edward, Alphonse, and Winry, in particular, all display gender performances that are virtually wholly fluid. Edward and Alphonse openly display emotion numerous times throughout the series, while Winry is employed as an engineer, a job atypical of her gender. Although these are incredibly brief

examples, they are glimpses into the fluidly-gendered younger generation of characters in this series.

I further contend that, although I have mainly explored gender play as it relates to the fictional setting of Amestris, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* can easily be read as analogous to shifting views of gender in other, real-world societies, as well. This anime might be viewed as a sort of inoculation, introducing and normalizing gender play for younger viewers, showing them that gender is not a fact, but a performance, to return to Butler's insights. Perhaps calling it an inoculation for younger viewers is too narrow, though; it may be more appropriate to say that *all* viewers of this particular series may see and accept these potentially new views on gender roles and gender performance. Parallels might be made to the views on gender currently shifting in America with growing acceptance and understanding of terms like cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, and others. American society is, however slowly, becoming more progressive in its views on gender identity and gender performance.

At the same time, this gender play is likely a symptom of changing generational views overall. Yumiko Iida claims that "the assertion of alternative gender identities is a creative cultural practice, specifically when conventional gender values and ideals become incapable of representing a complicated gender awareness" of a contemporary younger generation (69). Why not apply this same assertion to other forms of challenging hegemonic powers? Gender is often used in popular culture and literature as a metaphor for other social issues: class, race, nation, and others. The Homunculi, in the case of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, might be considered a group of "others" in relation to humans within the text; an "other" class, an "other" race, an "other" nationality to themselves. The punishment Lust and Envy receive, then, may be related as much to their association with hegemonic powers in Amestris as to their othered status

racially, among other things. Conversely, the Armstrongs are racially coded as ideal Caucasians with blonde hair and blue eyes, potentially tying in with their relative lack of punishment in contrast to Lust and Envy. Obviously, these assertions require further study before they can be set forth as fact or even real conjecture.

What cannot be denied, though, is the fact that *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* seems to ultimately praise rather than condemn progressive views of gender. The characters severely punished for gender play, Lust and Envy, are those associated with hegemonic powers, and are thus punished by those powers due to the threat that gender play poses to the status quo. Those characters that openly resist or completely reject the hegemonic authority, the Armstrongs, are able to avoid fatal punishment and even help to ultimately overthrow that hegemonic authority. It is clear that both Alex and Olivier Armstrong view their efforts, in relation to gender fluidity as well as their military efforts, as largely for the good of the coming generations. As I mentioned in chapter three, Alex Armstrong has a very feminizing emotional reaction to the Ishvalan Civil War; it is by no accident that the flashback in question pictures him cradling the body of an Ishvalan child, a member of the younger generation he was unable to protect from the hegemonic older generation represented by the generals of the Amestrian military.

In my view, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is in many ways not only a commentary on shifting views of gender in society, but also shifting generational understandings all together. Because *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is only a few years old—it finished airing in Japan in 2010 with a full-length movie following in 2011, and aired in America until 2011 with the film and a set of OVAs (Original Video Animations that are meant to accompany a series either as additions to the canon or comedic tangents) released in America in 2012—it is still a particularly relevant series. Not only is it relevant, in fact, but it can be closely tied to current social changes.

Its continuing popularity among fans is evident both at anime conventions and on the internet. Despite its popularity, though, *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* has received little academic attention; when it *has* been studied, it is usually in terms of philosophy associated with the plausibility of attaching a disembodied soul to a suit of armor or discussions of the use of alchemy in the series—both admirable scholarly pursuits. The gender play that exists in some of the supporting characters, though, and the implications of the way those characters are dealt with by main characters are subjects that one would be hard-pressed to find in academic research; hence my insistence at introducing this topic into the realm of academia.

At the same time, this particular discussion is by no means complete. There are several avenues for expansion in relation to the analysis of gender performance in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*. Although I have not done any ethnographic study into this topic at this time, it seems likely that the parallels between the gender play in this anime and the changing generational views in the real world are not lost on fans. Obviously, ethnographic research would be helpful in this case to better understand how the gender fluidity of some characters in *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is received by fans and what conclusions they themselves might draw from it. The parallels I have briefly drawn between gender, race, and class could also be explored in more detail with further research, especially considering gender as metaphor for these other social issues.

Ultimately, both the main plot of *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* and the underlying commentary on gender play have a similar point: the importance of the upcoming generation. As the inhabitants of Amestris endeavor to escape the rule of the ultimate hegemonic patriarch embodied in Father, characters inhabiting a liminal space between his rule and the younger generation experiment with gender performance. The characters who survive are the ones who

have no qualms with gender fluidity. In addition, Alex Armstrong praises the Elric brothers to their father, Hohenheim, after the victory over the First Homunculus: “We are all in debt to the efforts of Edward and Alphonse. Without those boys’ relentless courage, this nation would be no more” (“The Other Side of the Gateway”). This can be said of the younger, more open-minded generation in reality, as well. It is their relentless courage, their unwavering attempts to subvert and overcome hegemonic worldviews that push society to new, progressive attitudes through social revolution.

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