"PEEVISH IMPERFECTIONS": GENDER SLIPPAGE IN PHILIP SIDNEY'S *THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE'S ARCADIA*

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council
of Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

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San Marcos, Texas
May 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and tutelage of Dr. Daniel Lochman. His dedication to his students and his field not only contributed to my thesis but gave me an example of the type of teacher I one day hope to become.

I would also like to recognize Drs. Susan Morrison and Audrey McKinney, both of whom helped me not only through their remarks but in their enthusiasm for my project.

Thanks are also in order for John Roesler, a demi-god of the Writing Center, who gave his time and effort to helping me edit my thesis.

Thanks to Steve Wilson for being a damn good teacher, and to Nancy Wilson, patron saint of papers, who gave me a chance and let me find my passion for teaching. Steve and Nancy, you genuinely cared about my progress and success. Thanks.

To Sue Beebe for keeping me sane and giving me her valuable advice and a caring ear. To Carolina Hotchandani for being a wonderful friend and an awesome roommate. And to Amy Leiva for keeping me motivated.

I want to thank my mother and father, Victoria and Herman Herrada, for supporting me in every endeavor. Thanks also to my brothers, Chad and Colt, and to my

cousin, Sam Simpson, whose computer expertise kept me from going completely insane. Without you, Sam, I REALLY couldn't have finished this project.

Finally, I would like to thank Albert Nance. He not only pushed me to apply to graduate school, but he also supported me, kept me going, and made me laugh when I wanted to scream. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"And see how extremely every way you can endanger your mind: for to take this womanish habit, without you frame your behaviour accordingly, is wholly vain; your behaviour can never come kindly from you....so that you must resolveif you will play your part to any purpose, whatsoever peevish imperfections are in that sex, to soften your heart to receive them—the very first down-step to all wickedness."—Musidorus in Sidney's The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia. (133)

From the moment we enter this world, our sex influences the rest of our lives. Judith Butler, in the first chapter of her book *Gender Trouble*, explains the tendency for society to create binary gender performances to accompany typical male or female sex organs. For Butler, the patriarchal nature of language creates a negative space for feminine discourse, where the woman "constitutes the unpresentable" because of "a linguistic absence and opacity" (9). This concept of language allows for gender categories that "[are] also applied to embodied persons as 'a mark' of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference" (9). Butler continues that "gender can be understood as a signification that an (already) sexually differentiated body assumes, but...that signification exists only *in relation* to another" (9, Butler's italics). Gender places meaning on a body already categorized by the individual's genitalia. However, that meaning does not lie within the genitalia itself but in the reactions inspired by the individual's performance.

In *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1593) Philip Sidney creates characters who take such "marks" of gender and twist them through discursive and gestural performance. The importance of their performances in the narrative lies in their "relation" to one another. Examining the characters' reactions to the cross-dressed body or the gender transgression of another is an underlying issue that I will address. This study, however, will not forget how Sidney shapes a narrative around the characters' bodies, creating a relationship not just with each other but with us as readers and with Sidney as author.

To contextualize the cross-dressed body in early modern England, one must recognize the existence of gender bending before Sidney's text. Lives of medieval women saints offer examples of the acceptance of gender transgression under specialized circumstances and the consequences that faced those who chose to undertake a gender transgressive act with a cause deemed ignoble. For example, Kathleen Jones notes that the body of the reformed prostitute Mary of Egypt associated lightness and darkness, making her "a vessel of sin as well as of repentance" (103). Mary's symbolic status reflects a view imposed upon the feminine body as sinful by clerics who viewed the female body as threatening. As legends of female saints portray, religious and pious women adopted this belief by becoming more like the male in dress and behavior. Only when the holy woman, as a representative of the female body, the "vessel of sin and repentance," is colonized by patriarchal religion and begins to resemble a male does she become holy and cease being a threat to the patriarchal order.

The church fathers viewed women as a threat to otherwise pious males attracted to their sexuality. Jane Schulenburg, author of *Forgetful of Their Sex*, writes that such an attraction may not have been willing:

> The Church Fathers, as ascetics, and in some cases fanatical celibates, shared an uneasiness and fundamental suspicion toward women: they feared and also abhorred female sexuality. Their writings focus on the inherent dangers of women's physical attractiveness for the male celibate. (Schulenburg 129)

This dangerous sexuality was thought to be inherent in all females; therefore, in order to become acceptable in the eyes of the church, a woman had to "deny or renounce the sexual and reproductive aspects of their being (i.e. that which specifically defined them as women) and transcend their gender" (127). Even women who managed to transcend their sexual natures by dressing as a male and entering the monastery were in danger of the male's lust—as is the case with Euphrosyne (c.1100). According to Jones, Euphrosyne left her rich father's household in order to live in a monastery where she could worship and study free of the pressure of marriage. She cross-dresses as a man and enters the monastery, but she remains attractive to the males who reside there and who believe she is a male. Her costume covers the truth of her sex, but her sexual attractiveness is still evident even though she is trying to move away from her sexuality. Rather than chastise the lusting males, the elders remove the cross-dressed Euphrosyne from sight. Her removal echoes the Tertullian treatise *On the Appearance of Women*, which states, "man is lost as soon as he desires [women's] beauty, and he has committed already in his mind what he desired and you [a woman] have become his sword, so that,

although the sin may not be yours, you may not be free from hatred" (Blamires 52). Tertullian's quote cites the female's intrinsic sexuality as rendering the male incapable of controlling his desire. The woman's beauty and the male's uncontrolled desire make her his "sword" so that the pain she receives has roots in her beauty and ends with her defilement. Though Euphrosyne is not sexually assaulted, her female body made her sexual to the monks despite her attempts to deny sexuality. Her presence in the monastery caused an imbalance in the otherwise ordered community. Only when her presence is removed does that balance return.

Euphrosyne's isolation not only brings balance to her community, but it also brings balance to her spirituality. In her cell, Euphrosyne is cut off from the temptations of the outside world and able to exercise extreme control over her body by denying her physical body in favor of her spirituality. She is so changed that at the end of her story even her own father does not recognize her. She embodies the length to which some women were willing to go in order to preserve their purity and become closer to God. The saints were willing to give up their beauty, bodies, and lives in order to live as "brides of Christ." By denying their feminine bodies, as Schulenburg states, these women transcended their "unfortunate sexuality" (127). Schulenburg writes that these women became "sexless, gender-neutral beings," but they did so because a patriarchal religion deemed it necessary (128). In adhering to these terms, female clerics allowed themselves to be colonized by the misogynist ideas of the church fathers. The colonization of the female body became so complete that the image of the saint as "a bride of Christ" often led to sexual imagery—as is the case with St. Agnes who defended her love for Christ by stating

that Christ's "bridal bed is now already prepared for me with delights....from his mouth, I receive milk and honey. Even now, His pure arms embrace me. His fair body is united with mine, and His blood decorates my eyebrows" (47). This sexual imagery conveys the complete possession of the female body. Agnes denies her earthly sexuality and suitor and, instead, substitutes a mirror image of worldly marriage that sexualized her as "bride of Christ." Thus, the reader sees the female who denies her earthly sexuality and replaces it with heavenly status.

The adoption of male clothing by female saints represented an outward denial of the female body. The physical transformation of their bodies from female lay person to male cleric started with the symbolic tonsure. According to Shulenburg, the female's hair was normally long during the medieval period and "served in general as an expression of woman's sexuality and gender. It was also an indicator of female moral quality" (155). The female who cut her hair became a symbol of what Schulenburg recognizes as their break with the gender norms because in removing her hair, the female removes the "expression" of her "sexuality and gender" (155). For the transvestite saints, "This 'disguise'...provided them with certain practical benefits...a level of protection and opportunities for greater independence and mobility" (155). The importance of tonsuring emerges in the lives of two female saints. As their first act after declaring their wishes to enter the monastery, both Eugenia and Euphrosyne ask male attendants to cut their hair, symbolizing not only their break from gender norms but also a denial of their sexuality. For these women, dressing as men helped them to obtain a deeper spiritual self because they were able to remove themselves from the marriage

market and dedicate their lives to God. The church accepted their transgression because it preserved their chastity and allowed them a fuller spirituality.

For lay women, however, the gender roles remained strictly in place, and their attempts to remove themselves from the feminine role "were seen as 'deviant' and [they] won swift punishment for their 'deceptive' and transgressive acts" (161). In one case, a defiant woman, Gunda, dressed as a man in order to gain access to a traditionally all-male church, St. Calais. Her entrance into the church was, however, barred when "she was miraculously struck down by God—she lost her sight and black blood flowed from her breast" (162). In supporting such exclusions, the church enacted the Theodosian code, which banned cross-dressed women from entering a church (162). As long as women cross-dressed to escape defilement by marriage or rape, the Church accepted their gender transgression. However, Gunda's story and the need for the Theodosian code show that when women cross-dressed to achieve social mobility or express defiance against the patriarchal order, as Gunda does, the Church deemed it unacceptable. While cross-dressing allowed medieval women to transcend the spiritual limitations of their feminine bodies, controlling their bodies was still of utmost importance to the patriarchal religion and society.

Despite the misogynist views practiced by many of its believers, medieval Catholicism offered an outlet for women who were not willing to enter into a life of marriage and child bearing. Shulenburg writes that "Monasticism also afforded, for the first time, an honorable alternative to forced marriages and provided an effective escape from the very real fears and dangers of childbirth" (139). The coming of the

Reformation sometimes removed the woman's freedom to choose between marriage and the religious life. Though women had limited opportunities in the Middle Ages, the chance to pursue education and leadership through the Catholic Church had allowed them a freedom that was more restricted in the early modern era.

Cross-dressing female saints, such as Euphrosyne, provide an example of the double-edged sword that came with bending gender. While these females were revered as saints because of their endeavors, the line between admiration and transgression was very narrow, as we see in the case of Gunda. Through dress and action, the cross-dressing female saints and Gunda provide rich examples of blurring gender in socially accepted and transgressive ways. A similar blurring between acceptable and reprehensible is mirrored in Sidney's *New Arcadia*. In Sidney's text, Pyrocles, Pamela, Philoclea, and Parthenia perform gender roles that disrupt the binary categories of male and female. What remains unclear, however, is whether Sidney considered any of these characters as examples of reprehensible gender transgressions.

The disruption of gender categories in Sidney's newer version of *Arcadia* provides a complex picture of early modern English gender issues. The male and female characters in the work continually defy binary gender categories. On the surface, the cross-dressing and gender disruptions in *Arcadia* may seem somewhat comic and therefore removed from serious criticism, but some early modern readers of the text may have agreed with Musidorus that cross-dressing (and any gender disruption) was the "very first down-step to all wickedness" (*Countess* 135). This latter belief implies that clearly defined gender categories were important in early

modern England and that those who dared transgress these categories should be punished. Another issue to consider is the kind of punishment the characters who transgress gender received. Sidney allows Pyrocles' cross-dressing, one of the most blatant disregards for the gender roles within the text, to continue for most of his narrative. However, Sidney prevents women who also transgress gender from developing into the three-dimensional character Pyrocles becomes. This study explores these characters' gender fluidity in order to determine if there is a bias for the male character who cross-dresses.

I have divided my thesis into three chapters that examine the effects early modern gender categories had on the characters for whom such categories seem indeterminate. My first chapter, "'Formed by Nature and Framed by Education': Gender Assignment and Performance in Elizabethan England" examines the construction of gender in early modern England. The chapter begins with a brief explanation of the humoral sciences that reveals the subordination of the female depended heavily upon allowing science to subjugate her body. This study of science moves into an examination of early modern religious texts, which offer a similar patriarchal emphasis, and then to an examination of the gender hierarchy in the home as a way to show how gender roles were manifest in everyday life. This chapter shows how gender categories, though ordained by a higher social order, were by no means exclusive of disruptive alternatives. The examples of strong females show that many women did not adhere to such misogynist beliefs. Similarly, the characters in Sidney's *New Arcadia* suggest that gender categories were not as rigid as the scientific and religious literature may suggest.

In my second chapter, I analyze Pyrocles's role as a cross-dresser and Sidney's treatment of his character in order to determine if there is a cultural bias towards males who transgress gender categories. Pyrocles's gender disruption is more extreme than the females', and, throughout his cross-dressing, there is a comedic element. When Musidorus first stumbles upon Pyrocles/Zelmane he observes that the latter wears a pin that comically depicts Hercules at the loom under the direction of Omphale, a scene discussed in Sidney's *Apology for Poesy* as capable of inducing both laughter and delight. Pyrocles's performance as a woman is supplemented by Sidney's choice of the costume of an Amazon—a man-like woman—for his character. By choosing a female costume that is just as fluid in gender as Pyrocles, Sidney grants him a complexity that is missing in the narrative's females.

As an Amazon, Pyrocles threatens his friendship with Musidorus and his role as hero. His cross-dressing upsets the balance of gender, as is evident in the emotional and physical changes his character undergoes throughout the story. However, the reader senses that Sidney handles the transgression as a vehicle of growth for Pyrocles. As a man, Pyrocles is selfish and childish, but when the fragmentary text ends with him still as Zelmane, he seems not only a more complex character but a more admirable person. This chapter explains how his transgression provides Pyrocles with a means to become a noble character, one who resembles the kind Sidney describes in the *Apology for Poesy* as teaching the reader through delight.

In the third chapter, I will examine three of Sidney's female characters who act outside of their gender and explore their various receptions and punishments. In contrast to comic Pyrocles, the tragic element of the females' gender transgression comes when Cecropia imprisons and interrogates Pamela and Philoclea and Amphialus kills Parthenia. Investigating these females and the punishments they receive explains why, although their transgression of gender is not as serious as Pyrocles's, they receive harsh punishments, including torture and even death, which he does not face. In Book 1, Parthenia stands up to her mother and betrothed, defying the "approved" submissiveness expected of her sex. As a result of her taking power, Demagoras disfigures her. Just as Parthenia's actions defy the gender role, Pamela's philosophical, masculine reasoning with Cecropia reveals a depth of character that the males of the story lack. She takes an active stance against Cecropia's wishes, shows that she is more aligned with the spirit rather than the body, and refuses to surrender to Cecropia. As a result, she is psychologically tortured and endures a staged "death." Meanwhile, Philoclea counsels Pyrocles, showing she has grown and is capable of masculine control. While Pyrocles experiences Cecropia's prison, Pamela and Philoclea are the direct targets of Cecropia's assault. Thus, Sidney differentiates their experience from Pyrocles'. All of the three women attempt to control their own destinies by standing up to the force acting against them, yet this independence results in their pain and suffering.

My purpose in exploring these topics is to determine whether the gaps in gender that Sidney opens in his work, though incomplete, are ever healed. The work seems to present a bias in its development towards the male cross-dresser's

point of view, in contrast to the females who just *act* outside of their gender categories. Questions I hope to answer are as follows: Is gender in the Renaissance as fluid as it is in Sidney's text? Is Pyrocles meant to teach noble actions through his character? Why do the female characters, after they perform feats of masculine strength, cease to be central characters of the text, which is presumably written for a female audience, Philip's sister Mary?

The epigram preceding this chapter provides a starting point for this thesis. Musidorus' argument against Pyrocles' cross-dressing subtly contrasts reason and society's guidelines to the passion of love. As we explore the characters and their gender transgressions, we must keep Musidorus's voice of reason in our minds. While such gender rules, at least on paper, were rigid, some early moderns chose to perform outside of the roles set for them. Just as Musidorus provides unwanted counsel to Pyrocles, so these socially constructed roles loomed over those who decided to act outside of the prescribed gender roles.

CHAPTER II

"FORMED BY NATURE AND FRAMED BY EDUCATION": ELIZABETHAN GENDER ASSIGNMENT

A 1630 engraving by Thomas Cecil depicts Elizabeth I in armor, addressing her troops before the invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588. In a famous speech Elizabeth was purported to have made on this occasion at Tilbury, she states "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too" (Loades 252). While some scholars question the historical legitimacy of Cecil's engraving and of the accounts of Elizabeth's speech, the contents of both illustrate important beliefs regarding gender in early modern England. Elizabeth, the celebrated virgin queen and England's self-proclaimed mother and wife, has the dress and the "heart and stomach" of a man. Cecil's engraving and "Elizabeth's" speech embody the queen's feminine "body natural" and masculine "body politic" (Levin 123). Although Elizabeth was born a woman (her "body natural"), her God-given position as sovereign proved that she was masculine at heart (her "body politic"). In Cecil's engraving, Elizabeth is *performing* the gender she takes on in her body politic. Her performance of the masculine gender garnered the admiration of the male soldiers and courtiers under her rule and legitimized her role as sovereign in early modern England's patriarchal society.

Elizabeth's performance as a strong, masculine, capable leader contrasts with the gender traits attributed to her "body natural." For Elizabeth, taking male dress was a strategic move that gained approval from the males around her. However, not all gender performance was met with such admiration. Puritans and other strict Protestant religious groups condemned the English theatre partly because young boys performed the roles of women. Women other than Elizabeth who dressed as men met with similar, if not harsher, disapproval. For example, Mary Frith, "the original Moll Cutpurse and model for *The Roaring Girl*," caused a scandal in London when she was "cited in Consistory Court in 1612" for dressing as a man (Cressy 462). Much like the characters in Sidney's *Arcadia*, individuals who performed the opposite gender in Elizabeth's England were met with both disdain, as in Mary Frith's case, and admiration, as in Elizabeth's case. Though certain people, such as Elizabeth and the boy actors in the theater, could take on the attributes and dress of the opposite sex without grave consequences, when an individual began to blur the gender lines to an extreme that civil and religious leaders saw as transgressive, he or she often became perceived as a threat to the order of the patriarchal society. Without Elizabeth's male and female subjects performing their "proper" gender roles, patriarchal society in early modern England was threatened because the foundation on which it was built did not generally allow women the capabilities to rule over men. Below, I examine the construction of those "proper" gender roles, rooted in the scientific and religious beliefs of the time. Next, I will examine how those roles played out in the home, and how those homes offered microcosms of the kingdom. I will also examine the education of women and how this education allowed them to slowly break out of these

repressive roles. I will end the chapter by examining how cross-dressing and transgressive behaviors threatened the existence of the hierarchy.

The Elizabethan construction of gender

In early modern England, the relationship between gender and biological sex had a direct correlation because scientists attempted to define gender roles through the categorization of biological sex. Science and anatomy textbooks of the time reveal deeply misogynist views that legitimized the subordination of women. Similarly, early modern clergymen defined gender roles through often extremely anti-feminine readings of religious texts. The rigid nature of gender roles derived from scientific and religious texts, however, began to dissolve when individuals performed a gender that conflicted with their biological sexes. While in some cases gender performance was comedic or admirable when presented in a controlled setting, unregulated transgression of gender categories was not without controversy and danger. Transgressive gender performance seemed a threat to the patriarchal order of early modern society, making adherence to the roles very important. However, these male and female categories proved excessively restrictive for the people living with them. Unlike Elizabethan scientific and religious doctrine, which tried to base gender on absolute categories, early modern literature provided examples of characters who illustrate the complex nature of gender. In *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, as I will show in Chapters III and IV, Sidney's characters blur the gender lines through their actions and dress. While on one side scientific and religious dogma attempt to establish two binary gender categories, the

fluidity of gender in early modern dramatic and literary texts suggests that rigid gender categories were nothing more than a social construct.

The Influence of Hippocrates and the Humoral Sciences

In *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, Anthony Fletcher writes that "understanding the body was how people sought to understand gender" (35). Fletcher is, however, quick to recognize that the study of anatomy by no means provided a simple understanding of gender: "what they learnt was that the one provided no quick and easy line of demarcation for establishing the other" (34). Having two distinct binary categories of sex and gender leaves little room for those whose performances or anatomies are not easily categorized. This creates a precarious situation for the two seemingly concrete gender/sex categories because when a body is born or performs outside his/her category, the socially constructed models of gender no longer apply to the real body that stands before them. If there is disjunction between the anatomy or performance of a real person and the constructions created by society, how can the two exist simultaneously? To answer such a question, one would need to understand the Hippocratic roots of the early modern gender categories.

In Elizabeth's England, gender/sex categories were rooted in the humoralism of Hippocrates. Despite advances in the study of anatomy during the early modern period that disproved many of the ancient world's anatomical theories, many still relied on the Hippocratic humoral theory to explain the formation of male and female anatomies (Fletcher 33). The Hippocratic theory cited four types of humours: blood, cholar, melancholy, and phlegm. These four humours ruled the body in terms of heat and

coldness. Arturo Castiglioni writes that for Hippocrates "the essential factor in life is heat" (159). The heat of the body kept the humours regulated, and the absence of heat caused imbalance in the humours, resulting in disease or death (160). When one humour became too powerful, doctors took preventative measures such as "bleeding, purging, vomiting, or setting artificial issues" (Lindeman 10). Samuel Tissot, an eighteenth-century physician, shows evidence that humoral science survived the early modern period's advances in anatomy. He classifies "slight looseness or diarrhea" as "the body's own attempt to cleanse the system by 'carry[ing] off a heap of matter that may have been long amassed and then putrified in the body [and] which, if not discharged, might have produced some distemper'" (10). The same heat and lack of heat that determines health also determined sex. Early modern scientific views of sex attempt to explain the difference between the male and female organs, and the misogynist traits of the explanations provided a basis on which to construct gender roles that rendered the woman powerless.

A one-sex body theory derived from the ancient Greeks explained that the genitalia of men and women were essentially the same but inverted. The hot humours of men caused the genitalia to retreat outside of the body. In this explanation, the heat of the male is contrasted with the cold humours of the female. The female's humours are not hot or strong enough to push her genitalia out of the body. The "ovaries were female testicles; the penis in this exercise becomes the cervix and vagina; the uterus is an internal scrotum....[T]he womb was nothing other than the penis turned inward and the bottom of it nothing but the scrotum inverted" (Fletcher 34). By classifying the womb as an imperfect form of the penis, ancient and early modern science effectively reduced its

function to a secondary position. Because the female was able to carry the child, her reproductive function would seem to give her a special role in early modern society. However, Hippocratic science asserted that "the womb gave women something extra but not, by feat of male legerdemain, something extra which made them more perfect" (63). Scientists did not view the womb as sacred. Instead it became the passive recipient to the active male "seed." The passivity of the female in reproductive activity made her less perfect, and because of this imperfection, the womb was an inconvenience she had to tolerate (64). In addition to being imperfect, the womb was unpredictable and dangerous. Because the Greek "one-sex body" theory reduced females to the position of an imperfect, dangerous version of males, it legitimized the misogynist ideas that women were unable to rule themselves and, therefore, needed men to control them.

Humoral science and its views of the male and female sex organs directly influenced early modern gender roles. According to many textbooks, the heat of the male not only helps in the creation of his genitalia but makes him powerful. Fletcher quotes a 1651 textbook by Alexander Ross:

> The male is hotter than the female because begot of hotter seed and in a hotter place to wit the right side and because the male hath the larger vessels and members, stronger limbs, a more porie skin, a more active body, a stronger concoction, a more courageous mind and for the most part a longer life. (61)

The image of the "hot" male as physically strong and spiritually admirable reflects Hippocrates's assertion that heat is the center of life and creates a balanced order. In short, the early modern scientists' assertion of the Hippocratic theory gave adequate

support for males to assert sexual control. Ross's description of the female's coldness is much harsher:

> The fatness, softness and laxity of the woman's body, besides the abundance of blood which cannot be concocted and exhaled for want of heat argue that she is a colder temper than men...[H]er proneness to anger and venery argue imbecility of mind and strength of imagination not heat. (61)

Ross's explanation of women shows a point-by-point contrast with that of men. He describes the male as strong and active, and he portrays the female as "soft," lazy and passive. He asserts that the imperfection of the female is something she is born with and can never be rid of—it "cannot be concocted and exhaled" (61). Finally, he insults her intelligence by attributing her anger to ignorance. What Ross portrays here is an example of imbalance in the humours. If the male's possession of heat, the center of life, gives him the ability to maintain balance and order, the woman's lack of heat makes her lazy, argumentative, lustful and chaotic. What is more, if one looks back to the balance of the humours that is required for health, the female's inclination towards imbalance renders her not only a seemingly powerless figure but a person whose mere presence is dangerous. If the male's heat creates order and balance, the female's cold disrupts that balance, causing disease. The diseased body that the feminine presence creates figures the patriarchal society of early modern England. Men held positions of leadership in the government, church, and home. If the female dared to exert her control and her attempt was successful, patriarchal society would supposedly crumble. The need for the stability of the patriarchy made it important to assert control over women.

A complete balance of the humours was necessary not only for a person's health but also for the order of society, but the fluid nature of the humours in practice provided a bleak future to those who believed life and order depended on humoral constancy. If health based on these ideas of humours was, as Lindeman asserts, an "unattainable ideal," gender rules based on the humours faced the same unattainable status, a point that Fletcher also recognizes: "With the precise boundary between the heat which made man a man and the cold which predominated to make woman a woman difficult to draw, gender in fact seemed dangerously fluid and indeterminate" (33). While some scientific textbooks of the early modern period used the humours and sex organs as a way to legitimize the patriarchal society, the system could not easily assign rigid traits for two clearly binary sex and gender categories. If the male's heat maintains order, how does a cold female, such as Elizabeth, exert her rule over the males in her kingdom? Under the rule of Mary and then Elizabeth, these questions became extremely important to answer. However, humoral science did not offer a completely satisfactory answer. If, as the humours dictated, the male's heat gives balance and order, the queens' coldness should throw the kingdom into chaos. With this threatened imbalance, the performance of the masculine gender became necessary in order to convince the patriarchal government that she was capable of ruling. Though her sex threatened a dangerous imbalance, Elizabeth's performance as a man, as on the battlefield, gave her an important edge in establishing the perception that she was fit to rule. Elizabeth and her advisors constantly supplemented her "Virgin Queen" persona with the picture of her as a masculine and, in the public's eye, a more capable ruler. In doing this, Elizabeth became a woman who upheld the patriarchal ideals of her society. Her role in this was complicated, though,

because, in portraying herself as a man, Elizabeth also bent these rules. Knowing that her rule would be in danger if she did not play both gender roles, Elizabeth readily admitted her weakness as a woman and her desire to rule as a strong man. In doing this she effectively blended the humoral-based gender roles, and created a third gender—one wherein she chose the gender attributes she thought would aid her sovereignty. In these examples, performance of gender overruled the strict gender categories based upon biological sex.

Gender and Religion

Just as the scientific community attempted to use the "weaknesses" of the female gender as a means to subordinate women, the philosophical and religious communities produced texts that were deeply misogynistic. Most early modern religious texts, like the patristic and medieval precursors, incorporate Eve's initiating sin in the creation story as a justification of the weakness of and the need to subordinate women. Instead of spreading the blame equally, early modern theologians credited Eve with bringing sin into the world. As a result of the fall, theologians often connected Eve to the physical world and Adam to the spiritual, even though he allowed Eve to sin and spread her sin. This idea mirrors the philosophical "mind/body" distinction that Elizabeth Spelman describes when she recalls Plato's view of the body: "the body, with its deceptive senses, keeps us from real knowledge; it rivets us in a world of material things which is far removed from the world of reality; and it tempts us away from the virtuous life" (34). She describes the soul, in contrast, as the means to experience truth: "It is in and through the soul, if at all, that we shall have knowledge, be in touch with reality, and lead a life of

virtue…[O]nly the soul can ascend to the real world" (34). Spelman points out that to illustrate dominance of the physical body, Plato used the examples of women, children, slaves and brutes. He privileged spiritual love between men over the physical love between men and the women and young boys, whom he believed incapable of spirituality. Spelman's examples from Plato and the Bible creation story give a basis for the early modern treatment of women. In Platonic philosophy and religious belief, women were connected to the physical world, and both stories contrast the happiness of relationships between masculine beings (Adam and God in the creation story) to those involving female interference.

In Plato's works, women are considered a threat to the intellectual development of men. Plato's tracts reiterate the warning that the male must protect his intelligence from the physicality of the woman:

> The worst possible model for young men could be 'a woman, young or old or wrangling with her husband, defying heaven, loudly boasting, fortunate in her own conceit, or involved in misfortune or possessed by grief and lamentation.' (Fletcher 37)

With these gender constructions, the rule of men over women becomes a matter of spiritual and intellectual importance. For those who believed in the absolute truth of women as sinful creatures incapable of serious spiritual growth, any woman who threatened to transgress a gender role, that was based on science, religion, and philosophy represented folly and an absolute evil.

Stressing the importance of a spiritual, male relationship revealed a deep-seated belief that females were corporeal and dangerous. Some Protestants held to the idea that

"she who first drew man to sin should now be subject to him, lest by the like womanish weakness she fall again" (Stone 138). Not only does the sinful nature of a woman threaten her, but it also causes the downfall of man if a woman gains too much power. In this regard, Lawrence Stone quotes a George Wilkins play: "Women are the purgatory of men's purses, the paradise of their bodies, and the hell of their minds: marry none of them" (137). Though sentiments such as this met with rebuttal, the popularity of the idea is evident in the ten printings between the years 1616 and 1634 of Joseph Swetman's tract titled *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (137).

Post-Reformation England proved to be a particularly volatile time for women. The abolition of Catholicism in England brought with it the "elimination of the female religious cult of the Virgin Mary, the disappearance of celibate priests, who through the confession box had hitherto been very supportive of women in their domestic difficulties, and the closing-off of the career option of life in a nunnery" (Stone 141). The medieval cult of Mary had partly relieved women of the burden of Eve's sin and had made their status as inherently sinful beings a little less harsh. In addition, choosing a religious vocation had allowed medieval women to avoid marriage, provide them an outlet for intellectual pursuits, and offer leadership positions in convents. Without these options, women seemed to be at the mercy of the male head of their family. The alternative to married life was to live as a spinster, that proved sometimes proved unstable due to the lack of economic opportunity available to women in early modern England. In some cases, women were forced either by family or financial situation into marriages that proved abusive or unhappy.

Gender Roles in the Home

Instilling these gender roles within science and religion was one important and influential way to preserve the authority of early modern men, but so was making sure that devout worshippers and citizens practiced these roles within their homes. To encourage this outcome, the new Church of England stressed the importance of the authority of the "man of the house":

> Everyone who attended church…was receiving the constant reiteration of the principles of husbandly authority over wives and parental authority over children and other subordinates….through the Homily on Obedience, which was often read on Sundays, and through sermons and catechizing. (Fletcher 205)

These sermons, which were to reach nearly every family in England, helped to instill in the families the patriarchal ideals of the society. They reiterated the male's God-given right to rule his family by comparing the father and husband to the King of England, whose position in society was divinely ordained.

The Hierarchy of the Home as a Microcosm

The standing of early modern men and women within their society mirrored their position within the household. Kathryn DeZur observes the connection of the household to political society. She writes that in the *Old Arcadia* Philip Sidney himself "makes explicit the relationship between marriage and politics when he uses the metaphor of the household for political rule, an unsurprising move in a culture that often applied the metaphor of family to the state (i.e., the monarch as the paterfamilias)" (94). The hierarchy within the household placed the husband and father at the top "ruling" and

protecting his wife, children and, in some cases, servants just as the king or sovereign did his people. When Elizabeth ascended to the throne, this order was subverted, but many modern readers of these gender roles see Elizabeth as an exception rather than the rule. Though Elizabeth occupied the most powerful position in the state and church, her political advisors were male. Additionally, as I have indicated, Elizabeth's position forced her to assume some masculine traits. Elizabeth's actions prove that, rather than eradicating the patriarchal ideas of her society, the queen used them to her advantage. In Elizabeth's court, males retained a large amount of political power, and this power was mimicked in Elizabethan homes. Alexandra Shepard writes that in theory "the husband's responsibility [was] to provide—by 'getting money' through 'intermeddling' with other men....[A] wife's duty [was] to protect such provision and her own honour, thereby safeguarding the welfare and good name of the household" (75). The male ought to function within the public sphere, using physical labor or intellectual abilities to obtain employment and provide for the family. He was allowed to exert his power over other men and women outside of the home. However, in his duty to provide, the husband was also bound to the gender roles assigned to him by early modern society. If he was unable to provide for his family, he was thought effeminate. Challenges to the care of his family threatened his masculinity:

> Reproofs...undermined a man's status by questioning either his ability or his will to provide for his family, and derived their impact from expectations that a married man should not be dependent on his wife for his livelihood, and should not neglect his duty to provide. (Shepard 84)

Though the man's duty to provide protected his family from neglect and poverty, it also represented the importance of both genders. If he could or would not provide for his family, his status in the household became passive—a perceived feminine trait. If a king is unable to rule, the country suffers. If the husband/father is unable to provide for the family, it dissolves.

However, just as Elizabeth donned masculine and feminine characteristics, Elizabethan homes did not strictly adhere to the gendered hierarchy, as is evident in the role of the wife within the household and beyond. Although the female's domain, in theory, was the home, the domestic sphere, where she was to "protect such provision and her honor," Shepard provides evidence that many women operated in commercial endeavors outside their homes (75). The woman's duty to protect and keep domestic order was in most cases limited to the domain within the walls of the house her husband had provided either through employment or inheritance. However, some women did manage to operate outside this sphere. Shepard writes that the female presence in debt litigation shows that "women were neither as absent…in debt cases as at first appears, nor present only in cases involving widows" (90). Furthermore, women also participated in "trade…[and] they also claimed credit in terms of honest-dealing and provision" (92). The activity of females outside the home indicates that the gender roles laid out in early modern literature did not always transfer to marriages and households. While Shepard recognizes that this feminine activity is "impossible to assess" and that feminine "independence must have varied considerably within the context of particular marriages and economic settings," the cases she cites prove not every early modern woman occupied a solely domestic, submissive role in her household (93). Instead of the

traditional view of the male controlling the home and all who lived within its walls, most marriages were partnerships that sought to address the "mutual…concern" of the household, "which required adaptability and the best possible use of resources rather than adherence to a patriarchal blueprint" (95). According to Shepard, the success of the household was the foremost concern of married couples, and their adherence to the patriarchal order played a secondary role. Though there were females whose roles within the household and beyond required them to exert masculine power, sources indicate that the rules of the patriarchal order still figured into some of the more liberal marriages.

Fletcher, like Shepard, cites some liberal couples whose relationships were more equal than the patriarchal literature indicates. The letters of Mary Verney, who married Sir Robert Verney when she was thirteen and he twenty-six, show that she "was necessarily at first submissive. But it became a true partnership" (Fletcher 160). Later in their marriage, Fletcher writes, Mary felt comfortable enough to give advice

> about estate matters…,but at the same time [the advice is] prefaced with statements like this one: 'tis only because you bid me do it that I trouble you with my silly advice, for I am sure thy own judgment is better.' Such rhetoric…reassured both parties that their relationship was not stepping too far out of line. (161-62)

Mary's statements acts as a disclaimer, signifying that despite the power she exercises over commercial and household matters, her judgment is secondary to that of her husband. Mary is the type of active woman Shepard references, but Mary is also mindful of the role society has given her. In this way, Mary exists between the binaries because she is neither a "masculine" woman nor a completely submissive wife.

The partnerships within Elizabethan marriages varied between the classes. Among the lower classes, the "husband, wife and children tended to form a single economic unit…in which the role of the wife was critical" (Fletcher 139). Depending on the type of business the family conducted, the wife exercised a varying degree of control over the household. Among the upper-class, men who wished or had to pursue a profession away from home depended upon their wives to be competent household managers. In some households, women found themselves handling the affairs of their children as well as any number of servants that may have been employed by the family. Not only were they in charge of domestic duties, but women were often in control of paying the servants and managing the household finances. Fletcher writes that "a strong woman was needed to deal with the personnel, daily business and financial control of the domestic establishment" (174). In some families, husbands often away on business allowed their wives to conduct business transactions in the husband's absence. This allowed the woman to move her power from the domestic to the public sphere: "Some west country women were just as assertive as their husbands might have been over matters of wrecked ships and goods on or close to their estates" (179). One case of an Elizabethan business power is that of Mrs. Wilmott Trevelyn, "a mother of fourteen children, [who] directed workmen on her husband John's estate while he was away in London in 1574 and 1575, sold farm produce, searched out a lease and visited a landlord to ask him to wait for his rent" (180). Cases like Trevelyn's provide further evidence that not all women in Elizabeth's England were reduced to submissive roles that limited their ability to become powerful and exert control outside of the home, as Shepard recognizes

in her article. In providing this support and order to homes and businesses, women were able to prove their worth, which much scientific and religious literature had denied them.

Unlike husbands who allowed their wives to exercise control over domestic *and* business affairs, many looked skeptically upon these commercially involved women. Likewise, the freedom this role afforded some women created conflicts within households where "men wanted their wives to be both subordinate and competent" (Fletcher 174). Many men found that women who controlled the household blurred the gender roles a little too much. Such was the case with Ann Liddell, who served as her "husband's intermediary with Clavering in coal trade matters on Tyneside" (181). When William Cotesworth visited the Liddells in London, he "refused to discuss trading affairs with her" (181). Women such as Liddell walked the line between acceptable and transgressive power. In many cases, the female's power depended upon not only the husband's granting her that power but upon other males' recognizing that she could hold such a position.

The cases Shepard and Fletcher cite indicate a disjunction between the Elizabethan patriarchal literature and the practices of actual couples. In many marriages, the success of the household overpowered the husband's need to exert masculine control over his family. Shepard writes that "[t]he stakes of gendered identity appear to have been rather different in ordinary social practice than in prescriptive discourse" (95). Thus, the binary categories science and religion built began to influence social construction more than reflecting social practice.

Domestic Violence

Though some couples managed to bend the family hierarchy to make a more equal marriage, violence within most marriages was accepted as right of the husband in order to ensure order within his household. This society was, as Fletcher writes, one "suffused with personal relationships of dominance and submission, a society in which the use of violence was accepted as a means of maintaining order in hierarchal relationships, both within and outside the household" (192). Fletcher's statement produces a brutal image of marriage, seemingly indicating that the relationships between most husbands and wives were riddled with horrific violence. While England had "a legal code which allowed husbands to inflict what was called 'moderate correction' on their wives," which in many ways subordinated females by placing them under their husband's authority, wives were not without support in matters of domestic violence (192). Most commentators did not take marital violence lightly and all "agreed that physical correction of a wife was a last resort" (Amussen 13). However, Susan Dwyer Amussen recognizes that laws such as the one above provided opportunity for husbands to abuse their powers. In some cases, the victim's in-laws joined her husband in abuse. Elizabeth Easton in a suit claimed her husband's family "would rate her and slap her as a dog" and that her husband was "ready to beat her" (Fletcher 196). The plights of some victims would not receive notice until their husbands' beatings became extremely dangerous or even fatal. Fletcher writes of Anne Gosling, a woman from Norfolk, whose own family "knew her husband John beat her but did nothing to offer help until she was knocked unconscious" (197). In cases of excessive violence, Amussen writes that "authorities who normally defended patriarchal authority intervened to protect subordinate members

of families; random or excessive violence by the head of the household undermined the legitimacy of his power" (14). The excessive violence of a husband and father would endanger the order of the household because "Punishment without restraint created disorder" (18). Therefore, such actions had to be controlled. The laws which legalized physical violence as a means of discipline proved a double-edged sword. While the government permitted such domestic violence it did so only when it occurred within "reason." However, giving this authority to the husband made it "more difficult to monitor the use and abuse of power in cases of domestic violence" (18). Just as patriarchal literature and beliefs did not reflect Elizabethan home life, the laws permitting domestic violence created a disjunction between the government and the family. The government allowed these laws to ensure domestic order, but, in doing so, it created the potential for situations which threatened to spiral out of control.

In addition to laws that permitted domestic violence, the government passed laws that made it nearly impossible for females to own property. Of these legal restrictions against women, Stone writes,

> [A] woman's legal right to hold and dispose of her own property was limited to what she could specifically lay claim to in a marriage contract. By marriage, the husband and wife became one person in law—and that person was the husband. He acquired absolute control of all his wife's personal property, which he could sell at will. (137)

By restricting a female's legal right to own land, the society restricted her financial freedom. They show that the control of female power was at the forefront of Elizabethan law.

Education of Women

Despite the laws that supported the subordination and control of women, education, for a brief time, allowed females to explore a realm that had been dominated by males. Beliefs preceding the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth popularized the education of women in the humanist tradition:

> For a brief period, during the middle third of the sixteenth century, there was a vigorous drive for female classical education by Renaissance Humanists like Vives and Erasmus. Perhaps encouraged by Queen Catherine of Aragon, no fewer than seven ambitious treatises on this theme appeared in England between 1523 and 1538. (142)

Through education, women could begin to dispel patriarchal beliefs that the male was spiritually and intellectually superior. These educated women started to embody the admirable attributes of character that Plato's mind/body distinction had previously assigned to men with the result that "there appeared for a short time a handful of aristocratic women who were as expert as men in classical grammar and language" (Stone 142). This movement created an image of femininity that was perhaps impossible to achieve: a woman who could match the intellect of a man but still retain the submissiveness of a woman. Though widely admired, the intellectual female was not common. As Garret P.J. Epps writes, "it is… generally assumed that virile women are the exception, that most women will be 'feminine' in the various abject senses of that descriptor, due to their already overdetermined association with ornamentation, flesh, and sexuality—not in the sense of orientation, but of inclination" (311). Epps's aligning of the educated woman with the "virile" woman and his contrast between the virile woman

and the feminine woman suggest that early modern males considered the females who were not linked to flesh and sexuality (i.e., educated woman) masculine. Furthermore, Epps writes that men viewed educated women as having to work against the physicality of their feminine traits to achieve masculine intelligence. In becoming educated, the woman would have had to control what early modern philosophers viewed as chaotic. The "masculine control" Epps writes about in his article stems from the writings of theologians such as Isidore of Seville: "That which is properly masculine always masters and controls whatever is not" (304). Keeping in mind the misogynist slant of scientific and religious literature of this time, education provided some women with an outlet to move closer to what many perceived to be more masculine and more desirable personality traits.

While some men admired and celebrated women who were educated, others viewed intellectual women as a threat. Given the masculine overtones associated with education, if a woman were to become too educated, she could pose a threat to the established gender roles. Additionally, education gave women a focus away from home and family. Females' limited possibilities outside of the home and the importance of their domestic duties caused some to question the reasoning behind the education of women. The conflict involving educated women soon became irrelevant, because after a short period, early modern English society again began to favor the female's knowledge of domestic duties over classical education of females. This move, which was spurred by the 1561 English translation of Castiglione's *The Courtier*,

> put forward a different ideal of womanhood, one who had a sprinkling of letters, but whose prime qualities were now the social graces—skill in music, painting,

> drawing, dancing and needlework. This new courtly ideal, and the Protestant, especially Puritan, ideal of the woman as the docile housewife, the diligent upholder of holy matrimony in a subservient role to the husband, spelt the end of the learned lady. (143).

Though Castiglione's text, as Stone asserts, threatened the learned lady, there were still women who maintained and gained an education long after *The Courtier* was published. These women, including Mary Sidney, used their educations to unseat the ideal of the "docile housewife" and represented a type of woman who could both manage a household and author a novel.

The effeminate male

Just as control and intelligence allowed women to become more masculine, the opposite—ignorant or emotional behavior—made men effeminate. In his essay concerning effeminacy in the late medieval play *Mankind*, Epp explains that the characters of the vices were gendered feminine because they lack control over themselves and allow themselves to be controlled by other vices. The lack of control in early modern men carried the same connotation. As we have seen, the man who was unable to provide for his family (exert his control over the finances) becomes effeminate. Similarly, men who were victims of domestic abuse at the hands of their wives rarely reported the attacks because of the shame due to their inability to control their wives: "If men had tried to employ legal action to control wives who offered them violence, they would have been a laughing stock" (Fletcher 198). In fact, the situation of the wife beating the husband became a subject of many satires. Fletcher writes that these works "suggest[ed]

that many women could be expected, as far as they had the courage and the physical strength, to give as good as they got in marital quarrels" (198). Though a late medieval piece, *Mankind* offers a background in the satirical genre. The play shows a satirical image of the wife who emasculates her husband through threats and violence. New Guise laments that "both his head and his penis have been wounded by his wife…a double metonymy of wounded masculine authority" (Epps 309). The example of New Guise from *Mankind* suggests that the man who lacked control and authority was not correctly portraying his gender. If he allowed himself to be dominated by women or other men, the man did not adhere to the "masculine control" that Isidore of Seville had deemed appropriate.

The gender roles provided a way to make clear-cut categories to determine the function of the male and female in society. By performing outside of his or her gender category, the male or female could threaten the order of society. Instances of education (as in the case of women) or lack of control in marriage (as in the case of men) were not so easy to categorize. In some cases, as when the females showed masculine control, such blurring of the gender categories became admirable. This admiration is carried over from the medieval women saints, and it is manifest in Queen Elizabeth and Mary Sidney. Simply acting outside of the gender category by demonstrating intelligence, for females, or cross-dressing in the theatre, for males, blurred the lines but did not completely destroy them because these instances could be contained. While some critics condemned these gender-bending performances, the latter did not prove to be too much of a transgression. When the individual, however, chose to combine his or her actions with the clothing of

the opposite sex in an uncontrolled environment (outside the theater), the gender lines that held the categories distinct became threatened.

Cross-Dressing as Gender Transgression

Just as Elizabeth's performance on the battlefield garnered admiration from male soldiers, males admired the woman who demonstrated intelligence and masculine control. However, there were limits to the extent a woman could adopt masculine traits, a fact Epps recognizes:

> A 'virile' woman is generally deemed worthy of praise, where a woman in men's clothing is subject only to derision; the first in and through her self-control properly imitates a masculine God, but the second falsely and improperly imitates men, taking on false appearance of masculinity and none of the strength [vis] considered proper to it. (Epp 311)

The scientific, religious, and philosophical reasoning behind the subordination of women was manifest in the costumes both men and women wore. Therefore, dressing outside of one's gender category threatened the patriarchal order of society. David Cressy writes that many people viewed cross-dressing as transgressive because it upset the natural balance God had ordained: "Male and Female costumes were divinely ordained as God-given markers, so their misapplication subverted the fundamental structure of God's universal plan" (443). The universal plan to which Cressy refers is the order of society that kept males in positions of power and females subordinate.

In her article "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle," Jean Howard writes that "when women took man's clothes, they symbolically left their subordinate

positions. They became masterless women" (424). If a woman who failed to preserve her honor could threaten family and society, the woman who cross-dressed outside of the gender category did the same because she represented a similar defiance of existing authority. Males who adopted feminine clothing also became a threat to the patriarchal order: "For a man, wearing a woman's dress undermined the authority inherently belonging to the superior sex and placed him in a position of shame" (424). According to Laura Levine theatrical cross-dressing was perceived as a threat because it presents the self as pliable. The idea that there is no essential self is, as Levine writes "profoundly contradictory, for, according to [this] logic, the self is both inherently monstrous and inherently nothing at all" (12). Critics of the theatre, such as Stephen Gosson, feared that the early modern male spectator of the play would "automatically replicate what he ha[d] seen on the stage" (13). Furthermore, males cross-dressing as females threatened the heterosexual norm. According to Levine, the belief that cross-dressing would lead to homosexuality lay in its "associations [with] castration…[and] that 'doing' what a woman does leads to 'being' what a woman is" (23). Levine shows that the performances in the theatre threatened the early moderns, and, although her points concern males cross-dressing as females, the same could be said of female cross-dressers. Regardless of sex, men and women who cross-dressed in early modern England often seemed dangerous because they took their performances of the opposite sex beyond limits deemed acceptable by their society.

Conclusion

While the gender roles proved repressive to females, men also had to adhere to them. What Sidney shows us in *Arcadia* is that these gender roles were not always so rigidly maintained as some documents would suggest. Here are several very strong characters whose actions and dress go back and forth between the male and female genders. This thesis examines instances of gender change and shows how they represent the power behind sexuality in *Arcadia*.

The types of gender constructions outlined in this chapter—biological, religious, domestic, educational, and trans-sexual—provide a context for the transgressions presented in Sidney's *Arcadia*. Whether it be Pyrocles's cross-dressing as Zelmane or Pamela's and Philoclea's exercise of masculine control, gender is fluid for Sidney's characters. Rather than just being a method of entertainment, the gender slippage Sidney portrays becomes a manifestation of real early modern men and women. The examples in this chapter show that gender categories were important to early modern English society and that, when individuals act outside of these roles, they can be viewed as comic, as in satiric works, or seriously transgressive. In *Arcadia*, Sidney's hero Pyrocles represents both the comedic and transgressive aspects of gender bending.

CHAPTER III

"YIELD OUTWARD SHOW WHAT INWARD CHANGE": PYROCLES' CROSS-DRESSING

"Neither it be deemed too saucy a comparison to the highest point of a man's wit with the efficacy of Nature; but rather to give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature...Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight."—from An Apology for Poesy

In *The Apology for Poesy*, Sidney equates poetry with an imitation of the divine. He writes, however, that a poet's ability lies in the ability to delight and create words which move the reader to imitation of the noble characters. Literature's noble characters delight and teach audience through their actions. While delightful, noble characters represent an ideal of how to act, comedic characters provide an image of how not to act. By inciting laughter, these characters present themselves as fools whom readers do not wish to imitate. The reader can apply the conclusions Sidney produces in *Apology* to the situations in his *New Arcadia.* Though there are examples of characters who represent paradigms of the noble and comedic, only one character, Pyrocles, encompasses both the noble and the comedic by not being a complete examplar of either. He is simultaneously the image of Hercules spinning for Omphale, an image depicted on the broach he wears as Zelmane, and the hero who leads the Lacedaemonians into battle against the rabble. Robert Carver rightly opposes Mark Rose's "claim that Sidney

'intended his readers to find Pyrocles' disguise offensive'" as "too simplistic" and not aware of "the complex tradition of male-female transvestism in which Pyrocles's impersonation of an Amazon is grounded" (325). Yet, I do not, however, completely support Lisa Celovsky's assertion that Sidney meant the character's cross-dressing to represent a "rite of passage" (236). Instead, I propose that Pyrocles' cross-dressing is a blend of both an example of the offensive *and* the rite of passage. From a certain point of view, Pyrocles' cross-dressing projects a comedic picture by making the hero effeminate, yet the character's ability to blend masculine and feminine powers, as Celovsky outlines in her essay, makes Pyrocles an admirable character. In this chapter, I will outline how Sidney's Amazon costume creates a comedic image while showing Pyrocles' admirable devotion to love. I will also show how Pyrocles' costume allows him to grow from a youth who imitated a classical friendship with Musidorus to a cross-dresser who genuinely cares for another. Thus, Pyrocles not only blurs gender lines, but his cross-dressing compromises his position in the narrative, giving it the effects of both delight and comedy.

The Mannish Woman: The Role of the Amazon in the *New Arcadia*

As presented in the first chapter, male cross-dressing was problematic because it undermined the order of the patriarchal society. Being male makes Pyrocles dominant, but his love for Philoclea influences his decision to take the female costume and thus willingly make himself subordinate. It must be noted, however, that the female persona Pyrocles assumes is that of an Amazon woman, Zelmane. The female name he adopts, Zelmane, creates additional layers of complexity. In the second book, the real Zelmane

cross-dresses as a boy so that she may serve Pyrocles. According to Celeste Turner Wright early modern English literature "abounds in references to the Amazons," with the result that readers would have been familiar with Sidney's inclusion of the character type. However, does assigning Pyrocles a female role create a situation the reader would have found acceptable? In the introduction of *Playing with Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, Jean Brink, Maryanne Horowitz, and Alison Coudert recognize that "The Renaissance fascination with portrayals of Amazons, including domestication of Amazons and the disguise of men as Amazons, reflects awareness of a curiosity about the willful gender transformation" (x). Their awareness of gender transformation suggests that early modern readers would have also been familiar with the literary situation of a man's dressing as an Amazon and that some readers would not have taken offense. Pyrocles' costume infringes doubly on gender categories, not only because he is a man dressing as a woman but because the Amazon represents a female body whose adoption of male attributes some consider threatening.

The Amazons as Portraits of Heroism and Scapegoats of Gender Confusion

Wright credits the early modern fascination with Amazons to their bravery and skill in war. For Elizabethans, the Amazons served "as models of female magnanimity and courage and are even included, with no comment upon their sex, among many male examples of valor and of 'civil nobility'" (443). Wright bases her view on William Blande's *Discourse of Civill and Christian Nobilitie* (1576) and *Apology for Womenkinde* (1605) and Christopher Newstead's *Apology for Women*. These works precede and follow the publication of *The New Arcadia* which reveals familiarity with

similar views of the Amazons. At one point, Pyrocles uses the courage of the Amazons to justify his costume to a skeptical Musidorus: "this estate of the Amazons (which I now for my greatest honour do seek to counterfeit)....[is the one wherein] they want neither valour of mind, nor yet doth their fairness take away their force" (Sidney 135). This view of Amazons provides an example of a noble, admirable woman, but there were many critics of Amazons who viewed the bravery that Pyrocles, Blande, and Newstead found admirable as a perversion. Though Elizabethans admired the Amazons for their bravery and skill in battle, the mythic civilization threatened the Elizabethan patriarchal order. As a result of this threat, the Europeans distanced themselves from the Amazon tribes geographically and socially. As Louis Montrose argues in "The Work of Gender and the Discourse of Discovery," European explorers relocated the Amazons to the New World "just beyond the receding geographical boundary of *terra incognita*, in the enduring European mental space reserved for aliens" (25). This relocation of the Amazons within a category of "alien," reinforces the unnatural order of their society, and as Montrose writes distancing themselves from such a seemingly unnatural social order allowed Elizabethans to strengthen the legitimacy of their patriarchal government:

> Elizabethan perception and speculation were structured by the cognitive operations of the hierarchy and inversion, analogy and antithesis. By the logic of these operations, a conceptual space for reversal and negation was constructed within the world picture of a patriarchal society. Among those figures which might occupy this space were the Amazons. (26)

The Elizabethans' binary male/female provided clearly defined attributes for each gender—females were passive and timid and males active and aggressive. As female leaders and warriors, Amazonian women existed between these binary categories, just as Pyrocles's cross-dressing also places him in the space between binaries. As I stated earlier in this section, Pyrocles's choice of costume complicates the situation because he is now cross-dressing as a female who subverts the gender order in imitation of the real, now deceased Zelmane who had cross-dressed to gain access to Pyrocles. His situation reflects the Elizabethan literary fascination with individuals whose gender categories cannot fit into a ready-made definition. Readers are safe to express such fascination with the cross-dressing in *Arcadia* because it is contained within an imaginary world and does not transgress the gender categories discussed in the first chapter.

The Cruel Nature of the Amazons

Because of his choice of an Amazon's costume, Pyrocles achieves a complexity that would be absent if he had chosen a different female persona. The perception of his costume as that of an outsider deepens when the reader considers that "no characteristic of the classical Amazons is more frequently noted than their cruelty" (Wright 449). While the tales chronicling the cruel nature of the Amazons changes when their myth relocates from Greece to Asia and finally to South America, the role of males as the recipients of their cruelty does not change. In the cases Wright recounts, Amazon women originally "conspired against their Scythian husbands and seized control of the state....having tasted this freedom, they next decided that matrimony had been slavery....[they] despised household tasks, especially woolwork, liked only hunting and

warfare" (450). Their distaste for womanly work distances Amazons from their approved gender category, and their aggression towards males expresses not only refusal to fit into binary categories but also the fears the myths convey about any society that operated outside of masculine control. This fear makes Pyrocles' costume even more of a potential transgression. Dressed as an Amazon, Pyrocles is not just a cross-dresser but a cross-dresser who takes the costume of another gender-bending persona.

Patriarchal society bases the "unwomanliness" of the Amazons in their refusal to act in the submissive, home-bound role. According to Wright, however, it is their failure as mothers that solidifies their rejection of the patriarchal social order:

> [N]ot only did the Amazons refuse to suckle their sons but—according to their enemies—they often slew them at birth. At best they banished them to the fathers for rearing. Or—a third account, preferred by violent antifeminists—these outrageous mothers dislocated the boys' joints and then enslaved the cripples at spinning. This final ignominy recalls Omphale's tyranny over her lover Hercules, whose spinning, though regarded by some as a charming idyl, was usually denounced as a vile affront to male dignity. (453)

This horrific picture of the Amazon mother is important to Pyrocles in *New Arcadia* because it provides a context from which the readers and perhaps the characters of Sidney's work may have viewed Zelmane. The Amazon mother is characterized by her neglect and murder of male offspring, something that undermines one of the most important roles for an early modern woman—care of the male child as representative of the patriarchal descent. At their most violent, the mothers render their sons physically

incapable of doing anything but work deemed womanly (the same womanly work, it should be noted, that the Amazons thought the worst). Wright notes that these handicapped boys occupied the same role as the effeminized Hercules, who spins for Omphale. Pyrocles' pin depicting Hercules gives the cross-dressed lover a direct link to the boys whose mothers maim them. This link provides another layer to Pyrocles' costume. While his situation resembles Hercules' in that Pyrocles allows his love of a female to consume him and make him effeminate, the link back to the maimed boys brings a new context for his charade as an Amazon. Pyrocles is linked to Hercules, who is linked to the maimed boys—and Pyrocles chooses instead to occupy the role of the abusive Amazon. In this sense, Sidney creates a cyclical pattern wherein Pyrocles creates the pain that torments him.

The Comedy behind Pyrocles/Zelmane

Margaret Sullivan comments on Pyrocles' costume, writing that "the use of this disguise in the *Old Arcadia* is primarily comic, involving the hero in various sexual contretemps with his beloved, her mother, and her father" (70). Sullivan's assertion that Pyrocles' disguise links his cross-dressed body to the comic, through mistaken identity, creates a "gap" between the character and the reader. This comedic effect is also achieved, in part, through the ornate detail Pyrocles gives to his costume, which is, according to Wright, "grossly overdone" (440). When Musidorus first stumbles upon Pyrocles/Zelmane, he describes her dress, beginning with her head and moving down:

> [H]er hair in the fairest quantity in locks, some curled and some as it were forgotten....the rest whereof was drawn into a coronet of gold richly set with

> pearl and so joined all over with gold wires and covered with feathers of divers colours that it was not unlike to an helmet, such a glittering show it bare, and so bravely it was held up on the head. (130)

This picture of Zelmane, which becomes more ornate as Sidney describes the rest of her attire, contrasts with Wright's description of the conventional costume of the Amazon. In the description of Pyrocles' ornate costume, the young man resembles a drag queen more than a transvestite. Transvestites faithfully imitate mannerisms and dress of the sex they are trying to become. They do not want their performance to be recognizable to others because they are trying to seem like a woman. Drag queens, in contrast, make their costumes extravagant and ornate. A drag queen's performance becomes a public spectacle. Pyrocles' over-done costume becomes a matter of comedy for those who recognize him as a hero who has ironically dressed himself in an absurd female costume. Sidney's use of the broach depicting Hercules spinning for Omphale lends itself to the comedic element that flows throughout this scene. Although his costume does not resemble an Amazon's, most of the characters in *Arcadia* assume that Pyrocles is a woman: Musidorus (when he first encounters Zelmane), Basilius, Cecropia, Ampialus, Pamela, and Philoclea. Apparently only Gynecia and Musidorus, not an Arcadian, can see through Zelmane's exterior and realize that she is a man. Perhaps by making his character's costume believable to the others in the work, Sidney encourages the disbelieving reader also to become convinced. Though the reader knows the truth behind Zelmane's appearance, one sometimes forgets that Zelmane's costume is not reality. Because he is able to occupy these two spaces—providing comedy for the reader while being believable to the characters—Pyrocles begins to resemble Sidney's

assertion from the *Apology for Poesy* in that he performs an "Art of Imitation." He does not, however, rejoice in his costume because he knows that it is a way to get closer to his love and a trap for his masculine spirit. When he sings in the eclogues following the first book, his voice seems to not just lament his situation in the text but also that of the Amazons as an "other" in the West: "Bound, and bound by so noble hands, as loth to be unbound,/Jailer I am to myself, prison and prisoner to mine own self" (196). Pyrocles recognizes his feminine "body" as a prison that, though it helps him to win her, keeps him from consummating his love for Philoclea. Sidney portrays Pyrocles in such a way that the readers may begin to believe that maybe he is actually a female. His song about being a prisoner, therefore, works in two ways. He only sings about unrequited love, but he laments the limitations of his female self. Sidney's *Old Arcadia* did not include this description of Pyrocles. In the later *New Arcadia*, Sidney gives the cross-dressing character a chance to connect as a woman with the intended audience of the piece, his sister Mary. Ironically, though, in this case the male character internalizes the limitations granted to the female body. He, like an Amazon, he must overcome these limitations in order to become more admirable.

Pyrocles' Amazon costume as a microcosm of the kingdom's disruption

Sidney's choice of giving Pyrocles the transgressive dress of an Amazon mirrors the disruption that is occurring in Arcadia upon Pyrocles's arrival. Kalander explains that "having made a journey to Delphos and safely returned, within a short space [King Basilius] brake up his court and retired himself, his wife and children into a certain forest hereby which he calleth his desert" (77). Basilius leaves the Arcadian court in

order to keep his daughters from getting married because he has interpreted the oracle's prediction as a warning that his future son-in-law will forcefully take over the government. When Pyrocles dresses as Zelmane and gains acceptance into Basilius's "desert" compound the young man begins to fulfill this prophecy. Pyrocles woos Philoclea and puts himself in a role that threatens Basilius's kingdom, and his unsolicited role as beloved of both Basilius and Gynecia undermines his potential marriage. Not realizing Pyrocles's ruse, Basilius lusts after Zelmane, and Gynecia, who knows Zelmane is a man, desires Pyrocles. The desire Basilius and Gynecia have for Pyrocles sets the stage for a farce involving Basilius and his wife. Because Gynecia tries to consummate her love for Pyrocles, his mere presence makes Basilius a fool in that Pyrocles threatens to cuckold the king. In turn, the older Basilius' love for younger Zelmane also makes the king a fool. When Basilius and Gynecia simultaneously pursue Pyrocles, the narrative begins to move from romance to fabliau. This situation shows that Pyrocles' feminine costume not only makes him comedic, but it makes the characters who are the highest on the hierarchy, and who should be representing the noble actions Sidney describes in *Apology for Poesy*, incite laughter, too. While the reader most certainly laughs at the images of confusion associated with the love triangles, this situation reflects the destructive nature of the Amazon. As a hero, Pyrocles should display the noble deeds meant to teach readers how to act, and, since he abandons this duty in order to cross-dress, he brings laughter not only to the text but to the ruling monarch of Arcadia. By associating laughter with these noble characters, Sidney provides another indication that the well-being of the state is in danger.

Though some Elizabethans shared Pyrocles's opinion and admired the Amazon women on the basis of courage and valor, the Amazons were also regarded with a suspicion and fear that was rooted in the belief that their power could overrule the patriarchal order that was so important during the Renaissance. Given that both the courageous and tyrannical natures of the Amazons stem from an ancient tradition well known during Sidney's time, the early modern reader would have brought this history to the story. These conflicting views move Pyrocles/Zelmane from simply the comedic to make him/her much more complicated. The image of the Amazon brings with it a complexity that would be lacking if Pyrocles had chosen a different costume.

Though in the first version of *Arcadia*, Pyrocles does represent a threat to the kingdom and is tried for rape and treason, in the second version, remains unfinished, the conclusion of the adventures of Pyrocles is never related. Though throughout most of the revision, Pyrocles is comedic, his undying love for Philoclea also makes him an admirable, delightful character. Robert F. Carver notes that Sidney's representation of Hercules' effeminacy in *The Apology* represents a "strange power in love" that "procureth delight" while "the scornfulness of actions [in his spinning] stirreth laughter" (323). In dressing as an Amazon, Pyrocles incites laughter and departs from his noble being. However, his situation and character helps him also to represent the noble duty of love.

Pyrocles' Friendship with Musidorus

The friendship between Pyrocles and Musidorus in Sidney's *New Arcadia* becomes quite different as the narrative progresses. The catalyst for the evolution of

their friendship lies in Pyrocles' gender transgression. The importance and growth of the relationship between the two main characters reflects the guidelines of classical friendship which appeared in Cicero's treatise "On Friendship." In his work, Cicero views "Friendship as the most valuable of all human possessions, no other being equally suited to the moral nature of man, or so applicable to every state and circumstance, whether of prosperity or adversity, in which he can possibly be placed" (176). Certainly, this quotation applies to the many adversities Musidorus and Pyrocles face throughout the work and must overcome while preserving their friendship. Sidney's placement of friendship at the center of the text possibly stems from the popularity of such relationships in the Renaissance. Laurie Shannon writes of the "virtual chorus of Renaissance writers who celebrated friendship in a very specific form" (1). According to Shannon, the popularity in the early modern period led to the term "'Renaissance friendship' [which] now routinely names the entire discursive phenomenon" (1). Ullrich Langer provides an overview of the application of classical friendship in Renaissance texts. These sources reveal that Pyrocles' and Musidorus' friendship is one that, even at the beginning, is far from the perfect Ciceronian ideal. What begins as a friendship threatened by Pyrocles' actions towards his friend completely ruptures when Pyrocles abandons his friend for Philoclea, an erotic interest that serves as a catalyst for his comic cross-dressing. When this rupture occurs, it becomes evident that the friendship that barely holds during the first half of Book 1 must change in order to persevere.

Pyrocles and Musidorus' imitation of classical friendship

According to Langer, Greek texts proclaim that true friendship is restricted to two people because "the exclusive nature of true friendship [stems from] the long time spent together, the required similarity between friends, [and] the fact that the friend is another self" (19). Classical friendship can only occur between two men who "are similar to each other, when they have gained knowledge of each other through a long and agreeable time spent together, [and] when they are both virtuous" (20). Cicero echoes this Aristotelian belief that there is a similarity between two friends: "Whoever is in possession of a true friend sees the exact counterpart of his own soul" (179). For Pyrocles and Musidorus, their friendship at first resembles this closeness because they have known each other since childhood, and, following the death of Musidorus' father and Pyrocles' mother, they were raised in the same household. Musidorus tells Pamela in the second book that upon his father's death he was "[left] to the faith of his [father's] friends" which includes his uncle, Pyrocles' father Euarchus (228). Later in the same episode Musidorus relates that his uncle, Euarchus the King of Macedon, sends "both for the prince his son [Pyrocles] (brought up together…with Musidorus) and for Musidorus himself" (228). From this proclamation, readers begin to see that not only have the two men been raised as brothers but that in the early stages of their friendship they act as brothers. So close is the bond between the two men that the father of one sends for both as though they are one. Though this close relationship between the two youths fulfills the classical requirement that the friend must be another self, it also makes the cracks that later occur in their relationship all the more shocking. As the text progresses the reader sees that only Musidorus seems to view his friend Pyrocles as

another self, and by Book 2, when Musidorus relates his story to Pamela, the rupture in their friendship has already occurred, and, therefore, a brotherly tie between Musidorus and Pyrocles is doubtful.

In his treatise "On Friendship," Cicero writes that "A friendship placed upon…its proper and natural basis, is not only productive of the most solid unity, but stands at the same time upon a firmer and more durable foundation than if it were raised upon a sense of human wants and weaknesses" (185). One discovers that Musidorus' relationship to his friend resembles this requirement because, throughout the hardships that arise in the opening chapters, Musidorus remains constant. Sidney introduces the two characters after a shipwreck with the image of Musidorus' lamenting what he believes to be the death of his friend: "[He] gat up, looked around about to the uttermost limits of sight, and crying upon the name of Pyrocles, seeing nor hearing cause of comfort: 'What,' said he, 'and shall Musidorus live after Pyrocles' destruction?'" (64). The thought of his friend's death overcomes Musidorus, and he recognizes that, without his friend, he cannot bear to live. Washed up on the beach, Musidorus refuses help and instead asks his helpers, Claius and Strephon, to help him recover Pyrocles' body: "I pray you find means that some barque may be provided that will go out of the haven, that if it be possible we may find the body, far, far too precious a food for fishes" (65). Again, Musidorus shows that his friendship is constant. He puts the care of Pyrocles' presumably dead body above the care of his own live one, and when he discovers that Pyrocles lives he is delighted. However, pirates kidnap Pyrocles before Musidorus can save him, and again Musidorus mourns the loss of his friend. It is Musidorus who gives the expressions of grief and the exhibitions of constancy, and it is his journey to find

Pyrocles that Sidney tells in the subsequent pages. When Pyrocles recounts his journey after the two are reunited, his adventure-seeking tone contrasts with the grief that Musidorus has felt: "There you missing me, I was taken up by pirates, who putting me under board prisoner, presently set upon another ship and maintaining a long fight, in the end put them all to the sword" (107). Pyrocles seems too involved with his adventures to consider the concern of his friend. This lack figures into the story later when, soon after the two are reunited, Pyrocles departs from Kalander's court in order to pursue Philoclea, leaving only a letter to explain his absence:

> My only friend, violence of love leads me into such a course, whereof your knowledge may much more vex you than help me. Therefore pardon my concealing it from you, since, if I wrong you, it is in the respect I bear you. Return to Thessalia, I pray you, as full of good fortune as I am of desire; and if I live, I will in a short time follow you; if I die, love my memory. (116)

The letter signifies Pyrocles' unwillingness to confess his love to his friend and seek his counsel. Instead, Pyrocles denies him and leaves with more concern for his own well erotic pursuit than the hurt his disappearance would cause. Furthermore, by choosing the love of a woman above the love of a friend, Pyrocles demonstrates that his love for Musidorus lacks a solid intellectual basis Cicero outlines. He does not consider the hurt his friend may feel at not being a part of his decision nor does he reciprocate his friend's concern. Musidorus recognizes this difference after he reads Pyrocles' letter:

> Pyrocles, what means this alteration? What have I deserved of thee to be thus banished of thy counsels? Heretofore I have accused the sea, condemned the pirates, and hated my evil fortune that deprived me of thee; but now thyself is

> the sea which drowns my comfort; thyself is the pirate that robs thyself from me; thy own will becomes my evil fortune. (117)

Musidorus' realization of his friend's disregard acts as an admission that Pyrocles is not acting as he should, and, therefore, their friendship fails to exemplify an true classical friendship.

Musidorus' homoerotic attraction towards Pyrocles

The care with which Musidorus views the rescued Pyrocles, though seemingly not returned, may suggest repressed homosexual attraction towards Pyrocles, which according to Langer, makes it impossible for the two men to have a true friendship free "from desire, concupiscence, and erotic love" (Langer 20). Erotic undertones suffuse two blazons of Pyrocles and provide additional evidence that no perfect friendship exists between the two main male characters. In the first book, Pyrocles receives a blazon, first as a young, virile man and then as Zelmane. In both accounts, Musidorus is among those gazing upon Pyrocles, and the homoerotic undertones seem unmistakable.

In the first blazon, Musidorus has engaged a group of sailors to rescue his friend's body. As the men sail close to the site of the shipwreck, the men encounter Pyrocles:

> upon the mast they saw a young man—at least if he were a man—bearing the show of about eighteen years of age, who sat as on horseback, having nothing upon him but his shirt, which being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea on which the sun (then near his western home) did shoot some of his beams. His hair (which the young men of Greece used to wear

> very long) was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty. (66)

Sidney's description of the semi-clad Pyrocles sitting upon the mast as if on horseback helps to portray the young man as a hero. By the age of eighteen, most boys begin to take on masculine characteristics, but Sidney emphasizes the youth of Pyrocles by qualifying the heroic stance of Pyrocles with statement insinuating that the young man's appearance makes it almost impossible to view him as a man. Perhaps Pyrocles' youth, combined with his beauty, make him seem effeminate, but the males who gaze upon him seem comfortable looking at him erotically because he appears almost female. In the next phrase Sidney portrays Pyrocles' almost naked body. Instead of covering Pyrocles' lower half or displaying only his upper body for the onlookers, Sidney instead uncovers Pyrocles' genitalia by noting the absence of any clothing "but his shirt."

Sidney's artful prose helps to bury Pyrocles' nakedness and youth and to entice the male observers, including Musidorus. The description continues by drawing attention to Pyrocles' hair, which he wears long. Anthony Synnott, author of "Shame and Glory: A Sociology of Hair," cites Western tradition when he aligns long hair with femininity and short hair with the masculinity. He writes that "the appeal of long hair goes far back into Western mythology, to the stories of Mary Magdalene…Milton reinforced it in *Paradise Lost* when he described Eve's hair…'as a veil down to the slender waist'" (384). Because long hair has been associated since antiquity with the feminine, early modern readers may have also read Pyrocles' long hair as feminine, contributing to his overall association with femininity prior to his cross-dressing. The

last line of the blazon solidifies the implied homosexual imagery. The men's belief that Pyrocles is a god legitimizes their attraction by substituting a desire for the divine for the corporeal. This blazon feminizes the young man, and it allows the group of men, including Musidorus, to look at Pyrocles with attraction. Though in this episode Musidorus views Pyrocles' body alongside the other men, he is later attracted to his friend, when they are alone. Sidney's setting of an isolated Musidorus allows a more complete eroticization of the relationship of two friends.

Musidorus comes upon Pyrocles dressed as an Amazon after having spent much time trying to locate him. Though he "could not perfectly see her face,...so much he might see of her that was a surety for the rest that all was excellent" (130). Musidorus' attraction towards the unknown person recalls the first blazon, with the pronoun's suggestion that Pyrocles' build resembles a woman's. At the end of the long blazon, Pyrocles moves and allows Musidorus to "see her enter into a fine close arbor" (131). The framing of Pyrocles/Zelmane with trees allows the narrative to present him in a picturesque, arboreal, Arcadian, and intimate setting. Everything associated with this description emphasizes the femininity of Pyrocles' supposedly masculine body, despite a grossly overdone costume. Erotic tones strengthen when Pyrocles walks away from Musidorus, who "move[s]...as warily as he could, to follow her; and by and by he might hear her sing this song with a voice no less beautiful to his ears than her goodliness was full of harmony to his eyes" (131). Over and over again, Sidney gives clues to the reader that Pyrocles' costume is so convincing that Musidorus' sense of sight is fooled. Pyrocles' dress not only fools his friend but also attracts him. Musidorus' attraction for the feminized Pryocles recalls the sexualized imagery

associated with Pyrocles in the first blazon. Furthermore, it shows that the friendship between the two is not free of the eroticism that Langer writes must be absent in classical friendship. At this point in the narrative, neither the reader nor Musidorus knows that the "woman" he gazed upon is Pyrocles. Although the body for whom Musidorus has an attraction is supposedly feminine, the blazon's placement in the narrative indicates Musidorus' underlying homoerotic attraction for his friend. In convincing the reader Pyrocles is actually a woman, Sidney allows his audience to experience not only the shock Musidorus feels when he realizes the truth but also the feeling of being fooled by Pyrocles' costume.

The Final Straw: Musidorus' realization of Pyrocles' costume

When Musidorus' learns the truth, the disruption of the classical friendship is complete. Thus, Pyrocles' gender transgression forces a reconstruction of their relationship. Musidorus plays the role as friend like he is supposed to while Pyrocles' cross-dressing makes falls short of friendship's requirements. Musidorus does not flatter Pyrocles. Instead he reminds Pyrocles of his duty as a noble and a man. As Pyrocles' friend, Musidorus chastises the cross-dresser directly, making Musidorus not just a friend but a voice of morality and reason. He reprimands Pyrocles for taking the dress of a woman, claiming that "it utterly subverts the course of nature in making reason give place to sense, and man to woman" (133). This admonishment echoes arguments against males who cross dressed in the early modern period. As I pointed out in the first chapter, patriarchal society depended upon the subordination of one sex. If Pyrocles could convincingly perform gender traits of the opposite sex, he threatens that order.

Not only does Musidorus believe that Pyrocles's performance subverts the natural order, but he also claims that "it is the very first down-step to all wickedness" (135). His cross dressing is not just an unacceptable act in itself, but it is the first in a long series of transgressive acts.

Musidorus' statement shows that Pyrocles' cross-dressing is not merely a comedic device. It indicates that despite the comedy Sidney associates with the dress, there is a severity consequent upon Pyrocles' choice to dress as a woman. Furthermore, it shows Pyrocles' inability to control a woman's effeminizing love, a point addressed in Musidorus' rebuke:

> [F]or as the love of heaven makes one heavenly, the love of virtue, virtuous, so doth the love of a woman doth so womanize a man that, if he yield to it, it will not only make him an Amazon but a launderer, distaff spinner or whatsoever other vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform. (134)

Though the first loves Musidorus describes reflect the "strange power of love," Pyrocles' cross-dressing displaces the man and shows a love that forces him to enact a role he is not meant to perform. Rather than just stir laughter, though, Musidorus' words seem to harbor resentment, targeting the ways acting as an Amazon would be similar to a low-born spinner and a launderer. Musidorus reconnects the Amazons to the domestic setting they had spurned. His statement also undermines the convention that Amazons are admirable and courageous because he goes on to state that, despite a few strong examples, women are mainly characterized by weakness and "idle heads." In this speech, Musidorus articulates views similar to those in the humoral sciences and

religious doctrine wherein women, as a whole, were incapable of intellectual or courageous pursuits. To convince Pyrocles that his performance as an Amazon is unacceptable, Musidorus contrasts the image of an idle, weak woman with Pyrocles' duties as a courageous, noble man. Musidorus reminds Pyrocles that he must act as a noble, masculine prince by telling him to recall "what you are, what you have been, or what you must be" (134).

Musidorus recognizes that his speech may be unwelcome, but he reminds his friend that he produces his speech out of friendly love. Musidorus believes the power of duty is so strong that Pyrocles will certainly see a friend's point of view: "I doubt not I shall quickly have occasion to praise you for having conquered [it] than to give you further counsel how to do it" (134). This confidence shows a type of *noblesse oblige* in that it reflects the unwavering belief that duty to position will overrule passion of the heart. Though as Zelmane Pyrocles is characterized by a "weak and feeble mind," if he were to remember his duty as a noble, he would cast off his offensive dress and go back to what his birth has made him. The position of Musidorus' speech at this place in the narrative is significant for two reasons. First, since the hero is supposed to act nobly and Pyrocles does not, Musidorus reminds him and the reader what duty should entail: dress and actions worthy of one's position in society. Second, the speech illuminates the nature of friendship between the two men. Musidorus acts as Pyrocles's moral compass, chastising him for his actions but showing confidence in his belief that Pyrocles will make the right decision.

However, Pyrocles' response to Musidorus' argument shows that a man does not cast off the effects of love as fast as a friend might wish. In his response to Musidorus,

Pyrocles refuses to comply with his friend's demands to give up the guise of a female, and his refusal is not only in accordance with his actions in the narrative thus far. His words reveal a rift between the friends that the author can no longer hedge. Pyrocles counters Musidorus' view with a defense of women. He first argues that it was a woman who gave him life and to whom he is in debt: "I am not yet come to that degree of wisdom to think light of the sex of whom I have my life, since if I be anything I was, to come to it, born of a woman and nursed of a woman" (134). In my first chapter, I cited Elizabeth Spelman's use of Plato's mind/body distinction which aligns women with the body. Because Pyrocles' defense of women begins with his praise of the female's ability to harbour and produce life, it would seem that he associates the female with the body. In his next point, however, Pyrocles recognizes a female ability to reason when he argues that women are "framed of nature with the same parts of mind for the exercise of virtue as we are" (135). The placement of Pyrocles' praise of the female's physical and then intellectual abilities, indicates what he believes the most important function of the woman. While his first argument is an ability that is exclusive to the feminine, the second argument he poses equalizes the masculine and feminine. He combats Musidorus' accusation by bridging the gap between mind and body, female and male. In a sense, his argument making the sexes equal blends the two and creates a humanity that is neither male *nor* female but both. This blurring of the sexes in Pyrocles' argument resembles his own cross-dressed body. His denial of Musidorus' speech, however, leaves a rift that cannot be easily bridged.

If classical friendship is, as Cicero writes, between men who are the counterparts of each other's souls, then after this argument the friendship between Pyrocles and

Musidorus can no longer exist as a supposed classical friendship. After Pyrocles speaks, Musidorus instantly takes a role of caretaker to his friend: "how sharp-witted you are to hurt yourself!"(136). Pyrocles counters with further accusations: "no…but it is the hurt you speak of which makes me so sharp witted" (136). They continue with this exchange which places Musidorus as the parental figure to Pyrocles' childlike stubbornness. Finally, Musidorus, who feels he has fulfilled his duty as a friend, advises Pyrocles to purge himself "of this vile infection. Otherwise give me leave to leave off this name of friendship as an idle title of a thing which cannot be where virtue is abolished" (138). Musidorus' denial of his friend contrasts sharply with the image of mourning the loss of his friend on the beach. The "classical friendship" the two had seemed to enjoy no longer exists. Yet Pyrocles' response, that Musidorus' speech is a betrayal because the cross-dresser is suffering from the "infection" of love, offers Musidorus the chance to resurrect the friendship as something different. After hearing his friend's plea for help, Musidorus recognizes that Pyrocles is imperfect, but he chooses to remain friends: "But since you are unperfect …it is reason you be governed by us wise and perfect men" (139). The role he takes, however, is more that of a kindly advisor than a friend because he recognizes that Pyrocles' choice to remain cross-dressed makes him an imperfect friend as well as an imperfect man. Despite this recognition, Musidorus delivers these words with a smile, which not only reestablishes the friendship but also contributes to the comedic element surrounding Pyrocles' dress.

Cicero recognizes that a rift may occur between friends. He writes that friendships may face hardships due to of competition:

> Should a particular affection contracted in this tender age happen to continue to riper years, it is nothing unusual to see it afterwards interrupted, either by rivalship in a matrimonial pursuit, or some other object of youthful competition, in which both cannot succeed. (185)

Cracks in their friendship begin with Pyrocles' dismissal of his friendship with Musidorus, and they culminate in his taking an Amazon costume in order to pursue his love. In a traditional romance love triangle, two men desire a relationship with the same woman, but Musidorus' and Pyrocles' love triangle departs from this pattern. Pyrocles' love for Philoclea threatens his relationship with Musidorus not because they both love the same woman but because Musidorus loves Pyrocles. The competition is no longer between two men for the same woman but between Musidorus and Philoclea for Pyrocles' attention. At the end of his speech, Musidorus voices his frustration with his friend and states his inability to reconcile the friendship if Pyrocles refuses to adhere to his wishes: "For true amity being founded on an opinion of virtue in the object of our affection, it is scarcely possible that those sentiments should remain, after an avowed and open violation of the principles which originally produced them" (187). Musidorus's statement recognizes that Pyrocles' cross-dressing goes against the order of society and violates the original context of their friendship. The "principle" under which the friendship was originally produced was that Pyrocles was a man. Before Pyrocles' gender transgression, their relationship resembled a classical friendship in which Musidorus' homoerotic desire, though existent, remained an underlying factor in the narrative. After Pyrocles' transgression, however, Musidorus' attraction to Pyrocles complicates the friendship, and his erotic attraction towards the feminized body of

Pyrocles, for whom his feelings of friendship should be nonsexual, creates another lover's triangle.

The deterioration of Pyrocles' image as hero

Pyrocles's cross-dressing not only threatens his masculine friendship with Musidorus, but it jeopardizes his status as hero in that he abandons the male body for that of an Amazon. Before he cross-dresses, Pyrocles is a military officer who leads a group of men, the Helots, into battle. When fighting the Arcadians, the Helots begin to lose ground until they regain strength from their inspiring leader: "the Helots, which were otherwise scattered, bent thitherward with a new life of resolution, as if their captain had been a root out of which as into branches their courage had sprung" (97). Pyrocles acts as the model for the others males' courageous acts, and his occupation of this role demonstrates Pyrocles' preeminent masculinity. Pyrocles' courage supplements the image of him as a leader and hero. His courage is demonstrated through his military action, showing that in his military pursuits Pyrocles occupies the active male body. After Pyrocles realizes that the leader of the opposing troops is Musidorus, he uses the rhetoric and reasoning of humanist-trained nobleman to convince the Helots to give up their battle. "[A]s much moved by his authority as persuaded by his reasons," the Helots comply with his request and end their battle with the Arcadians. Pyrocles' speech shows not just his masculine ability to reason but also his skill in using rhetoric and his authority as a nobleman to convince a group of men to stop the battle that previously they had fought with "cruel obstinacy" (97). After he cross-dresses, Pyrocles retains some semblance of the heroic when he defends Philoclea

from the lion and from Amphialus' gaze. He limits his heroism, however, to deeds that benefit or defend Philoclea. He moves from being a leader of men to a lover who allows Philoclea to lead his heroic actions.

This shift signals another manifestation of his effeminacy. As a man in love and as Zelmane, Pyrocles must focus his efforts on his beloved. Pyrocles' cross-dressing forces him to occupy femininized body that at times requires him to play a passive role, and nowhere in the text is this passivity more apparent than in book three when Cecropia takes him prisoner, along with Pamela and Philoclea. Overpowered and imprisoned by Cecropia's henchmen, Zelmane can do nothing to save his beloved and her sister, and he remains passive during their imprisonment. The erotic love Pyrocles has for Philoclea influenced his decision to cross-dress, which in turn impacts his heroic role. This same passivity is apparent in a scene which features Pyrocles' mourning what he thinks is the death of Philoclea. In the beginning of the scene, Pyrocles, "carried with the madness of anguish," attempts suicide (564). When his attempt fails, Pyrocles' "reason and manhood" help him to see that his actions would be better suited to "destroy man, woman, and child that were in any way kin to them that were accessory to cruelty" (564). Pyrocles' realization momentarily restores his active masculine agency, and he states that he wants not just to kill the men and women directly related to the murder but even the children of those directly involved. Though Pyrocles' violent desires align him with the masculine, his determination to destroy innocent people shows that he is not heroic. In contrast to this desire to act cruelly, Pyrocles remains inactive. Though he is determined "to seek all means how to get out of prison," his resolve breaks at the thought of no longer seeing the face of his beloved:

"sorrow having dispersed itself from his heart into all his noble parts, it proclaimed his authority in cries and tears, and now with more gentle dolefulness could pour out his inward evil" (564). The grief and sorrow he demonstrates in the passages that follow reveal the deep love he feels for her: "Sweet Philoclea, thou art gone, and hast carried with thee my love; and hast left thy love in me, and I, wretched man, do live, to die continually, till thy revenge do give me leave to die" (565). Pyrocles' tearful confession of love for Philoclea in the same scene as his violent determination to avenge her death signals a conflict within his cross-dressed body. His movement from masculine desire for action to feminine emotions signals a wavering between the gender he is performing and the gender assigned to his physical body. His grief for Philoclea also resembles Musidorus' expression of sorrow at Pyrocles' apparent death. As Mark Rose states, this picture of Pyrocles exemplifies unacceptable, unheroic behavior (354). However, I believe that his costume has allowed him to grow as a character. When Pyrocles is in the prison confessing his grief for what he thinks is Philoclea's death, he shows an empathy that is absent in his friendship with Musidorus. The reader sees a depth of character that was missing in the Pyrocles before his cross-dressing, and by becoming more feminine, Pyrocles is able to experience this growth. The reader cannot, however, see Pyrocles' transition as an example of simply a growth of character or as a warning against cross dressing.

Pyrocles' role in the text

At the point in the narrative where Pyrocles is mourning Philoclea's supposed death, he is no longer comic. His devotion to Philoclea, evident in the suffering he

experiences, allows both the contemporary and modern reader see Pyrocles as potentially tragic and admirable. This change signals Pyrocles' giving up of the comedic elements in favor of nobler traits, such as demonstrating his love for Philoclea. After the mourning scene in Book 3, Sidney revisits the image of Pyrocles' feminine body as a prison, first evoked when Musidorus discovers him in disguise. Close to the end of the fragmentary Book 3, Pyrocles and the Arcadian princesses have been captured by Anaxius and his brother Zoilus. Rather than take action against their captors, Pryocles first hopes "that Musidorus [will] find some means to deliver them" (589). Soon, however, Pyrocles demonstrates his military prowess by killing Zoilus. Anaxius subsequently challenges Zelmane to a fight, and, seeing that she will win, he asks her to "return so now to your own sex for mercy" (591). After his plea, Zelmane becomes conflicted: "[She] repressed a while her great heart, either disdaining to be cruel, or pitiful and therefore not cruel: and now the image of the human condition began to be an orator unto her of compassion" (592). Here the reader sees the image of Pyrocles' somewhat masculine spirit fighting against his feminine body. In the first book, Pyrocles fights and kills enemies without a second thought; here he pauses in his battle and considers the man against whom he is fighting. In this scene, Pyrocles embodies characteristics of both the masculine and the feminine. He represents both the caring feminine and the fighting masculine, but the conflict that arises from this situation signals that he cannot always be both. Sidney applies this conflict of masculine and feminine to the battle between Anaxius and Pyrocles: "There was strength against nimbleness; rage against resolution; fury against virtue; confidence against courage; pride against love" (593). Sidney creates the image of two "men" fighting as "two

contrary tides" (594). Also, during the battle, the names "Pyrocles" and "Zelmane" are used interchangeably to describe Pyrocles, blurring Pyrocles' gender. The revised version cuts off in the middle of the battle, leaving the image of the two fighting men and the fight between masculine and feminine unresolved.

One question we need to ask ourselves is to what extent Pyrocles, under the female costume, is masculine. His battle against Anaxius is a manifestation of the battle between feminine and masculine that plays out within Pyrocles' spiritual self. The fact that this conflict remains unresolved adds complexity to his character. We will never know if Sidney meant for him to act as a warning, and example, or both. I believe, though, that Sidney meant for Pyrocles' situation to remain ambiguous. The conflict Pyrocles goes through in his last scene is supposed to be the way the reader sees his gender transgression—as a battle between masculine and feminine traits that lacks resolution. Regardless of what Sidney meant for his character—whether meant as a caution or an admirable hero or both—Pyrocles achieves an amount of complexity and growth in his movement toward the feminine that the females of the text are for the most part denied even when they assume some manly traits. By taking a feminine costume, Pyrocles moves away from the "ideal" manliness that he had previously occupied, and his foray into the feminine demonstrates a selfless love for another person.

CHAPTER IV

"HIGH PERECTIONS OF NATURE": PARTHENIA'S, PHILOCLEA'S, AND PAMELA'S GENDERTRANSGRESSIONS

In "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," Louis Montrose explores the demonstration of gender and power in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream,* a work comprised of "symbolic forms shaped by other Elizabethan lunatics, lovers, and poets" (61). The "shaping fantasies" he writes of in his article refers to the "dialectical character of cultural representations... within a specifically Elizabethan context of cultural production: the interplay between representations of gender and power in a stratified society in which authority everywhere is invested in men—everywhere, that is, except at the top" (61). Montrose views the characters of *Midsummer Night's Dream* as representing the complicated gender hierarchy of early modern England. Montrose's thesis describes also the conflict Pyrocles experiences at the end of the revised *Arcadia.* We have seen that Sidney portrays Pyrocles as a supposedly masculine spirit "imprisoned" by the female body he has chosen to adopt. As Pyrocles' mind combines the feminine inclination towards mercy and emotion and the masculine tendency to exhibit violence, he becomes a manifestation of the conflict Elizabeth's rule brought to the patriarchal order. Though Pyrocles represents the most transgressive character in the *New Arcadia,* Parthenia and the Arcadian princesses also depart from the conventional gender categories. In the

earlier version the female characters remain undeveloped and one-dimensional. In the revised *Arcadia*, the female characters exhibit a power that deepens the gender conflict within his story. The power of the princesses already threatens to undermine the expectations society has for them, illustrating the conflict that comes with the female "representation of gender and power." King Basilius' daughters, Pamela and Philoclea, and the royal advisor Kalendar's niece, Parthenia, are all female characters in whom gender slippage occurs as a result of intelligence or transgressive actions. Although the mere existence of the masculine traits they exhibit may be perceived as threatening, their gender transgression finally does not undermine the patriarchal order. Unlike the comedic elements that accompanied Pyrocles' cross-dressing, these women's gender bending results in the tragic. While Pyrocles, the male cross-dresser, grows beyond the comedic image Sidney attributes to his costume, the females who attempt to obtain more power by exhibiting masculine behavior either do so under adverse conditions, such as imprisonment, or are punished severely by Sidney's narrative.

Pamela and Philoclea

Basilius' daughters in the *New Arcadia* reveal the complex roles of the royal female in early modern England because they constantly move from being objects of other character's desires or the images of the perfect early modern woman to characters who are independent of the projected images others give them. When the reader first encounters a representation of the sisters in a painting in Kalander's estate, they are projections not only of the artist of the painting (in which only Philoclea, Basilius, and Gynecia are included) but also of Kalander's description and the viewer's perception.

Later in Book 1, when they move from the portrait's image to represented characters, they first seem to exist as objects of desire and love for Pyrocles and Musidorus. Soon, however, the women begin to take shape as characters in their own right, as demonstrated chiefly by their intelligent resistance to Cecropia. As they grow as characters, their imprisonment in their aunt's, Cecropia's, castle interrupts their progress. Their imprisonment, spurred by Cecropia's wish to marry one of them to her son Amphialus, again reduces them to objects of another's desire. While imprisoned, however, they demonstrate a depth of character that the other characters, both male and female, in Sidney's work lack. Unlike Pyrocles, whose growth comes when he suffers passively what he perceives to be the loss of another, the sisters actively protect their chastity, their sanity, and their lives. Though their growth peaks during their imprisonment, they seem to regress to their secondary status after they escape from the prison.

When the *New Arcadia* ends abruptly, the expanded roles of the female characters also end. In Books 4 and 5 of the *Old Arcadia*, Pamela and Philoclea are thrust into supporting roles, mere projections of the males they encounter. In that earlier version their roles are unlike Pyrocles', whose growth we see from the beginning of the revised version to its fragmented "end." In the revision, Pamela's and Philoclea's departure from "acceptable" female roles contributes to their imprisonment. Kalandar's description of the two women reveals that Pamela's majesty distinguishes her from the conventional female role, while Philoclea's seemingly homoerotic desire for Zelmane in Book 2 shows her growth from the submissive girl Kalandar had described to an independent woman willing to forge her own path in love. Following the work of Gayle Rubin, I will show how the removal of the influence of their father, Basilius, from their marriage

compromises their roles as submissive women. Additionally, their growth in Cecropia's prison reveals how their passivity helps them sustain the torture they experience, allowing them to exhibit growth as characters, but growth that is less central to the narrative and less complete than Pyrocles'.

Kalander's description of the sisters

The sisters enter the narrative through Kalander's description of their beauty, when he contrasts Pamela's "majesty" to Philoclea's "sweetness." Kalander's language reveals his fear of Pamela's virile nature and his admiration of Philoclea's passive character:

> The elder is named Pamela, by many men not deemed inferior to her sister. For my part, when I marked them both, methought there was (if at least such perfections may receive the word of more) more sweetness in Philoclea but more majesty in Pamela: methought love played in Philoclea's eyes and threatened in Pamela's; methought Philoclea's beauty only persuaded, but so persuaded as all hearts must yield; Pamela's beauty used violence, and such violence as no heart could resist. (76)

The language he uses in association with Philoclea and love—that it "played" in her eyes—creates the image of her as a child, playing along side Eros—one who is easily controlled and subdued. In contrast, Pamela's love "threatens." The violence Kalander uses to describe Pamela's love indicates it is more forceful than that of her sister. This violence carries to a description of Pamela's physical body. Kalander says that Pamela's beauty "used violence" in rendering the hearts of those who encountered her incapable of

resistance. He personifies her beauty as a being, using violence as a means to conquer hearts. Unlike Pamela's beauty, Philoclea's "only persuaded." The "only" Kalander uses with Philoclea contrasts with the "used" he employed in his description of Pamela. He seems to downplay the active nature of Philoclea's beauty by contrasting the rhetorical connotation of "persuasion" with the active connotation of "violence." Additionally, Kalander's reference to persuasion connects the younger sister's beauty to the verbal rather than the physical. The main goal of rhetoric is persuasion, and Kalander associates persuasion with the young girl. Later in the text, as I will show, Pamela demonstrates her skill as a rhetorician, and Philoclea's association with rhetoric at this point in the text may seem out of place. However, Kalander ties his rhetorical allusion to Philoclea's physical body, and Pamela's skill as a rhetorician lies in her mental abilities. The mind/body distinction figures into this description. Philoclea's persuasion is in her body, making her more feminine, and Pamela's is in her mind, making her more masculine. Though both sisters' beauty overwhelms the hearts of those who gaze upon them, Pamela's more active, violent beauty seems more of a threat.

As Kalander's description continues, he departs from the princesses' physical bodies and relates to Musidorus how Pamela and Philoclea's intellectual talents reiterate the differences in their temperaments:

> And it seems that such proportion is between their minds: Philoclea so bashful, as though her excellencies had stolen into her before she was aware; so humble, that she will put all pride out of countenance; in sum, such proceeding as will stir hope but teach hope good manners. Pamela of high thoughts, who avoids not pride

> with not knowing her excellencies, but by making that one of her excellencies to be void of pride. (76)

He again attributes passive tendencies to the younger sister by using clearly defined terms for her and ambiguous language for her sister. Philoclea's intelligence is "bashful" and "humble," and his description would lead the reader to believe that she does not exhibit pride although her excellencies are clear to those who meet her. Kalander's account of Pamela's "high thoughts" remains purposefully vague and morally ambiguous. Though his statement about Pamela is positive, his ambiguous language buries the praise in complicated rhetoric. The difference in language creates a tie to the difference in their girls themselves. His language emphasizes Philoclea's more passive love, beauty, and excellencies make her easier to define. In contrast, Pamela's active, virile traits make her a more complex and more masculinized character at this point in the narrative.

Pamela's virile nature is apparent from the very beginning of Kalander's description. The violent images he connects with her physical body indicate that, rather than allow the patriarchal society to control her, she controls her position in the patriarchal society. Philoclea's passive attributes make her easier to control and define. However, Philoclea does not remain in this easily categorized role. Zelmane's introduction into their isolated camp forces Philoclea to deny her submissiveness and to claim control over her own body.

Philoclea's Homoerotic desire

In commenting on Cleophila's (Zelmane's) Sapphics in the first eclogues of the *Old Arcadia* and Philoclea's response, Julie Crawford writes that "the Sapphics invoke

female homoeroticism in the story line of *Arcadia*" not only opening the door for the later female homosexuality but attempts to create a bond between the female readers and the text (979). Sidney reproduces the eclogues to which Crawford refers word-for-word in the later version of his work, suggesting he found the homoerotic relationship between Philoclea and Zelmane important. Philoclea's response to Zelmane's Sapphics changes her from the obedient, young girl Kalander describes and makes her an independent woman who, rather than fall in love with a man and procreate, chooses to persist in a homoerotic relationship with Zelmane.

Philoclea's acceptance of her homoerotic desires begins in Book 2, when she imitates her beloved's physical movements:

> Then followed that most natural effect of conforming herself to that which she did like, and not only wishing to be herself such another in all things, but to ground an imitation upon so much an esteemed authority; so that the next degree was to mark all Zelmane's doings, speeches, and fashions, and to take them into herself as a pattern of worthy proceeding. (238)

Philoclea's imitation of the Amazon Zelmane is important because it indicates that she has unconsciously accepted the homosexual attraction she feels before admitting it to herself. Philoclea's desire to imitate moves her to observe closely her beloved's body and to internalize that observation as a prelude to joining her body with Zelmane's and as a substitute for the desire she feels. As Philoclea begins to recognize and admit to herself that her actions are not just "the badge but the service, not only the sign but the passion signified," she wishes to strengthen her tie to Zelmane (239). She thinks up a variety of scenarios in order to become closer to her beloved, including the wish that both women

could be Diana's nymphs, a fantasy she rules out because other nymphs "would have their part in Zelmane." She imagines that they could be sisters, another scenario she finds unacceptable because "if [Zelmane] happened to be married she would be robbed of her" (239). Philoclea's daydreaming culminates in her wish to make one of them male so that love would adhere to the natural order: "Then grown bolder, she would wish either herself or Zelmane a man, that there might succeed a blessed marriage betwixt them" (239). Philoclea's wish that *either* she *or* Zelmane could be turned into a man indicates that she is not so tied to her female nature as Kalander had led the reader and Musidorus to believe. Her willingness to cast off her feminine body for love recalls Pyrocles' choice to take on a feminine disguise in order to get closer to Philoclea.

Sidney dedicates a lengthy passage in his *New Arcadia* to the pain Philoclea feels because of her desire for Zelmane, a pain that stems from her realization that a sexual relationship with another woman is forbidden in her society, and, in the end, Philoclea submits to her love for Zelmane: "Away then all vain examinations of why and how. Thou lovest me, excellent Zelmane, and I love thee" (244). By giving up the social constraints that prevent her homosexual love for Zelmane, Philoclea is no longer the submissive daughter whose beauty "persuades" men to love. Instead, she actively pursues and accepts love, a conventionally masculine activity.

"The Traffic in Women": Pamela and Philoclea's Control over Marriage

In her essay, Gayle Rubin cites Claude Levi-Strauss' *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* as discussing the importance of the "gift exchange" between tribes in a "primitive" social structure: "gift giving confers upon its participants a special

relationship of trust, solidarity, and mutual aid" (172). She writes that Levi-Strauss "adds to the theory of primitive reciprocity the idea that marriages are a most basic form of gift exchange, in which women are the most precious gifts" (173). Such giving of women as gifts creates a deeper bond between the tribes because they produce a connection of kinship between the two groups (173). In patriarchal society, such marriages are controlled by the woman's closest male relative. The removal of the male from this equation, depending upon the context and society, would create a rift in the order of exchange on which the system is based.

The conflict that occurs when a woman is free to choose her own marriage partner becomes manifest in Elizabeth's own court. The debates concerning Elizabeth's marriage and choice of husband emphasize their importance to the courtiers under her rule. Among those affected by her marriage was Philip Sidney, whose conflict with the Duke of Oxford over the queen's marriage to the Catholic, French Alençon led to his temporary banishment from Elizabeth's court.

In the *New Arcadia*, Sidney includes two sisters who, like Elizabeth, exercise control in choosing their marriage partners. Because Basilius has removed his daughters from the court to keep them from matches that apparently endanger his rule, he abandons the power he has over the exchange of his daughters in the marriage contract. What the reader sees, then, in Pamela's and Philoclea's pursuit of Musidorus and Pyrocles, is women's effort to control marriages, a control that usurps masculine authority but results in their imprisonment and torture because they refuse to yield their loves to marry Cecropia's son, Amphialus. Because their father's faulty judgment removes any hope they have of obtaining his approval for marriage partners, they have no choice but to

pursue marriage contracts on their own. In pursuing these relationships the princesses ironically exercise masculine power in seeking to fulfill one of the most important duties they have as women in a Protestant society, marriage and procreation. Pamela's and Philoclea's positions as princesses in Arcadian society make their choice of suitor as important to the narrative as Elizabeth's was to early modern England. Without their marriages, the crown would pass to Cecropia's line. Thus, in controlling the marital exchange, the sisters take control of the future of their kingdom. Yet their choice of lovers, Musidorus and Pyrocles, and their refusal to accept Amphialus cause the unpleasant experiences they endure in Cecropia's prison.

Their Imprisonment

Though imprisonment is a trial the sisters must endure, it provides a backdrop for the chief demonstration of their knowledge and masculine power. According to Starke, their noble actions while in the prison are meant to redeem them from the situation that placed them there. Their imprisonment, Starke claims, "originate[s] in Cecropia's hatred....[but] is partially the result of their own poor judgment" (191). Cecropia sends a group of six women to lead the princesses and their companions, Miso and Zelmane, to non-existent games in the forest. The princesses allow themselves to be taken in by the ruse because "they believe unquestionably in the appearance of beauty" (191). The maidens Cecropia sends to lure the sisters into the woods are images of sexuality and baseness:

> [They wear] scarlet petticoats which were tucked up almost to their knees....their legs naked, saving that above the ankles they had little black silk laces upon

> which did hand a few silver bells…their breasts liberal to the eye; the face foremost of them in excellency fair and of the rest lovely, if not beautiful; and beautiful might have been if they had not suffered greedy Phoebus over often and hard to kiss them. (441)

As Starke notes, the maidens' scarlet petticoats, bare legs and breasts, and their tanned skin make it evident that these women are unsavory characters. Starke writes that the females' "excessively tanned skins, a sign of low birth, are also metaphorically suggestive of sexual looseness" (192). The sisters initially refuse to join the women for fear that to do so would make Basilius angry. However, they allow Miso "one whom nature placed below them" to guide them into the forest, thus causing their imprisonment (192). Although Starke concentrates on the sister's misjudgment in allowing Miso to guide them, she also shows how the sensual nature of their situation, both with the attractive females and the pastoral setting, "cloud[s] their reason" (191). For this moment they are acting in an area that eludes definition. After dismissing their initial concern for Basilius' anger, the sisters take control of their situation and act independently of their family's patriarch. However, they allow Miso to guide them instead, making them subordinate to their servant. This episode is an interesting transition from the independent roles the sisters gain before their capture to the moments of brilliance they demonstrate while in prison. At the moment of their capture, the princesses are suspended between the noble and the shameful, active and submissive, both independent and dependent.

In Pamela's and Philoclea's choice to follow Miso and the maidens into the forest, they act as a unit rather than two women with distinct personalities. However, upon entering Cecropia's prison, their personalities reemerge within the context of their

arguments against Cecropia. The distinction between the sisters' arguments becomes apparent in Cecropia's observation of Pamela and Philoclea upon entering each sister's chamber. She first sees Philoclea sitting upon a cushion, crying over her imprisonment. In contrast, she finds Pamela calmly embroidering a purse with "certain roses and lilies, as by the fineness of the work one might see she had borrowed her wits of the sorrow that then owed them, and lent them wholly to that exercise" (*Countess* 483). Cecropia's initial observation leads her to frame her argument accordingly. The older woman first approaches Philoclea, her son's beloved. Recognizing the young girl's "association with emotion rather than intellect," Cecropia begins her argument by targeting Philoclea's fear and trying to convince her the imprisonment is for protection (Starke 193). She claims that in fear, Philoclea "misconstrues everything that only for your sake is attempted. You think you are offended, and are, indeed defended: you esteem yourself a prisoner and are, in truth a mistress: you fear hate, and shall find love" (*Countess* 458). Cecropia creates binary categories that contrast Philoclea's fearful perception and present situation with the happy reality that could exist if Philoclea agrees to marry Amphialus. Cecropia also creates an image of Amphialus as "some heavenly spirit…appear[ing] unto you and bid[ding] you follow him" (459). By creating these images of peace and happiness, Cecropia hopes to convince the emotional, fearful Philoclea to agree to the marriage.

Her argument, however, fails to convince the young princess, who claims "'I would I could be so much a mistress of my own mind as to yield….[B]ut my heart is already set' (and staying a while on that word, she brought forth afterwards) 'to lead a virgin's life unto my death'" (460). Philoclea's language acts as an indication of her more humble nature. Instead of claiming mastery, she declines any responsibility for her

decision. Furthermore, the narrator's interjection indicates Philoclea's conflicted conscience, emphasizing the pause between her refusal of Amphialus and her near confession of her love for Pyrocles. Her near confession places Philoclea in the area between the inactive girl introduced in Kalander's description and the independent woman who accepted Zelmane's love.

Seeing that her ethos-based argument is unsuccessful, Cecropia appeals to Philoclea's sense of duty. She claims that living a life of chastity goes against nature's plan: "Nature, when you were first born, vowed you a woman, and as she made you child of a mother, so to do your best to be mother of a child" (460). Cecropia's second argument echoes patriarchal scientific and religious literature in its claim that gender roles are powerful enough to supersede the wishes of the person. According to Cecropia, Philoclea's wish to lead a life of celibacy upsets the order of nature because the young girl would not be fulfilling her role in society, to be a mother. In her response to this argument, Philoclea becomes more assertive, stating that she believes marriage to be a "burdensome yoke" (460). Again, Cecropia echoes a patriarchal sentiment: "For believe me niece, believe me, man's experience is woman's best eyesight" (461). She goes on to profess that her happiest moments occured when she saw her "joy shine in another's eyes" (461). Cecropia continually emphasizes the female's duty to make her husband happy and to procreate. However, Philoclea resists this duty by allowing a daydream about Zelmane to take her from the present situation. Philoclea's defense throughout, though not weak, reflects her passivity in its lack of force. We see Philoclea as successful, but her budding independence does not flower until her scene with Pyrocles.

The humble nature Philoclea demonstrates in her argument contrasts with the assertive, forceful defense of Pamela, who exercises a "stability of persona" (Starke 183). Without the "high thoughts" that had threatened Kalander could not posses one of the greatest minds in the revised work. Pamela's intelligence and her powers of logic and rhetoric, as Starke points out in her essay, are typically gendered masculine and allow her to protect her feminine virtues from Cecropia (Starke 183). Pamela masculine rhetoric distances her from the submissiveness of her sister, and allows her to become a woman who dons masculine education as a way to exhibit her growth as a character.

Pamela frames her speech in response to each of Cecropia's points, demonstrating not only her intellectual capabilities but also her rhetorical skill. Starke writes of other early modern examples of female literary figures who were, as Pamela, skilled in rhetoric: "Rosalind, Milton's masquing Lady, Marvell's Maria Fairfax" (186). Skilled rhetoricians, these females displayed a talent that was both a credit and threat to their sex: "The romance virgin's....capacity for artful speaking, perhaps imaginable only in the context of increased humanistic education for well-born girls in the sixteenth century, is shown both to protect and endanger her virtue" (Starke 186). Starke recognizes that aristocratic women used rhetoric to protect themselves from "disgrace and loss of virtue" (186). The rhetorically skilled, courtly maiden who controlled her speech and used it to protect her chastity contrasted with the "loose-mouthed woman" whose "speech is like Penelope's web in its failure to achieve linear coherence or closure" (187). During Pamela's debate with Cecropia, the reader sees a skilled rhetorician and a "loosed-mouthed woman." Though both women are noble, Cecropia's goal, to marry her son to one of the heirs of the kingdom, makes her a "loosed-mouth woman." In the beginning,

Cecropia's argument is a fitting match for Pamela. She creates a "linear coherence" in the presentation of her points and her refutation of Pamela's statement. However, her argument lacks closure because Pamela interrupts her speech with a passionate, forceful rebuttal of Cecropia's denial of God. In this case, Cecropia attempted to convince Pamela that a life independent of duty to family and God is preferable to "lov[ing] virtue servilely" (*Countess* 487). This argument creates a new complexity because in defending herself, Pamela must now claim the allegiance and submission to a male deity and to her father.

Pamela refuses Cecropia's offer of Amphialus, indicating that she must follow her parents' decision: "he must get my parents' consent, and then he shall know further of my mind: for, without that I know I should offend God" (486). Cecropia counters with the assertion that Pamela's beauty and youth should free her from her duty to her parents: "Let not some of them for whom already the grave gapeth, and perhaps envy the felicity in you which themselves cannot enjoy, persuade you to lose the hold of occasion while it may not only be taken but offers" (487). Cecropia's argument calls for Pamela's independence from Basilius, but the princess demonstrates her virility instead by framing a successful argument against her aunt. Paradoxically, this argument's foundation is in Pamela's assertion to remain subordinate to her parents.

Pamela also refutes Cecropia's argument on a spiritual basis. Cecropia denies the importance of a supernatural deity:

> Be wise, and that wisdom shall be a God unto thee. Be contented, and that is thy heaven: for else to think that those powers (if there be any such) above are moved by the eloquence of our prayers or in a chafe at the folly of our actions carries as

> much reason, as if flies should think that men take great care which of them hums sweetest, and which of them flies nimblest. (488)

Until this point in the argument, Pamela had remained calm. Now, however, her "cheeks were dyed in the beautifullest grain of virtuous anger, with eyes which glistered forth beams of disdain, thus interrupted her" (488). In her subsequent speech, Pamela judges her aunt as a "wicked woman" and her arguments foolish (488). Her language here continues its logical trajectory in questioning her aunt's authority. By judging Cecropia, Pamela contrasts her aunt's undesirable traits with her own goodness and then constructs a complicated theological argument using logic and rhetorical skill. She is able to counter Cecropia's assertion that there is no constant God, and in doing so, she places herself above the other woman intellectually. At the end of the argument, Sidney contrasts Pamela's "majesty of unconquered virtue" with the image of Cecropia "like a bat," shying away from the brightness of Pamela's purity (494). In her strongest moment, Pamela seems to subordinate herself to her parents and to God. However, the reality of her situation, in that she does not appeal to her father's judgment in loving Musidorus, and her masculine reasoning and rhetorical skill demonstrate that she has mastery over her own devices.

Philoclea's growth

While Pamela's argument fully demonstrates her strength and virility, Philoclea's peak of growth occurs later in Book 3 when she counsels an unwitting Pyrocles while he mourns her supposed death. With Philoclea hidden by the shadows, Pyrocles converses with her, mistaking her for a servant. When he mourns her death, she counters with an

argument that shows that, after her staged death, Philoclea is more aligned with the spiritual thoughts. She says that such a death would be noble in that it would preserve the virtue of the one who died: "you cannot [bemoan] her, who hath in one act both preserved her honour and left the miseries of the world" (567). Philoclea connects the virtue of her body with that of her spirit. Without a pure body, her spirit cannot remain virtuous. This is a sentiment she echoes in her other points that life is fleeting for everyone, including her: "you would think yourself greatly privileged person if, since the strongest building and lastingest monarchies are subject to end, only your Philoclea (because she is yours) should be exempted" (567). The evidence Sidney gives of Philoclea's growth is in her reasoning, which she delivers calmly. She frames a successful, virile rhetorical argument in contrast to Pyrocles' feminized chaotic, emotional grief. The contrast of the two characters emphasizes Philoclea's independence and control.

Though both Philoclea and Pamela are undoubtedly complex characters, their growth follows a more traditional pattern than that of Pyrocles. They begin as images in Kalander's description and steadily gain independence until their growth peaks in Cecropia's prison. After their demonstrations of reason and rhetoric, however, they seem to recede back to being the objects of desire for the males around them, and the *New Arcadia* ends with the female's dependence upon Zelmane/Pyrocles for protection.

Parthenia and Argalus: An Expanded Love Story

Parthenia's relationship with Argalus is often read as a positive example of love, but her experiences serve to caution women against daring to act outside of approved

gender categories. Although Parthenia and Argalus's love withstands various difficult situations, the trials Parthenia must suffer coincide with her attempts to take power from those who try to run her life. As Parthenia attempts to step out of the approved "submissive" gender role, Sidney punishes her actions through their consequences in the narrative. Parthenia first transgresses against her mother and Demagoras, a transgression that shows Parthenia first as an obedient daughter and then an independent woman. Next Parthenia appears as Argalus's wife, apparently she moves along the same trajectory from submissive to independent. In her most gender transgressive act she takes the disguise of a knight in order to avenge Argalus's death. Parthenia's love for Argalus is noble, and as a result, it delights the reader, but her gender blurring results in her being the victim of Sidney's narrative.

Most readers see Argalus' and Parthenia's love affair as an example of ideal love that Sidney includes in his narrative as a kind of model to his other characters and the readers. Clare Kinney, sees the lovers as

> representatives of the noblest kind of love, whose moral integrity, perfect fidelity, and exemplary public and private conduct are not only utterly distinct from any notion of "bold bawdry" but also constitute a standard against which the behavior of all other lovers and questers in Arcadia may be measured. (37)

Reading the story in this light provides not only an example of a strong relationship but also a strong woman. Parthenia actively denies her mother's wishes for her to marry the rich Demagoras and instead pursues the relationship she desires with Argalus. After she makes this decision, she experiences a series of hardships that test their love. Despite these tests, Parthenia's actions are driven by the love she has for her husband. The choice

she makes, to remain loyal and steadfast in her love for Argalus, signals the control she has over her own life and makes her a powerful female character. From this point of view, it is tempting to see Parthenia's role as the "ideal" early modern woman—loyal to her love and an example to other women. However, Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei, in "Relational Antifeminism in *Arcadia*," cautions readers against viewing the female characters in *Arcadia*, including Parthenia, from such a one-sided perspective: "To read the work as a straightforward legend of good women is undoubtedly reductive, if not incorrect" (26). Although Parthenia and Argalus's love is admirable in its constancy, the hardships they—especially Parthenia—must endure provide dark undertones to this subplot.

As for many women in the Renaissance, Parthenia's beauty is both a liability and an asset. The narrator recognizes that she is "fair indeed (fame, I think, itself daring not to call any fairer)" (*Countess* 88). Her fair face renders her susceptible to the "male gaze," which Laura Mulvey defines as reducing women to an "exhibitionist role simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their beauty coded for a strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (6). This "looked-at-ness" renders Parthenia an "object" to the male who gazes upon her, Demagoras, and also to her mother, who uses Parthenia's beauty to attract the wealthy Demagoras into marrying her daughter. As an obedient daughter, Parthenia yields to her mother's requests, not for love, but "because her obedient mind had not yet taken upon it to make choice" (88). However, the young woman does refuse to marry Demagoras after she meets and falls in love with Argalus. In declaring her love for Argalus and refusing to obey her mother's orders, Parthenia begins to develop a voice of her own. Before her "speech [was] as rare as precious," but now she takes an active stance against her

mother's demands (88). Parthenia's independence blooms as she resists her mother's orders: "The more she assaulted, the more she taught Parthenia to defend" (89). At this point, the reader begins to see Parthenia not as a proper, obedient daughter but as a much different character, fighting for what *she* wants.

When she had seemed submissive, Parthenia was praised by the narrator because submissiveness is attractive for her gender. Now, Parthenia's more active stance against her mother takes her from being the submissive *object* of everyone's wishes and gives her control of her own marriage. Rather than wait for her hero (Argalus) to rescue her from the villain (Demagoras), Parthenia gains control by refusing to become the object of her mother's and her fiancé's intentions. Parthenia's resistance to her mother is so strong that the older woman soon took "such a spiteful grief at it that her heart brake withal, and she died" (90). After this death, Parthenia is free to make her own choice. The young woman leaves her betrothed in favor of Argalus, and Demagoras retaliates by destroying her beauty. He "rub[s] all over her face a most horrible poison, the effect whereof was such that never leper looked more ugly than she did" (Arcadia 90). Sidney uses Demagoras's revenge as the second test the lovers must endure. However, the motivation for Demagoras's actions seems to be much more sinister than merely the vengeance of a scorned lover. He destroys her beauty, and in doing so, he shows that he views her as an object whose worth is defined by the "enjoyment" she produces for the male who gazes upon her. This attack is the first in a series of events which seem to "punish" the young woman when she attempts to act outside of the "approved" gender category.

Despite Demagoras' action, Argalus' love for Parthenia remains constant: "beseeching her, even with tears, to know that his love was not so superficial as to go no

further than the skin" (91). Argalus proves that his love for Parthenia is not based on the beauty of the image she projects but the person who exists under the exterior. Other couples in Arcadia do not endure so extreme a hardship, so Argalus' and Parthenia's relationship stands out as an example of a love that endures. As stated above, their devotion to one another makes Parthenia and Argalus seem the ideal image of love in *Arcadia*. However, the faith Argalus has in Parthenia's worth beyond beauty is not an opinion she shares.

Though Argalus vows to love Parthenia despite her malady, Parthenia denies her worthiness: "she loved him as she could not find it in her heart he should be tied to what was unworthy of his presence" (91). Unlike Argalus, who looks beyond his beloved's physical attributes, Parthenia identifies her "worth" with her beauty. She believes that, because she is no longer beautiful, she is no longer worth Argalus's love. Without her beauty, Parthenia cannot happily endure the male "gaze." When she removes herself from the court, she objectifies herself. She is so ingrained with the constructed idea of what constitutes a woman's worth that she cannot stand to subject her lover to a life with someone who does not achieve it. Parthenia's self-judgment stems from her taking control away from her mother and Demagoras. Standing up to Demagoras caused Parthenia not only to lose her beauty but to objectify herself according to the conventions of society that would rather see her as a quiet, submissive female, fulfilling her "proper" role, rather than acting outside of an approved gender category.

Although Parthenia and Argalus' relationship is plagued with hardships, there is one scene wherein the two lovers exist without tragedy. This scene, which occurs in Book 3, shows Argalus and Parthenia in a domestic setting: "He reading in a book the

stories of Hercules, she by him, as to hear him read; but while his eyes looked on the book, she looked on his eyes and sometimes staying him with some pretty question, not so much to be resolved of the doubt as to give him occasion to look upon her" (501). What looks to be a peaceful, simple scene, is loaded with meaning. Here is Parthenia in her rightful place. She does not look at the book, but rather she looks to her husband who reads. If she were to read on her own, she would be free to form her own ideas and opinions. If she gets her information from her husband, who acts as a filter, he can manipulate the information she obtains (not unlike the Wife of Bath's fifth husband). In this scene, the only one in which Argalus and Parthenia are peaceful, the narrator places the two in a situation where both characters seem to be in their rightful places. Perhaps this serves as a subliminal message for the reader: happiness only comes if you play the role you are meant to play. The scene also has Parthenia seeking the objectification of the "male gaze." When she asks questions of her husband's reading, so that it may "give him occasion to look upon her" (501). Her beauty has returned magically, so she now thinks herself worthy to be Argalus's wife and in his gaze.

Immediately after describing the domestic scene, Sidney's narrator describes their marital relationship: "he ruling because she would obey, or rather because she would obey, she therein ruling" (591). Sidney's language suggests that the success of their marriage depends upon the subordination of one partner. However, Sidney also writes that, because she obeys, Parthenia is really in control. Parthenia's "rule" stems from her obedience to Argalus, which leads the reader to conclude that it is precarious—if not completely false. When a messenger comes to call Argalus to war, Parthenia objects wholeheartedly: "Do not thus forsake me. Remember, alas, remember that I have interest

in you" (502). Argalus laments her sorrow, but refuses to consider her plan: "This is the first time that ever you resisted my will. I thank you for it; but persevere not in it" (503). Argalus resists her attempts to keep him at home by reminding her of his happiness: "let not the tears of those most beloved eyes be a presage unto me of that which you would not should happen" (503). He resists her attempts to break out of her role by forcing her to consider not her feelings but his. His rebuttal suggests that it is his happiness, not hers, that matters. Instead of keeping Argalus from war, Parthenia should act as a soldier's wife, proudly sending her husband to fight and thinking not of her own feelings but of him and his honor. Parthenia's objection to Argalus's fighting signals a certain instability within her character. In some cases, she is willing to act as the submissive wife, but when situations threaten her happiness, Parthenia steps outside of her submissiveness. Parthenia's arguments against Argalus's fighting take her from the demure, submissive wife to a woman daring to take control from a "dominant " force. And it is just as the narrator implies. When she does not obey, Parthenia does not rule. Argalus's answer shows that Parthenia's "control" goes only so far as she is willing to let him control her. Argalus's call to war and Parthenia's stepping out of her submissive role shatter the peaceful domestic image of the lovers, and this disruption of the peaceful setting leads to Argalus' and Parthenia's deaths.

Argalus's death occurs after Parthenia attempts to exert control over her husband. Since he does not listen to her in his home, Parthenia follows him to the battle and steps even further out of her role. The narrator is careful to point out that when Parthenia shows up, the "fear of love ma[de] her forget the fear of nature" (506). While Sidney's use of "nature" in the statement allows a certain ambiguity, the *Oxford English*

Dictionary defines the word as "the inherent dominating power or impulse in a person by which character or action is determined, directed, or controlled." ("nature," def. 5a). It is possible that Sidney's use of "nature" here is in accordance with that definition. If "nature" is an inherent dominating power or impulse, the "nature" that Parthenia forgets could be the impulses that make her "womanly." When she dares to rush the battlefield and come between two fighting men, Parthenia lets her passion—her love for Argalus—overrule her womanly nature. If she was accorded with the conventional traits of her womanly "nature," she would be afraid of the fighting and know that her rightful place is not on the battlefield. Argalus recognizes her interference with regret and some contempt. He directly chastises her actions, recognizing that they make him seem less manly: "Ah, Parthenia, never until now unwelcome unto me, do you come to get my life by request? And cannot Argalus live but by request? Is that a life?"(507). Parthenia's interference with the manly activity of battle has caused her to bring regret and shame to his final hour. While Argalus professes his love for her just before his death, he recognizes that her presence at the battle has emasculated him (506). Their final scene together is touching, but it is tinged with the realization that Parthenia's attempt to control her husband has tainted his honor.

Parthenia's previous gender transgressions work subtly into the narrative. Readers may lose themselves in the tragic plot of Argalus' and Parthenia's story and overlook her attempts to control her place. However, Parthenia's last, most obvious, transgression comes as her last act. When she cross-dresses as the "Knight of the Tomb," she seeks to revenge Argalus' death on Amphialus. In Parthenia's final scene, the narrator provides her with two blazons. The first she gets when she enters cross-dressed

as a knight. The narrator's careful detail to each aspect of Parthenia's masculine dress provides a convincing disguise not just to the other characters but to the readers as well. When she is the "Knight of the Tomb," the narrator uses masculine pronouns to describe her dress and actions and to conceal her feminine identity from the reader. While her dressing as a man provides the subplot with an interesting twist and shows her devotion to Argalus's memory, readers cannot simply view her cross-dressing as a literary device to make the story more interesting. By taking on the dress of a man, Parthenia encroaches upon the privileges that come with being a man in the early modern period. In a quotation I have cited earlier, Jean Howard writes that "when women took men's clothes, they symbolically left their subordinate positions. They became masterless women, and this threatened overthrow of the hierarchy" (424). Howard also writes that typically "the good woman was closed off: silent, chaste, and immured within the home" (424). Parthenia's cross-dressing signals her break with her subordinate position. Parthenia is "masterless." She has no male escort, but she instead acts as an escort to the women who surround her. As Howard suggests, the cross-dressed Parthenia represents a threat to the early modern hierarchy. By leaving their sphere, the home, women who dared to dress as men may have thought they could leave the home. By dressing as a man, Parthenia is not just looking to get revenge, but she is also threatening the hierarchy, the family, and males. Parthenia's death as the Knight is an alternative to the death of patriarchal society. When Amphialus give Parthenia a mortal wound, she receives her second blazon:

> her beauty then, even in the despite of the passed sorrow or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection. For her exceeding

> fair eyes having with continual weeping gotten a little redness about them; her roundy sweetly swelling lips a little trembling, as though they kissed their neighbor death; in her cheeks the whiteness striving by little and little to get upon the rosines of them; her neck, a neck indeed of alabaster, displaying the wound, which with most dainty blood laboured to drown his own beauties, so as here was a river of purest red, there an island of perfectest white. (*Countess* 528)

This erotic picture of death contrasts with Parthenia's "Knight of the Tomb" blazon. Before, Parthenia performed as a male knight, and her blazon convincingly portrayed her as a male. Now Parthenia receives an erotic portrait as a dying woman. Once Parthenia has been revealed and her feminine revolt stopped, she is again beautiful and again subject to the male gaze. While Amphialus mourns his actions of killing a woman, Parthenia's is the result, too, of her cross-dressing and attempt to take more power than society allowed for her gender. If her grief would have been passive (as society says it should be), Parthenia may not have died.

It is tempting to pigeonhole Parthenia's and Argalus's narrative as an example of ideal love, but underneath this love story, Sidney enacts a much darker plot. Reading Parthenia's character as simply an example of a devoted wife and one half of a perfect love would be to reduce her to the one-dimensional character she definitely is not. Her character is more paradoxical. Although at times she allows herself to become the object of the male gaze, her actions resist complete objectification. She strives to control her own story, and in doing so, she takes her character beyond the "object" of others' plans. As readers, we cannot ignore Parthenia's gradual trajectory to cross-dressing as "The Knight of the Tomb" or her wish to defy her "nature." To do so limits our understanding

of gender relations not only in Arcadia but in early modern England. Despite the complexity of her character, we see that Parthenia is still subject to the males within the patriarchal order.

Unlike Pyrocles, whose gender bending brings comedy, the growth of these women is plagued with hardships. Though Pyrocles endures Cecropia's prison with Pamela and Philoclea, he is not the target of her aims, as are the sisters. Additionally the sisters must endure the psychological torture of their staged deaths. The women are complex characters in their demonstrations of virility and power, but their independence is constantly hedged by their claim to submissiveness, as in Pamela's argument against Cecropia. This makes their place in the narrative as ambiguous as Pyrocles'.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When I began this thesis, I was seeking to reconcile the gender slippage in Pyrocles, Philoclea, Pamela, and Parthenia by applying Elizabethan gender rules to their situations. I thought that, in this application, I could show why they acted out of the gender roles and attempt to categorize their places in the text. However, in writing the first chapter and reading Shepard's article, I began to find that these gaps in the text resembled those between early modern scientific/religious literature and the actual lives of Elizabethan men and women. The disjunction between reality and literature proved that the binary categories of "masculine" and "feminine" were merely constructions of gender that patriarchal authors recommended, and maybe even preferred, but were not always practiced by those who lived under them.

Determining this, I turned my attention to Pyrocles. I wanted to know whether, in the absence of binaries, Sidney allows his cross-dressed character to be noble. While Musidorus's speech (the epigram of the introduction) at first seemed to indicate Sidney's displeasure with those who acted out of their gender categories, my research seemed to deny such displeasure. In the beginning of the text, Pyrocles provides a comedic picture of love's effects; however, as the text progresses, he becomes a character whose costume allows him to grow beyond the selfish person he was when he

was simply male. In this way, Pyrocles is both an example of the subversive effects of cross-dressing and the noble effects of feminizing love.

When I started the fourth chapter, I concerned myself with trying to prove why Sidney keeps his female characters from achieving the same complexity as Pyrocles. What I found, however, was that the female characters were not necessarily less complex so much as their journeys were less developed. The traditional delivery of their stories, with an introduction, steady growth, climax, and fall, defies the conflicts they face within themselves and against Cecropia.

What I have arrived at, then, is that there is no reconciliation in the gender slippage of the text, due partly to its being incomplete and partly to the characters themselves. Sidney writes his characters in such a way that they are not two-dimensional constructs but have some complexities that resemble real people's. Perhaps Sidney's more complete exploration of Pyrocles signals his camaraderie with the character. Living under Elizabeth's rule placed many male courtiers in an uncomfortable, subordinate position. The unresolved gender issues that arise in Sidney's text mirror the confusion that arose in Elizabeth's court.

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