Transgender Reassessments of the Cross-Dressed Page in Shakespeare, *Philaster*, and *The Honest Man's Fortune*

A page boy is in love with his master. One version of this story should be familiar: shipwrecked in a strange land, Viola cross-dresses as the eunuch page boy "Cesario" so that she might serve the Lord Orsino, who enlists her to woo the Lady Olivia. Matters are complicated when Cesario falls in love with Orsino and Olivia with Cesario, but all are married to appropriate heterosexual partners in the conclusion.[1] The story is retold less than a decade later in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Philaster; or, Love Lies A-Bleeding* (1608-10).[2] Inspired by Viola's escapades,[3] this play features the page boy Bellario whose master, Philaster, employs him to convey romantic messages to his fiancée, Arethusa. Bellario is besotted with his master and at the end of the play is revealed (to both characters and audience) as the girl Euphrasia. A few years later, *The Honest Man's Fortune* is published.[4] This play, again, features a page boy — Veramour — who delivers messages from his master, Lord Montague, to the Lady Lamira. Like Viola and Bellario, Veramour adores his master and is suspected to be a girl in disguise who has been inspired by "two or three Plays" — such as *Twelfth Night*, *Philaster*, and John Lyly's *Gallathea* — to dress as a boy (5.1). Eventually Veramour's clothing is searched and he is declared to have been a boy all along, but what does this search prove? This article presents a critical reassessment of the cross-dressed page through the lens of transgender theory, focusing on its evolution through Viola, Bellario, and Veramour. It challenges the supposed "real" material body of the boy actor; it analyses the importance of class, age, and imitation to transmasculinity; and it investigates the violences to which gender divergent characters are subject, arguing for reading modern and early modern gender divergence comparatively. Drawing on trans theory, this article discusses the "real" and its relationship to deception, how imitation

constitutes gender, the prosthetic materiality of gender, and the role of narrativization in constructing gender. Finally, this article argues for locating gender divergence in characters who are never outed, seeking to define early trans identities beyond violence and exposure.

It is first necessary to define "transgender." In historical trans studies, one must address the possibility that one "cannot write a parallel history of 'transgender' or 'transsexual' before the advent of the very vocabulary that generated its subject."[5] Drawing on the approaches of queer historicism,[6] some scholars resist this with "shadow histories": archival projects that identify people who had corresponding experiences with those of modern transgender people.[7] Other scholars advocate transhistorical "touches," queer temporality, or homohistory.[8] I deploy "transgender" comparatively and broadly, bringing many gender transgressive characters within its compass in order to facilitate productive parallels between disparate subjects. Importantly, I strategically *assume* without *concluding* characters' transness and consider its implications for our understanding of the body, disguise, and identity. If a character presents as male until he is threatened with stripping and torture, how differently do we understand him as a disguised woman versus a trans man? How is such a situation enhanced by our understanding of the violences to which modern trans people are subject? I employ here a comparable approach to Riley Snorton in their treatment of gender-transgressive Black figures across history; of a postcard titled "French cross-dressing couple," Snorton writes, "Are they queer or trans or both or neither? And how would possessing a definitive answer on these matters matter?"[9] This approach also allows for the conceptualization of violences as transphobic in order to establish continuities between historical and modern subjections, which takes a cue Sawyer Kemp's important work in pursuing continuities between modern and early modern passing and transphobic violence.[10] This article uses "violences" broadly to encompass many subjections in the wake of Dean Spade, positioning all forms of beating, sexual violence, harassment, and censoring

within its compass.[11] A transgender re-reading of the cross-dressed page — one which accounts for understandings of the body and its interpretation advanced by trans theory — not only provides new approaches to the gendering of class, age, passing, and violence in these texts, but also undoes anachronistic assumptions about gender in the early modern period.

Twelfth Night

I begin with Viola and boy actors,[12] drawing on trans approaches to epistemologies of the body and the "real" to reassess how we understand the cross-dressed boy actor paradigm. Theatrical cross-dressing has received significant scholarly attention and is a popular subject for subversive scholarship, encapsulated by Jean Howard's landmark argument against "eras[ing]' signs of gender struggle,"[13] but trans theory has seen little application to early modern subjects. While early modern medical texts primarily defined sex by genitalia, in the absence of or in addition to visible genitalia there were a range of other characteristics by which sex was categorized. This understanding was pioneered by Will Fisher, who demonstrated how sex was defined by beards or hair length as well as by prosthetic characteristics like handkerchiefs and codpieces.[14] Differentiating between sex and gender (a distinction much of trans studies has critiqued) proves fraught during a time when biology was thought to be affected by behavior. On stage, the absence of the naked body puts far more weight on these prosthetic traits in constructing sex. Such theatrical constructions are influentially treated by Peter Stallybrass and Ann Jones, who understand there to be two bodies at work in the performance of Renaissance women. For *Twelfth Night*, there is Viola's prosthetically constructed body (in Act I) with wigs, cosmetics, and costume, and then there is the body of the boy actor who plays her, "the body of a boy," "the body beneath," assumed

to be cis male.[15] This generates, they argue, "an eroticism that depends upon a play of differences" between "the boy's breast" and "the woman's breast," a tension between the "real" and the prosthetic body.[16] Though this approach is rewarding, it assumes a relevant materiality to the boy actor's body that does not bear out. This body too remains inaccessible, obscured by prostheses: it exists only in the imagination of the audience or reader. What Stallybrass and Jones call the "anatomical specificities of the actor's body" are just as constructed and elusive as the female body it is purposed to represent.[17] How useful, then, is this contrast between the constructed female body and the male body beneath when that male body must also be constructed, not prosthetically but by the mind of the audience or scholar? And do we even know that that body was male?

An excellent reassessment of this topic is put forth by Simone Chess, who challenges assumptions as to the cisness of boy actors in discussing their "queer residue." She argues that "a class of actors […] might be identified through a combination of their physical appearance (what we might call androgyny, male femininity, or trans/nonbinary affects), apprenticeship training […], famous roles […], and queer gender performances on or off stage."[18] Chess charts the queer and trans performances of these actors once they had "transitioned" to adult roles, challenging our assumption of the boy actor as cis male. Chess' concern is less with the realities of the body beneath and more with the gender-variant performances in which these actors participated, but she makes the important point that we cannot assume these actors were all cis male and that such assumptions are built on an anachronistic understanding of gender in the early modern playhouse.[19] Kemp has also highlighted the challenge with Butlerian approaches to early modern scholarship, since "an assumption of stability seems to underscore much of our scholarly fixation on Shakespeare's cross-dressing boy actors."[20] Yet once we accept that the body of the "boy actor" is just as constructed as that of the role he portrays, we can dispense with the need to always contrast

the constructed performed body against the "real" body of the actor beneath. This approach is informed by trans studies' challenge to the understanding sex as biological, essential, and stable,[21] but while trans studies has major implications for our understanding of early modern sex and gender, it has seen little traction in early modern studies.[22]

What light do these theories bring to *Twelfth Night*? Viola begins the play committed to a contrast between the real and the performed: she must "Conceal [...] what I am" (1.2.50). Viola's evolving understanding of gender and the real can be elucidated through the work of Halberstam, for whom the "real" is to be distinguished from "realness," where "Realness — the appropriation of the attributes of the real, one could say — is precisely the transsexual condition. The real, on the other hand, is that which always exists elsewhere, and as a fantasy of belonging and being."[23] When Viola claims "I am not that I play," this invites a contradiction suggested by her embodiment by a boy actor, one which offers us two ways of understanding the body/disguise configuration in *Twelfth Night* (1.5.176). While Stephen Orgel importantly asked *why* boys were taken for women, I ask *how* that "taking" functions.[24] We may read Viola as a boy playing a girl playing a boy in a triple layering, or we may see it as an exchange where the audience takes the boy actor's "real" body for the disguised Cesario and the female costume as the "real" Viola. We can understand this impossibility of reaching the real through Gayle Salamon, for whom "the materiality of the body is [not] something to which we have unmediated access, something of which we can have epistemological certainty;"[25] the materiality of the boy actor's body is not only mediated through costume and performance, but that body beneath lacks epistemological certainty. There is no accessible "real."

There is a key debate in trans theory, encapsulated by Jay Prosser and Halberstam, which bears peculiar relevance to early modern drama. This concerns the body's qualities of the real when theorizing transness. For Prosser, material embodiment (and thus dysphoria and

medical intervention) is the crucial aspect of transness; for Halberstam, the transsexual instead rejects any possibility of "real" gender and its incoherent signifiers are distinctly postmodern. Prosser critiques this position with the quip, if "We are all transsexuals [then] there are no transsexuals."[26] Prosser's position has more urgent application to the lived experiences of trans people, for whom medical and legal biopolitics may be life or death. As Spade writes on this theme, "Even though I don't believe in real, it matters if other people see me as real — if not I'm a mutilator, an imitator, and worst of all, I can't access surgery."[27] Regarding early modern cross-dressing, Halberstam's rebuttal to Prosser's position shares much with Fisher's reading of the materiality of gender in early modern England; in asking whether or not gender realness is achievable, Halberstam writes, "what actually constitutes the real for Prosser in relation to the transsexual body? The penis or the vagina? Facial hair or shaved legs? Everyday life as a man or a woman?"[28] This modification of Butlerian performativity might be represented with a paraphrase of Beatrice: "He that hath no beard or shaved legs is less than a man." In *Twelfth Night* we see how, for Viola, performing gender in "everyday life" comes to constitute gender itself. Although Viola begins by identifying Cesario as a "disguise," as the play continues she plays with gender and realness and destabilizes her gendered ontology. She comments "As I am man" (2.2.36), "As I am woman" (38), "I am all the daughters of my father's house, / And all the brothers too" (2.4.120–1). Her later comment, "I am not what I am" (3.1.139), parallels and destabilizes her earlier position of "I am not that I play." While Halberstam frames the transgender body as a representation of postmodern incoherence, Viola's distinctly early modern "I am not that I play" neatly characterizes Halberstam's distinction between the real (Viola's "am") and realness (Viola's "play"). Over the course of *Twelfth Night*, Viola settles into her disguise as the "poor monster" who confounds this search for the real (2.2.34). To return to Halberstam's question, "what actually constitutes the real [...] in relation to the transsexual body?" Viola's

everyday life as a man, as Cesario, becomes that ontological "am" in "I am not what I am." Performance, not the "real', increasingly constitutes gender.

We may think to find the "real" in the body beneath of the boy actor, but this too is constructed. When Viola comments that there is a "little thing" that "would / make me tell them how much I lack of a man," she bawdily puns on her absent penis, which may joke doubly on the presumed presence of the actor's penis (3.4.290–1). But what does it mean to presume the presence of that "little thing" that can only exist theoretically? There is no ocular proof of the boy actor's genitalia, and so Viola and the boy actor are both similarly lacking. There are other fantasies at work regarding Viola's anatomical specificities. Though she presents herself as a "eunuch" to Orsino (a meeting to which we are not privy), this is not an identity ever suggested to Olivia, who never considers Cesario to lack anything that might disqualify him as a gentleman. Take a similar joke in John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida,* where a boy singer (played by a chorister) is mocked for his poor singing and decried a "eunuch" (5.2.15).[29] The actor, a prepubescent boy, is comically misread as an older castrato and his supposedly absent testicles are mocked. Again, the actor's genitalia remains theoretical, being constructed and then denied in the minds of the audience. These comments are not evidence of, or engagement with, a somatic reality but are acts of construction. This approach may also be applied to non-theatrical contexts; as Colby Gordon argues of Adam's prick in Sonnet 20 (drawing on Jeanne Vaccaro), "stitchery works against the model of surface and depth according to which a 'natural' body awaits discovery beneath a manufactured exterior. Here, the gendered body is fabric all the way down, a contrivance wrought through a distinctly feminized form of labor."[30] In such contexts, there is no "real" sex.

This is not to say there is no *fantasy* of sex. Orgel highlights that whether boys look like women "depends on how society constructs the norm of womanliness," but we may

specify this from physical verisimilitude to the simplified, binarist, and troped form of theatrical gender boys embody that never fully accorded with life off the stage.[31] When boy actors bear prosthetic breasts in the gender reveals of plays such as *Law Tricks* (1608), *No Wit, No Help, Like a Woman's* (1611), or *The Prisoners* (1635), the plays do not raise the possibility that such breasts may be prosthetic *within the fiction* of the play (or address gynecomastia). Prosthetic breasts represent and trope a female body just as Hal and Falstaff's cushion represents a crown and tropes the king's body. Such gender reveals evince a willingness to accept a troped fantasy of gender on stage, one constituted by behavior, affect, and prostheses, and which may amplify a fantasy that also circulates outside of the theatre, but it is still a fantasy. Relatedly, we may attribute a symbolic maleness to boy actors, one that facilitates the ambiguously gendered dramaturgical play of Rosalind's epilogue that allows the boy actor to oscillate between male and female impersonation, but symbolic gender is not somatically constituted; it is also communicated by behavior, affect, and prostheses. An early modern audience's willingness to accept prostheses standing for the real demonstrates an engagement with fantasy independent of the actors' bodies. Symbolic gender may not cooccur at all with somatic reality. To sympathetically rephrase Jones and Stallybrass' point, it is not that there is *no* body beneath, but that body exists only in fantasy. The somatic body remains inaccessible and fantasy predominates.[32]

Masculinity is thus constituted by many behavioral aspects, including class. When Olivia begins to fall for Cesario, she assesses whether or not he is of a suitable class for marriage. Like gender, this assessment of class is predicated upon somatic aspects: "'I am a gentleman.' I'll be sworn thou art. / Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit / Do give thee five-fold blazon" (1.5.281–3). "Class drag" or "class cross-dressing" enables gender passing by translating gender difference into class difference, as in the cases of the escaped slave Ellen Craft posing as the white and disabled gentleman Mr Johnson or of working-class

trans man Brandon Teena passing for a courtly middle-class man;[33] relatedly, an upper-class trans woman or a working-class trans man may pass more easily than the inverse due to the gendering of class itself,[34] whereas wealthier, upper-class figures will always have greater material access to the medical, legal, and prosthetic aspects of transition. A return to pre-twentieth century texts may enable some escape from what trans studies scholars such as Spade, Radi Blas, and Yv Nay have identified as the "colonial logic of interpretation" (Blas) whose construction of transness perpetuates "colonizing violence […] that is bound up with questions of nation, geographical position, and citizenship and is thus intertwined with racism, xenophobia, and class privilege" (Nay);[35] however, upper-classness nonetheless proves essential to the acceptance of gender transgression even in early modern texts. Early modern transness demonstrates the roots of such colonial logics and raises the difficulty of its extrication.

Class drag enables the passing of cross-dressed heroines, whose identities fall on a spectrum between the subservient page — a classical Ganymedean, in homoerotic service to a Lord — and the waggish youth who may pretend heterosexuality. *As You Like It*'s romantic pastoralism invokes sheepherding labor only as a backdrop, and Celia and Rosalind assimilate into Arden's working-class culture by appropriating its aesthetics when Celia affects a "poor and mean attire" and both of them "smirch" their faces with "umber" in order to "pass along" as the working-class (1.3.110–2).[36] While Rosalind takes the name of Ganymede and engages in ostensibly homoerotic play with Orlando, we are always aware of the heteroticism that undergirds it. "Ganymede" also asserts a contemporary waggishness rather than the classical subservience of his namesake, with "a swashing and a martial outside" (1.3.109). Like Rosalind, Portia's gender performance is also waggish and she will "turn two mincing steps / Into a manly stride, and speak of frays / Like a fine bragging youth" (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.4.67–9) — and these brazen falsehoods about "frays" will

scapegoat any potential slips in Portia's gender presentation, thus smuggling a gender performance under the guise of performative swagger. As Kemp suggests, such strategies fall far from modern transmasculine experiences, a "spectacle of waggish masculinity [which] seems out of step in the current cultural landscape where discovery is fatal and 'stealth' is a virtue, where the common wisdom is that to pass you would do well to keep a low profile."[37] Rosalind's disguise also draws on the convention of nobility disguised as shepherds and Orlando's improbable failure to recognize her contributes to the difficulty of reading Rosalind's performance alongside trans experiences. For Shakespeare's heroines, cross-dressing is enabled by class cross-dressing, with the page's maleness significantly constituted by class rather than sexual characteristics; but while this may more easily enable gender transgression for the upper-class, it pushes it further out of reach for the lower.

Passing is also, obviously but problematically, enabled by imitation. Cesario is prized because of page boys' aptitude for imitating their masters' love to woo on their behalf. As Orsino explains of this ventriloquistic wooing, "It shall become [Cesario] well to act my woes; / She will attend it better in thy youth / Than in a nuncio's of more grave aspect" (1.4.26–8). He argues that Viola's absence of manhood makes her a skilled proxy wooer, "For they shall yet belie thy happy years / That say thou art a man" (30–1). Such ventriloquism works both ways, as when Viola's identity is revealed her role as page boy and proxy wooer provides suitable context to make her Orsino's wife: "And since you called me master for so long, / Here is my hand, you shall from this time be / Your master's mistress" (5.1.315–7). Passion is a field in which women and boys become indistinguishable; as Rosalind remarks, "boys and women are for the most part cattle of this colour" (*As You Like It*, 3.2.393–4). In my central three plays, the pages are employed as go-betweens for romantic messages, and *Philaster* expands on not just the value but the necessity of imitation to early

modern boys. I shift now onto Bellario, addressing imitation and self-authorship in the construction of boyhood and transmasculinity.

Philaster

In *Philaster,* the exiled Lord Philaster employs his devoted page boy Bellario to convey secret messages to his fiancée, Arethusa. Philaster falsely believes that these meetings have granted Bellario a pretext to seduce Arethusa and, consumed with jealousy, he stabs the three of them in a bloody fiasco that gives the play its title — though none are mortally wounded. At the end of the play Bellario is put on trial for his transgressions and, about to be tortured, he reveals to both characters and audience that he is "really" the cross-dressed girl Euphrasia, thus freeing him from any accusations of adultery. Satisfied with this outcome, Arethusa and Philaster allow Bellario to remain in their service. Bellario is employed to woo on Philaster's behalf for the same reasons as Cesario: the lady will be "Full of regard to thy sweet tender youth […] Apter to give than thou wilt be to ask" (2.1.2–4). When Bellario reports on his master's love to Arethusa, he delivers a speech that is not, in fact, a faithful report of Philaster's feelings for Arethusa but rather of his own feelings for Philaster: "If it be love / To forget all respect to his own friends / With thinking of your face; […] Then, madam, I dare swear he loves you" (2.3.48–60). Bellario displays two mimetic capabilities: the ability to imitate the love of one's master, but also *imitatio*. Imitation should not be taken as evidence of inauthenticity, as the masculinity of early modern boys is built on mimesis. Masculinity was developed from an appropriate humanist education while a boy's academic achievement was marked by his ability to perform *imitatio* successfully. *Imitatio* is the concept central to humanist pedagogy that marks a boy's scholarly skill by his ability to

imitate classical authors. The Erasmian understanding of *imitatio* believed that such practices were necessary in order to drive out the feminine nonsense that would otherwise crowd a boy's mind from the sphere of mothers, nurses, and sisters that he would inhabit in his younger years. These humanist logics saw that the imitation of masculine authors was the appropriate way to ensure a boy himself became masculine and learned. For Butler, "Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original,"[38] and the masculinity of an early modern boy is predicated upon the imitation of literary and rhetorical style. To return to Spade's fear that being seen as "a mutilator, an imitator" will disqualify his transsexual identity, this is a concern from which early modern gender divergent individuals are not only free but for whom such themes may be comfortably compatible with both trans and cis experiences of gender. To be an imitator *is* the condition of masculinity in early modern culture.

What occurs, then, when a character other than a cis boy engages in *imitatio*? Bellario's engagement with *imitatio* is twofold. On one hand, he employs the tactics of *imitatio* to construct an appropriate history for the transmasculine role he inhabits, while also imitating the role of one who has been trained in *imitatio*. Philaster tells of how, when he first discovered Bellario in the forest, the boy delivered him a "lecture" of "country art" (1.2.134) and spins a story of having been raised at "the mercy of the fields," an orphan feeding on "roots" and "crystal springs" (126–7). This is not the product of lived pastoral experiences but an imitation of Ovidian poetics. Bellario's transmasculine history is one reproduced from classical authors, just as would be any cis boy's educational experience. On the second point, Bellario not only imitates classical models but also the pedagogical framing that instils such models. When Bellario mistakenly believes he is being released from Philaster's service he invites punishment: "Let me be corrected / To break my stubbornness — if it be so / [...] and I shall mend" (2.1.37–9). Though this recalls the fetishization of schoolroom beatings, Bellario has never experienced the boys' schoolroom — his education was that of a woman at court.

The expected nature of Bellario's schoolroom education and its violence is emphasized by Arethusa's comment in raising the specter of "a curst master when thou went'st to school" (2.3.38). Bellario must play a boy who knows the violence of the humanist classroom, for the boy who failed at *imitatio* would meet with corporal punishment; as Lynn Enterline summarizes, "a boy's choice is stark: imitate 'some piece of an author' well or be beaten."[39]

The task of the transmasculine Bellario is a perversion of such humanist logics, for he can only be educated and beaten by his master if he performs *imitatio* successfully, imitating a boy who has learned *imitatio*, an imitation of imitations. From a humanist and Butlerian perspective, Bellario achieves boyish masculinity with his Ovidian identity. To return to Spade's concerns, another major issue faced by modern century trans people is how doctors "consider autobiographical accounts thoroughly unreliable" due to the tendency of trans people to "*construct*[…] *a plausible history*" of their trans identities in order to qualify for treatment.[40] In short, doctors construct narratives of transness that trans people must conform to in order to access treatment, trans people repeat these narratives, and then trans people are denied treatment for being seen as imitators; it is a pernicious catch-22. Yet for Bellario — and all early modern boys, cis or otherwise — the absorption and imitation of masculine narratives is not only accepted but encouraged. Bellario achieves what Coriolanus never quite grasped, to become an "author of himself" who "knew no other kin" (5.3.36–7).[41] While Euphrasia is not an "orphan of the fields" (Euphrasia's father, Dion, is very much alive), Bellario *is*. He has abandoned his father, who attempts to marry him against his wishes, and was born anew when Philaster discovered him. What may read as deception in the context of cross-dressed heroine narratives may read as a necessary survival strategy and self-authorship alongside modern trans experiences. Early modern *imitatio* offers us a radically different relationship between masculinity, imitation, and the real than that dictated by twentieth century definitions of transness.

In addition to class, age drag is another important facet in enabling gender passing. These three pages — Viola, Bellario, and Veramour — all pass for page boys, not men. It is boys' social analogousness to women, not only their physical resemblance, that made them so apt for theatrical impersonation, as Mark Albert Johnston and Orgel have argued.[42] Plainly put by Fisher, "boys were considered to be a different gender from men during the Renaissance."[43] This understanding of boyhood as a separate and transitional gender to manhood makes it a fertile ground for trans identities, which (naturally) are so constituted by transition themselves. Both age and class drag may thus enable gender passing, but Bellario's age is unstable. As Bruce Smith has demonstrated, "boy" "elaborates a distinction in power vis-à-vis a social or moral superior" and men subject to sodomy charges were described as "boys" up to the age of 29.[44] Bellario is read as younger than Euphrasia. Arethusa asks, "what kind of grief can thy years know? […] Hadst thou a curst master when thou went'st to school? / Thou art not capable of other grief" (2.3.36–48). Arethusa does not fix Bellario with a numerical age but rather a life stage: he is a boy just out of school and what Jacques describes as "the whining schoolboy with his satchel / And shining morning face, creeping like snail / Unwillingly to school," a life stage preceding "the lover, / Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad / Made to his mistress' eyebrow" (*As You Like It*, 2.7.145–9). Euphrasia is the latter; to Arethusa, Bellario is the former.[45] Yet Bellario's age shifts depending on the agenda of the reader. Arethusa sees him as a child, "a pretty, sad-talking boy" (2.2.7), that she never treats with sexual intent. Yet to Megra, the mistress of Philaster's rival, Bellario is a sexually active youth. Megra is the Iago of this play, spreading seeds of Arethusa and Bellario's disloyalty, and she is motivated to prove Bellario a deceptive, desirable, sexually active figure. Her estimations of Bellario's age are more explicit: she says, "I know the boy / [Arethusa] keeps, a handsome boy, about eighteen; / Know what she does with him, where and when" (2.4.154–6). Here, knowledge facilitates the insinuation of licentiousness.

Arethusa — who is, at this point, unaware of the slanderous accusations against herself and Bellario — continues to display a nonspecific understanding of Bellario's age when interrogated on their supposed illicit relationship. She does not acknowledge the boy as "handsome," but only that he is "not ugly" and that she "took him not for beauty;" when asked if the boy is "about eighteen," Arethusa's response denies both the knowledge itself and having pursued it: "I never asked his age" (3.2.9–17).[46]

At the end of *Philaster*, Bellario resolves the crisis by revealing he has "really" been a woman the whole play, having disguised himself to be close to Philaster, with whom he has long been in love. After this revelation, Philaster and Arethusa welcome Bellario to remain a servant in their household, committed to chaste service. Philaster continues to call him "Bellario" and (at least in Q1) Bellario avoids the heterosexual marriage so often doled out to Shakespeare's cross-dressed pages. Mary Trull writes of the eroticization of pageboys that "boyishness represents a transitional state, one between innocence and knowledge of ambitions both sexual and social, and, therefore, between innocence and experience of desire, deceit and venality;"[47] for Bellario, that "transitional state" has been lengthened eternally, wherein his chaste transmasculinity makes him into a boy that will never grow up.[48] This state may also be viewed more critically. Modern acceptance of transness is frequently predicated upon the denial of sexuality; as Blas writes, "Uneasiness about one's own body, denial of physical pleasure, and refusal or postponement of any active sexual experience operate as markers of transsexuality and (circularly) as its condition of possibility."[49] The early modern imagination shares with the modern on this point: the transgender figure is imaginable and permissible only within the bounds of the denial of sexual pleasure — in which the "real" (genitalia) and the discomfort it provokes can be ignored. Again, these are page boys, *not* men, and their perceived childlike nature exempts them from anxieties regarding sexual threat — something which also makes boys a preferable alternative to adult

women, as Orgel prompts.[50] However, we might assess Bellario's fate more charitably. Bellario may deny or refuse "active sexual experience," but his masochistic deferral of sexual pleasure does not *erase* that pleasure. Compare Isabella in *Measure for Measure,* whose embrace of "more strict restraint" (1.4.4) and willingness to wear "keen whips" "as rubies, / And strip myself to death, as to a bed" (2.4.101–2) has been misogynistically read as evidence she will embrace heterosexual marriage to the Duke, yet should exist on its own terms. Bellario's masochism could be interpreted alongside the requisite denial of pleasure expected of modern transsexuals, but it may instead be seen as its own valid sexuality. Bellario's desire for Philaster translates into appropriate subjugated, erotic devotion, which is enabled by his class drag, and in order to maintain that erotic attachment he cannot mature into the role of sexually active (and economically independent) manhood or womanhood.[51] The transmasculine page in *Philaster* thus demonstrates an understanding of gender constituted by three factors which may all be imitated in order to attain a transmasculine identity.

The Honest Man's Fortune

I turn now to transphobic violence and the final page, Veramour. The phenomenon of transphobia is summarized by Susan Stryker: "Transgender people who problematize the assumed correlation of a particular biological sex with a particular social gender are often considered to make false representations of an underlying material truth, through the willful distortion of surface appearance."[52] I have discussed so far the successes of these transmasculine identities and the benefits they may bring, but these characters are also subject to violence, inflicted upon them directly or indirectly because of their gender transgression.

In this final play, *The Honest Man's Fortune*, the page boy Veramour is apprenticed to Montague. Like Orsino and Philaster, Montague seeks to woo a lady, the wealthy Lamira, and employs his page to act as a go-between. Primed by Veramour's intensely homoerotic and masochistic attachment to his master — "liberty / Is bondage, if compared with his kind service" (3.1) — a regular theatre-goer may suspect that Veramour is yet another cross-dressed girl and anticipate a Bellario-esque revelation that never comes. Over the course of the play, the arrogant womanizer Laverdine mistakenly comes to believe that Veramour is a girl cross-dressing as a boy, and he attempts to pursue "her." When pressed about his identity, Veramour appears to confess that he is, in fact, a girl in disguise, inspired by "two or three Plays" to cross-dress as a boy (5.1) — obviously denoting the likes of Viola and Bellario and framing Veramour as a third variation of this type. But in the climactic scene Veramour's clothing is searched and he is confirmed to have been "really" a boy the whole time, an inversion of *Philaster*'s conclusion. With Veramour's "true" identity as a boy revealed, Laverdine is suitably chastened for his lecherous ways. Yet what does this searching reveal when there is no material body to access, and what different understanding of this play do we gain if we assume Veramour may not be cisgender?

Veramour's plotline is less developed than that of Bellario and Viola, and he may be read parodically. His subversive androgyneity has been evaluated as an "ingenious manipulation of the faithful page/loving heroine/boy player/catamite nexus,"[53] but for Sandra Clark, who finds Bellario to be an "erotically stimulating androgyne,"[54] *The Honest Man's Fortune* may either "allow the view that gender may be a matter of convention and social construction" or its "reductive comic ending [may] show that it can always be biologically determined."[55] Scholars have never doubted Veramour's cisness, although the play repeatedly brushes against the interchangeability of boys and women and stresses the irrelevance of Veramour's genitalia. In contrast to the orderly homoeroticism of the pageboy for his master,

Veramour invokes more sodomitical dynamics when Laverdine asks him to share his bed. "Lie with you?" Veramour ripostes, "I had rather lie with my Ladies Monkey; 'twas never a good World since our French Lords learned of the Neopolitans; to make their Pages their Bed-fellowes" (3.1). Yet it is later confirmed that Montague has, in fact, made his page his bedfellow: "we have laine together, / But by my troth I never found her, Lady" (5.1). It remains unclear what, exactly, Montague has "never found," just as it remains unclear what it is Laverdine's men "search" for when they rifle through Veramour's clothing. The play further confuses homo- and heterosexual intercourse with Laverdine's comment that, due to the false revelation that Veramour is a girl, "we may lawfully come together without feare of hanging" (4.1): here, homo- and heterosexual intercourse are differentiated not by physical discrepancies but legal regulation. This theme is exacerbated by the comic suggestion that Laverdine's transgender misreading of Veramour has the rhetorical power to transform Veramour, who says he was unaware of his being a lady "Untill this Gentleman opend my dull eyes, / And by perswasion made me see it" (5.1). Finally, when the Lady Lamira wonders "What wench would [Laverdine] have?" and Montague answers "Any wench I think," the punchline is delivered with the entrance of "Veramour, like a Woman" (5.1) — an early precursor to "Nobody's perfect."[56]

Veramour is subject to various violences across the play: he is harassed by Laverdine, he is searched by Laverdine's comrades, and he is interrogated by the Lady Charlot. Charlot "most dangerously suspect[s] this boy to be a wench" and instructs him to "come hither, let me feele thee" (4.1). In response, Veramour removes his glove "to feele whether you be a boy, or no" (4.1): a recompensing threat of heterosexual combativeness to assert his maleness. Laverdine, meanwhile, is more aggressive. His attraction to Veramour is initially aroused by a desire to dominate what he (mis)recognizes as a woman in disguise. His attraction recalls Laxton's similarly unwanted pursuit of Moll in *The Roaring Girl*, who is

excited by her assertive, transgressive behavior and insists he will "lay hard siege to her" (2.1.195).[57] Both Laxton and Laverdine eroticize the forced subjugation of these "women" into appropriate, feminine submission. Moll makes no secret of being a cross-dresser and thus Laxton merely wants to dominate her, whereas Laverdine takes pleasure in outing Veramour against "her" will. When Laverdine comments, "these are standing Creatures, and have strange desires; and men must use strange means to quench strange fires," he evokes a victim-blaming logic wherein he must act the part of a pederast in order to disprove Veramour's gender identity (3.1). Laverdine also sexually harasses Veramour by inviting "her" to come "lodg[e] […] in mine arms" and "lye with [me]" (3.1) and speculates that "this is a disguised whore" (3.1), assessing that "she" fails to pass as a boy due to "her" being so "pretty" (3.1) and "dainty" (5.1). This reading of Veramour as a "whore" reflects the misreading of gender transgression as sexual availability, an enduring misapprehension that contributes today to the high rates of sexual violence inflicted upon transgender individuals.[58]

Like Bellario, Veramour's age shifts depending on how he is gendered. When read as male, Veramour is a boy too young to care for himself, being "Unable to advise thy selfe" (1.1). Yet when read as a woman, Veramour becomes a sexually available "whore" (3.1) of marriageable age. Since ambiguity in Bellario's age arises from his transmasculinity we cannot separate the violences to which he is subject as a result of these investigations from his gender identity. This is not the only policing to which Bellario is subject; while his gender is never questioned in the play itself, it is in the play's editorial reception. In Suzanne Gossett's generally admirable introduction to the play, she advances the problematic argument that Bellario's crying, gentleness, prettiness, and tenderness add up to "clues that the 'boy' is female."[59] To assume that the audience can pick up on these "clues" to discover Bellario's "real" femaleness denies the possibility of gender transgression and draws conclusions about sex based on nonnormative gender behavior.[60] Such investigations employ

similar strategies to the policings that characterize the experiences of both modern trans people and historical gender transgressive individuals.[61] We cannot corroborate Gossett's claim that an early modern audience searched for and picked up on these "clues" and so we must carefully evaluate to what extent such positions might be modern projections. Another reader of *Philaster* takes a similar stand: the reviser of Q1, who quickly marries off Bellario to the minor character Trasiline, despite his previous attempts to resist a forced marriage. The editor also revises Bellario's gender identity between Q1 and Q2, altering him from "a page" to "*Euphrasia* disguised like a page" in another form of textual violence. When charting the history of this alteration, Jeffrey Masten explains how "one person's textual corruption and 'progressive degeneration' may be another person's history of sexuality."[62] Investigative practices that seek to determine one's "true sex" encourage violence against trans or gender-nonconforming individuals in the modern day, and we cannot engage in the same policings and "correctings" for literary characters in a vacuum.

Unlike Bellario and Viola, Veramour's identity remains out of reach. If we assume for the sake of argument — and in accordance with dominant criticism on the play — that Veramour *is* a cis boy, *The Honest Man's Fortune* displays how transphobic investigation harms cis people who fail to accord with gender norms. Today, this is primarily an issue for gender nonconforming cis women, which has proved an increasingly common occurrence in the wake of modern bathroom hysteria,[63] but can also be found in Falstaff's cross-dressing episode in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Falstaff is not beaten because he is a cross-dressing man but because the woman he impersonates, the witch of Brentford, is considered by Ford to insufficiently conform to gender norms.[64] Veramour dresses as a woman in the final scene in order to humiliate Laverdine and, like Falstaff's beating, a joke is made of the violence inflicted on Veramour. He is searched, or sexually assaulted, so that the onlookers can tell "the ring from the stone" (5.1). Although Laverdine is the final butt of this joke, violence

against a potentially trans character is nonetheless presented as comic and justified due to a need to confirm their "real" identity. It should be noted, however, that the violence to which Veramour is subject remains comic. Veramour makes jibes at Laverdine's expense. He does not protest to being searched and perhaps consents to it: "If hands and face make it not evident, *you shall see more*" (emphasis mine), although nothing is ever "seen" (5.1). Both Veramour and Bellario are threatened with being stripped: thus sexual violence serves as both the investigatory tool for gender transgression and its punishment. Cross-dressed disguises and transmasculine identities may be read as strategies of self-defense to resist forced marriage and sexual violence, yet these characters remain vulnerable to such threats.

This is how we interpret the play if reading Veramour as a cis male, but by understanding the irrelevance of the body beneath such cisness cannot be confirmed — nor should it be assumed. Within the fiction of the play, Veramour's own body beneath is searched, but what does this reveal or confirm? When Salamon challenges the idea that we have "epistemological certainty" of the body, she does so because "epistemological uncertainty can have great use, both ethically and politically, in the lives of the non-normatively gendered."[65] Veramour's body is an exemplar of one to which we lack unmediated access and which remains epistemologically uncertain. In this final scene, the men who search Veramour to prove "she" is really a girl find "breeches" under "her" dress, but admit "'Tis not enough, women may wear those cases" (5.1). They "Search further," with the unspoken implication that they eventually discover the "real" body beneath. But how much further do they search? They differentiate between what "women may wear" and the real body below that yet, as Fisher demonstrates, early modern sex is in part prosthetically constructed; if one cannot ascertain Veramour's sex without access to the "real" body beneath, that body has little relevance to its social experience. Furthermore, even an apparently successful confirmation of sex may itself prove to be a purely prosthetic

enterprise, as early moderns did use prosthetic genitals to materially construct sex.[66] Whatever lies beneath tropes Veramour's gender, but its prosthetic, somatic, or fantastic nature remains elusive. The search for Veramour's "real" body first sifts through the layers of dress, breeches, and underwear and here, finally, draws the line at how deep gender might run. We do not know what is searched for under Veramour's clothes, or what Montague "found" when they shared a bed. Veramour's sexed body is a construct, theoretical to the audience, never grasped — epistemologically or otherwise — by the characters. A cis male, transmasculine, or cross-dressed Veramour are identical. Veramour is a page boy — and we know no more than that.

Conclusion

In the midst of *Philaster*, Arethusa laments there will be "never such a boy again / As my Bellario!" (3.2.73). When Euphrasia is charged with "conceal[ing] [her] sex" this cry may seem ironic, but Bellario outlives this revelation (5.5.146). Philaster still calls him "Bellario," he remains Philaster and Arethusa's servant, and he rejects his father's coercive betrothal. Veramour, on the other hand, is never outed at all, yet by adopting a transgender perspective on the play Veramour need no more be read as a cisgender male than Bellario or Viola. This approach also allows for the understanding of imitation, self-authorship, sexuality, and violence in *Philaster* and *The Honest Man's Fortune* as neither incidental nor peculiarly early modern but congruent with contemporary trans experiences. While transphobic practices have a long history that must be confronted, and doing so opens possibilities for better understanding how such violent attitudes originate, we may also find transgender antecedents in these texts that deepen our understanding of both modern transness as well as the

landscape of early modern gender. To construct a history of visible transgender representation in cultures that enforce cisnormativity is necessarily to construct a history of violence and exposure, as only figures whose gender divergence is outed will be identified as potentially trans. Thus many trans readings of these plays (including this very article) risk capitulating to Prosser's critique of Butler, wherein he charges her with "locat[ing] transgressive value in that which makes the subject's life most unsafe."[67] On one hand, identification of violence against gender divergent individuals allows for the investigation of the evolution of transphobia; on the other, if we identify violences as the defining aspects of a trans identity, then we will only see trans characters in the contexts of violence and, by extension, measure the authenticity of modern transness by suffering. It is only by considering characters who do not have their transness exposed for audience consumption and who are not stripped of their gender divergent qualities that we can construct an alternate history of transgender representation. We may also, by understanding that the bodies of both character and actor remain inaccessible to the audience, understand that there exists no "real" sexed body in early modern drama. Sex is found elsewhere in prosthetic characteristics, performance, imitation, and identity. We may then progress towards Salamon's hope that "discussions of transgenderism and transsexuality" will "not be so problematically reliant on 'the real,'" which "can never quite shed its normativizing and disciplinary dimensions."[68] By employing strategic assumptions of transness, the transgender early modern need not be defined by violence. We can then offer reassurance to Arethusa's cry: there will be once again such a boy as Bellario.

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[1] William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Oxford Scholarly Editions Online.

[2] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: Methuen Drama, 2009).

[3] See Lee Bliss, "Three Plays in One: Shakespeare and 'Philaster,'" *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 2 (1985), 153–170. On the parodic nature of these plays, see Bruce R. Smith, "Making a Difference: Male-Male 'Desire' in Tragedy, Comedy and Tragicomedy," *Erotic Politics: The Dynamics of Desire in the Renaissance Theatre*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 2005), 99–116 (111) and Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (London: Routledge, 2015), 65.

[4] Nathan Field, John Fletcher, and Philip Massinger, "The Honest Man's Fortune," *Fifty Comedies and Tragedies* (London: 1679), 509–31. Its authorship is contested; see Grace Ioppolo, "Introduction," *The Honest Man's Fortune* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), vii-xxiii (xix-xxi).

[5] Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortorici, "Trans, Time, and History," *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5.4 (2018), 518–539 (520). See also Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura's concept of "transhistoricity," which communicates the double bind of reaching for historical evidence of transness while also navigating the impossibility of such a project; *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[6] For queer historicism, see Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (University of Chicago Press, 1991); Valerie Traub *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 1992); Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mary Bly, *Queer*

Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[7] On shadow histories, see Geraldine Wagner, "Dismembering Desire: Cross(dress)ing the Boundaries of Gender and Genre in The Life and Death of Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse," *English Studies*, 92.4 (2011), 375-99; Matthew Goldmark, "Reading Habits: Catalina de Erauso and the Subjects of Early Modern Spanish Gender and Sexuality," *Colonial Latin American Review*, 24.2 (2015), 215-235; Ruth Mazo Karras and Tom Linkinen, "John/Eleanor Rykener Revisited," *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns*, eds. Laine Doggett and Daniel O'Sullivan (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 111-22.

[8] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Duke: Duke University Press, 1999); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Duke: Duke University Press: 2006); Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Springer, 2016); Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA*, 128. 1 (2013), 21–39.

[9] Riley C. Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 5.

[10] Sawyer K. Kemp, "'In That Dimension Grossly Clad': Transgender Rhetoric, Representation, and Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Studies*, 47 (2019), 120–13 and "Transgender Shakespeare Performance: A Holistic Dramaturgy," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2020), 265–283.

[11] Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, rev. edn (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015).

[12] *Twelfth Night* does not originate the romantic cross-dressing plot, with *Gallathea* being an important text on this theme, while the pageboy type draws on the Ganymede myth; however,

the specifically eroticized *and* cross-dressed pageboy appear to rise with Shakespeare and his successors.

[13] Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.4 (1988), 18–440 (419). See also Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996); Tracey Sedinger, '"If Sight and Shape be True': The Epistemology of Crossdressing on the London Stage," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48. 1 (1997): 63–79; Mark Albert Johnston, *Beard Fetish in Early Modern England: Sex, Gender, and Registers of Value* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[14] Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[15] Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000), 66, 207.

[16] Ibid., 215.

[17] Ibid., 208.

[18] Simone Chess, "Queer Residue: Boy Actors' Adult Careers in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 14.3 (2020), 242–264 (258).

[19] Following Chess, I shall still refer to these actors as "boy actors" for simplicity's sake.

[20] Kemp, "Grossly Clad," 125n5.

[21] For early approaches to this, see Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society*, 1.2 (1987), 125-151 and the more widely read Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). These lenses have yet to be applied to Thomas Laqueur and Helen King's work on the one-sex model, whose medical focus is beyond the purview of this article, but are long overdue.

[22] For the lateness of early modern trans studies, see Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher, 'Introduction: Early Modern Trans Studies', *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 14.3 (2020), 1–25. Key texts in early modern scholarship include Simone Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature: Gender, Performance, and Queer Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, "Early Modern Trans Studies," 14.3 (2020).

[23] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 52.

[24] Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88 (1989), 7–29.

[25] Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia, 2010), 1.

[26] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 9.

[27] Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender," *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 315–32 (321).

[28] Halberstam, 51.

[29] John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[30] Colby Gordon, "A Woman's Prick: Trans Technogenesis in Sonnet 20," *Shakespeare/Sex: Contemporary Readings in Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Jennifer Drouin (New York: Bloomsbury, 2020), forthcoming.

[31] Orgel, *Impersonations*, 70.

[32] A separate conversation concerns boy actors as living participants within the theatre and related institutions (the court, the school), and how their representation of women relates to

the bodily abuses to which actors were subject by figures such as Nicholas Udall. Such a conversation should account for how gender transgressive behavior is met with sexual violence; boy actors may be chosen to play women because of their pederastic eroticization, but that the act of playing women may render boy actors more vulnerable to sexual violence. We should also consider the hypothesis that intersex boy actors may be able to play women's parts for longer and mark them as particularly vulnerable to such violences.

[33] Snorton, 55–98; Halberstam, 65.

[34] On passing and class, see Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion," *Hypatia*, 22.3 (2007), 43–65 (51–2) and *Marjorie Garber, Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Psychology Press, 1997), 152–4.

[35] Blas, 51; Yv E. Nay, "The Atmosphere of Trans* Politics in the Global North and West," *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 6.1 (2019), 64–79 (65).

[36] Rosalind's voice outs both her gender and class: its higher pitch interprets her as "boy" and its accent betrays her class status — though this she attributes to learning from "an old religious uncle" (3.2.329–30).

[37] Kemp, "Grossly Clad," 124.

[38] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 307–320 (307).

[39] Lynn Enterline *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 35.

[40] Sandy Stone, *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto* (1987; 4th edn, 2014), sandystone.com. For a more thorough analysis, see Bernice Hausman, "Body, Technology, and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies," *Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 335–61.

[41] For trans people, Prosser writes, narrativization is "a way of making sense of transition, the link between locations: the transition itself" (9). Prosser argues for understanding trans people as autobiographers, but in early modern contexts we can contextualize this project within transitions into *all* gendered identities: Euphrasia to Bellario, boy to man, girl to woman. Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance self-fashioning and Prosser's transsexual narrativization may thus be fruitfully compared in the historicization of constructing gendered selfhoods.

[42] Mark Albert Johnston, "Playing with the Beard: Courtly and Commercial Economies in Richard Edwards's 'Damon and Pithias' and John Lyly's Midas," *English Literary History*, 72.1 (2005), 79–103 (81–2) and "Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and the Fertile Infertility of Eroticized Early Modern Boys," *Modern Philology*, 114.3 (2017), 573–600 (579).

[43] Will Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54.1 (2001), 155–187 (155). See also Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (University of Chicago Press, 1991); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[44] Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 194–95. See also Masten, 113–6 and Alan Bray, "What determined the shared and recurring features of homosexual relationships was the prevailing distribution of power, economic power and social power, not the fact of homosexuality itself." *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 56.

[45] My focus on boyhood does not allow for a treatment of girlhood and transness, but there is something important to be said in this age slippage's elision of girlhood and womanhood in relation to the tripartite girl/boy/man structure that Orgel proposed, which excludes girls and which Jennifer Higginbotham has greatly expanded for girlhood. See Orgel, "Nobody's

Perfect," and Jennifer Higginbotham, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Sisters: Gender, Transgression, Adolescence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[46] For more on the age of consent and the eroticization of Bellario's liminal age, see Masten, 116.

[47] Mary Trull, "Keeping Boys and Men: Marvelous Pageboys in Romantic Tragicomedy," *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 19.2 (2017), n.p.

[48] Faced with the impossibility of grasping the "real," Halberstam outlines how instead trans people "inhabit categories of their own making" to engage with "gender realness," and here Bellario participates in such an engagement. He constructs the identity of a male servant, blending classical tropes into a lower-class pageboy role. From both necessity and desire, Bellario renounces sexual relationships and thus participates in another behavior Halberstam attributes to trans and queer people: inhabiting "the stretched-out adolescences of queer culture […] that disrupt conventional accounts of subculture, youth culture, adulthood, and maturity." In this resistance to what Elizabeth Freeman calls chrononormativity, Bellario constructs and inhabits his own category outside of the conventional bounds of gender, age, and class. See Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 3 and Halberstam, 52 and 153.

[49] Radi Blas, "On Trans* Epistemology: Critiques, Contributions, and Challenges," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6.1 (2019), 43–63 (51).

[50] Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect."

[51] For more on Bellario's masochism and sexuality, see Jo Miller, "'And All This Passion for a Boy?': Cross-dressing and the Sexual Economy of Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Philaster,'" English Literary Renaissance, 27.1 (1997), 129–50; James M. Bromley, *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011), 83–6;

Christine Varnado, "Getting Used, and Liking It: Erotic Instrumentality in *Philaster*," *Renaissance Drama*, 44.1 (2016), 25–52.

[52] Susan Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies," *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–17 (9).

[53] Laurence Senelick, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2002), 142.

[54] Clark, 63.

[55] Ibid., 66.

[56] *Some Like It Hot*, dir. Billy Wilder, United Artists, 1959. Orgel, in "Nobody's Perfect," argues that the homoeroticism of boy actors, for all its danger, was nonetheless preferable to the threat of female sexuality. Within the fiction of the play, it may be relieving to affirm that Veramour is, in fact, a boy, and the
fantasy of violent, sadomasochistic sexual congress Laverdine raises is frustrated.

[57] Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*, ed. Paul A. Mulholland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). For Moll and transness, see Marjorie Rubright, "Transgender Capacity in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611)," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 14.3 (2020), 45–74.

[58] 47% of US transgender individuals reported experiences of sexual assault in 2015; "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Executive Summary," *National Center for Transgender Equality*, https://transequality.org/ 3

[59] Suzanne Gossett, "Introduction," *Philaster* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 1–102 (48).

[60] This also defines twentieth century understandings of transness, with the DSM-III assuring the reader that the "anatomic sex" of transsexuals can always be determined by the "alert

observer." *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 3rd ed (Philadelphia: American Psychiatric Association: 1980), 262.

[61] For more on this phenomenon see Serano, 176–7.

[62] For a full investigation of the editorial history of his play and its gendered implications, see Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare's Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2016), 115–31 (124).

[63] German Lopez, "Women are getting harassed in bathrooms because of anti-transgender hysteria," *Vox*, May 19 2016, https://www.vox.com/2016/5/18/11690234/women-bathrooms-harassment

[64] See Kemp for more on this episode in "Transgender Shakespeare Performance."

[65] Ibid, 1.

[66] Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 96–98 (196) and Sherry Velasco, "How to Spot a Lesbian in the Early Modern Spanish World," *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, ed. E. L. McCallum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 179–96 (182); Karras and Linkinen, 116.

[67] Prosser, 49.

[68] Salamon, 3.