

## How to be a Man, Though Female:<sup>1</sup> Changing Sex in Medieval Romance

Angela Jane Weisl

**I**N THE KINKS'S SONG "Lola," the narrator sings:

Girls will be boys and boys will be girls  
It's a mixed up muddled up shook up world  
Except for Lola.  
Well I'm not the world's most masculine man  
But I know what I am and I'm glad I'm a man  
And so is Lola.<sup>2</sup>

This may not seem an obvious paradigm for the examination of medieval literature, but gender confusion and transformation is a surprisingly popular topic, explored both metaphorically and literally in a variety of medieval texts. What appears to be a kind of metaphoric fantasy for Christine de Pizan in the *Mutacion de Fortune*, the dream of transgenering becomes literal in a number of additional works. This transgenering itself takes multiple forms. If in the majority the transformation is either a performance or a temporary state, in two lesser-known examples, *La Chanson d'Yde et Olive* and *Tristan de Nanteiul*, it is permanent and complete. Thus the literature offers a full range of gender potential, suggesting that the gendered body is permeable and malleable, indeterminate in its categories. In more modern parlance, the romance implies that biology is far from being destiny. Gender participates in a series of taxonomies that structure the social order, and it therefore participates in processes beyond itself, such as Christianity and knighthood, which are equally about identity within the world of chivalric romance. Therefore, the inscription of one often helps to define the other. For instance, the gender transformations of Yde and Blanchandine are authorized because

they take place within a specifically Christian context. Additionally, because knighthood is so explicitly defined in terms of gender, the women who pass as men in these stories are able to do so because of the rigid understandings of what masculinity means. However, in undoing the basic term of masculinity (maleness), these transforming figures destabilize the term's meaning while reinforcing its function. Like all other forms of transformation and hybridity—animal and monstrous transformation and conversion, for example—these sex changes help undo a series of seemingly fixed categories and meanings, complicating that which the material seems to define.

Christine de Pizan's *Mutacion de Fortune* offers one of medieval literature's most memorable sex changes. Anxious and alone after the death of her husband, Christine imagines herself cast out to sea in a boat she cannot control. After striking a rock and capsizing the ship, Christine awakens and says, "Je m'esveillay et fu le cas / el qu'incontinent et sanz doute / Transmuee me senti toute" (*Mutacion*, 51-53): ("I woke up immediately / There is no doubting it— / I was changed all over"). She adds:

Si me senti trop legiere  
Que ne souloye et que ma chiere  
Estoit muee et enforcie  
Et m'voix forment engrossie  
Et corp plus dur et plus isnel,  
Mais choit de mon doy fu l'anel  
Qu'y meneüs donné m'avoit,  
Don't me pesa, et bien deoit,  
Car je l'amoie cherelement.  
Plus ne me tins en la parece  
De plour, qui croissout ma destrece.  
Fort et hardi cuer me trovay,  
Dont m'esbahi, mas j'esprouvay  
Que vray home fus devenu; (*Mutacion*, 1347-1361)<sup>3</sup>

[My appearance was altered and made stronger,  
My voice became deeper,

My body, harder and more agile.  
 But the ring that Hymen had given me  
 Fell from my finger.  
 I found within myself a strong and hardy spirit,  
 Which amazed me,  
 And proved that I  
 Had become a real man. (Bornstein, 13-14)]

Maleness gives her the ability to seek adventure—indeed, she says she must censure any attempt to shirk it. She repairs the boat and steers it safely to shore. Although she says it would please her “Mais Meiulx me plairoit plus du tiers / Estre femme, com je souloie” (1398-99) (to return as a woman and be heard),<sup>4</sup> she also notes that she must “Or fus je vrays homs, n’est pas fable / De nefz mener entremettable” (1391-92) (“be like a real Man”), since “Fortune ce mestrier m’apprist / Et Ainsi de cet fait me prist” (1293-94). (“Fortune kindly taught me the way / To do manly deeds; to this day.”) She also notes that men are now her peers. Within the context of the *Mutacion*, Christine’s transformation seems primarily economic and intellectual; through the fruits of her labors—her writing and study—she supports her mother and children, pays her husband’s debts, and gains significant fame. While continuing to write lyrics, love debates, and romances, Christine also finds herself engaged in the deeds of the French kings and the work of Arms and Chivalry, advising sovereign princes on the causes of wars and battles, the qualities of leadership, sea garrisons, and ransom tactics. If Christine is refeminized by the time she writes her most famous work, the *Book of the City of Ladies* in 1405, in 1429 she lavishes praise on a gender-transformed woman, praising, in her last work, the *Ditié de Jehanne D’Arc*, Joan of Arc, saying “Among our men so brave and apt / She’s captain over all; such strength / No Hector or Achilles had” (36, lines 286-287).<sup>5</sup>

While Christine’s sex change is striking, it is also, finally, metaphorical. Despite her stressing that this transformation is permanent, saying that “home remaindray” (1403) (“I remained a man”), there is no suggestion that Christine began dressing in men’s clothing or doing anything particularly masculine apart from the subjects of her writing. Even though Christine envisions herself changed in mind and body, it

is clear from her later books that she still understands herself as inherently female, particularly in her extensive defenses of women. However, medieval narrative offers up additional moments where these gender transformations become increasingly literal and finally, complete. The best known is doubtless Silence in Heldris de Cournuallie's *Le Roman de Silence*. Raised as a boy because women cannot inherit property, the child's identity becomes a source of heated debate between Nature and Nourriture, Nature insisting that because the child's sex is female, she must gender female and desire feminine things and Nourriture insisting that her upbringing determines her gender. Silence fails each test, successfully proving herself a boy, until her final unmasking by Merlin. Similarly, the Spanish romancero "La Doncella que fue a la Guerra" shows Don Martinos, a cross-dressed female soldier passing, through repeated tests, as a man, until forced to remove her clothes.

Less well known but even more intensely charged are the true sex changes in the twelfth-century *Chanson d'Yde et Olive* and the Blanchandine episode in *Tristan de Nanteuil*. In these, the unmasking that characterizes the endings of *Silence* and "La Doncella que fue a la Guerra" is reversed. Instead of uncovering the ultimately female body underneath the masculine clothing and behavior, both Yde and Blanchandine, after passing as men so successfully that they are married to other women, are finally undressed with the anticipation of exposure and instead reveal male bodies, capable of fulfilling their procreative roles in the generational imperatives of their own stories. In the *chanson de geste* called *Tristan de Nanteuil*, Blanchandine, disguised as a man, ends up married to Clarinde, the sultan's daughter, and eventually, when faced with exposure, is offered the choice to remain a woman or change into a man, which she does. In *La Chanson d'Yde et Olive*, a continuation of the *Huon de Bordeaux* story, the princess Yde, who flees the incestuous advances of her father who wants to marry her to produce a male heir, takes up service with the emperor of Rome, proves herself a brave and chivalrous knight, and is finally married to the emperor's daughter. She is then transformed miraculously into a man and becomes Emperor of Rome and King of Aragon. In both cases, the newly transformed men immediately impregnate their wives, who then give birth, in *Tristan* to a future saint and in *Yde* to the next Emperor of Rome.

Fascinating and odd as these two stories seem, they may be less radical within than they appear. It has become commonplace to acknowledge the performative nature of gender. Judith Butler's statement "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" has become paradigmatic.<sup>6</sup> The body stylizations undertaken by these medieval women who would be men need to be examined beyond this sense of performance as well as within it. The medieval material remains caught between performance and essence; between Nature and Nurture. Certainly gender can be performed. However, as Judith Halberstam notes, the attempt to transgender, whether that ultimately includes surgery or not, is not explicitly an attempt to destabilize categories of gender, but an attempt to reside within them and for subjects to place themselves "in the way of particular forms of recognition." She adds, "transgender may indeed be considered a term of relationality; it describes not simply an identity but a relation between people, within a community, or within intimate bonds."<sup>7</sup> Thus the goal of these transformations, for the people who undertake them, is to produce something recognizably and definably masculine, a readable body that is simply the opposite of the one their biology seems to dictate. If, as Simon Gaunt suggests, "gender is a crucial element in the ideology of the *chansons de geste* [and by extension, the romance] since its ethical system is exclusively masculine,"<sup>8</sup> these women operate by claiming a fixed place within a system by means of a flexible body. There is a medical context for these transgenderings as well. The anatomical tradition that the period inherits from Galen assumes a woman's sexual organs to be an inverse of the male's, essentially a "negative" of the male genital "positive," a penis turned outside-in. According to Anne Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, the primary difference, then, between males and females is their temperature; men are hot and women are cold, so if a woman became too hot, she could, theoretically, transform into a man. Thus, if "according to premodern theories of medicine, the transformation from female was not in itself contrary to nature,"<sup>9</sup> then what happens in these poems becomes a kind of examination of potential rather than a pure fantasy. That said, the texts do not offer these transformations as medical; a rush of warmth does not turn Yde or Blanchandine "outside-in." Instead, both are acts of

God, undertaken for divine reasons and announced by divine messengers, providing a kind of authority and authenticity to these transitions that take them beyond the possibilities of clothing and performance.

This authority is notable, because while there are many incidents of male cross-dressing, these rarely seem to take on the transformative qualities of the previously named texts. Michelle Szkilnik comments on this distinction: “while female cross-dressing and the problems it raises can be the matter of a whole romance or at least of very large sections, male cross-dressing does not generate abundant writing.”<sup>10</sup> Although she notes a tendency in cross-dressing to confuse linguistics and grammar, saying “dressing like a woman might make you, linguistically at least, a woman,” she also notes that this gendered instability does not, in the male examples, ultimately transcend much more than language, even if it “suggests that gender categories are not as fixed as one might think.”<sup>11</sup>

Keith Busby offers a full discussion of male cross-dressing, which thus observes the seemingly inherently gendered differences between that and female cross-dressing. Because he points out that while common, male cross-dressing is essentially superficial and transitory, it becomes possible to contrast it with the more complex nature of female cross-dressing. He notes that “the tradition of warriors, and hence knights, dressed in female garb was quite familiar to medieval authors and audiences,” citing the classical precedent of Achilles disguised as a woman by Thetis offered to medieval audiences through Statius, Ovid, and, of course, the *Ovide Moralisé*.<sup>12</sup> However, he also points out that male cross-dressing is generally a “part of a broader implementation of comic devices which borders on the farcical.”<sup>13</sup> Male cross-dressing, he notes, is a site where “romance, its ideals, and protagonists, are being deflated and demystified; its sharp edges, which hitherto defined and delineated ruses and issues, are gradually being blurred.”<sup>14</sup> Elements in his examples do raise transformative possibilities, suggesting potentially radical revisions of gender, but these ultimately remain tempered by reminders of the figure’s inherent masculinity. For instance, in *Meraugis de Portlesquez*, Meraugis is described “. . . par goi, il prist / Trestote la robe la dame / Et lors dou tot come une fame / se veste et lace et empopine” (3336-39). (Truly, he took the lady’s robe and just like a woman, dressed and laced and dolled himself up.)<sup>15</sup> Putting on the lady’s clothes makes Meraugis

act like a woman, at least for this moment; but readers are consequently drawn to envision his masculinity (in a similar technique used by the author of *Yde et Olive* to enhance Yde's!) because "Descent aval de cel chastel / S'espee desoz son mantel" (3341-42) (he descended from the castle, his sword under his cloak).<sup>16</sup> The sword, a potent reminder of Meraugis's maleness, then makes a near mockery of the whole situation. When the mariners ask where their lady (whose clothes Meraugis has stolen to escape her island) might be, he responds, "Vez la cien ma main!" (3367) ("See her here in my hand!") referring to the drawn sword. If the scene isn't overtly phallic enough, Meraugis undoes his belt and declares again, "Par m'ame, / C'est espee, c'est vostre dame" (3369-70). ("By my soul, this sword is your lady.")<sup>17</sup>

The other example that Busby discusses at length, Calogrenant's transformation into a woman in *Claris et Laris*, at first seems more complete and complex than those of Meraugis and the nun/lover in *Silence*. Turned into a woman by a magic spell, and only able to change back if he finds the three vital knights, Busby notes of Calogrenant, "initially the transformation is corporeal: Calogrenant comes to resemble physically the damsel he saw."<sup>18</sup> The text offers up some entertaining examples, including that Calogrenant's sleeves are now too long, since as a woman, he is much slighter than he was as a man. Once in female dress to match his feminine form, he is convincing enough that the king tries to seduce him, saying "Comment vos est, fet il, donzele? / Molt vous voi bele damoisele, / Ne sai, se me vorres amer" (26: 178-80) ("How are you damsel? I see you are a very fair young woman, and I don't know whether you'd like to love me")<sup>19</sup> and later runs into a similar seduction scene with Mordred from which he escapes at full gallop. However, it seems that Calogrenant's transformation is entirely superficial. Despite being made to ride a palfrey instead of his destrier, as Busby says, "the metamorphosis is complete in everything except attitude, in which Calogrenant remains resolutely masculine."<sup>20</sup> Once he finds Claris, Laris, and Gauvain, "a son part est revenue" (26: 354) (He became himself again).<sup>21</sup> Thus, Busby opens his discussion of male cross-dressing saying:

It is questionable whether one can properly speak of transvestism in medieval secular narrative. Certainly, instances of cross-dressing

are not presented as manifestations of a sexual inclination or lifestyle but rather a means of disguise which enables authors to develop their narrative structures and at the same time to generate comedy.<sup>22</sup>

When he speaks this way, he is primarily addressing male-to-female disguise. When he later says of Calogrenant, “despite the physiological and vestimentary transformation, Calogrenant continues to behave like a knight with a quest,”<sup>23</sup> it is possible to read the difference between the examples he discusses and the female transformations. When “vestimentarily transformed” (metaphorically or literally) into men, Christine de Pizan, Don Martinos, Silence, and Yde all do just what Calogrenant does; they also behave “like knights with a quest,” inhabiting the stereotypes of masculine behavior, action, and thought as fully as any of the texts’ men do.

In both tropes of female-to-male transformation, each of these “ladies” spends a significant portion of her own story as a man, taking on Christine’s “harder and more agile” body, and, I would argue, because they are perceived as men, undergo a functional sex change, even if that change is ultimately reversed. Diane Watt suggests that “cross-dressing [in medieval saint’s lives and romances] was sometimes more than a temporary measure taken to enable flight; it could also signify a complete rupture with the past,” implying that the act of transvestism went well beyond clothing, pointing to a significant change in identity, which helps to redefine the cross-dressing heroines in a more complex context.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps more significantly, to use Jay Prosser’s formulation, “transsexuality is a matter of constructing a transsexual narrative *before* being constructed through technology.”<sup>25</sup> It is the story of transgender difference, of the possibility of being a man before becoming a man, that is important for understanding these stories (even if the surgical “technology” of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries is replaced by the medieval “technology” of divine intervention). Therefore, the narratives of Yde’s and Blanchandine’s masculinity (and indeed, the stories of Silence and the Doncella, and even Christine) are what really determine the heroine’s gender identity; the physical transformation that they go through is merely a confirmation of what already exists.

Szkilnik points out what now seems almost commonplace: cross-

dressing “shows a progressive reconsideration of the practice: suggesting at first the fluidity of gender boundaries.”<sup>26</sup> Since cross-dressing allows the female character to acquire “all the masculine qualities” and also “become the best among the ‘most’ perfect,” “dressing as a man somehow alters women’s literary nature [and] quickly becomes uncomfortable. However admirable, the women are embarrassing. They are too good at being men.”<sup>27</sup> It also gives the heroine an opportunity to dispense with traditional female identities, which Watt defines as “emotional, passive and powerless,” and exchange these for masculine ones, “rational, authoritative, active, and strong” which allow her to surpass “all other men in virtue and ability.”<sup>28</sup> In a sense, stories like *Silence* and even Christine’s *Mutación* privilege the role of performance rather than the characteristics of the body. These stories “directly challenge the primacy of the body in determining gender.”<sup>29</sup> Peggy McCracken offers an additional perspective on this gender complexity. She suggests that “performance and dress may have an authority equal to that of anatomical characteristics in determining gender identity.”<sup>30</sup> Disrupting all overt notions of gendered meaning, these hero/heroines suggest that “gender identity is fabricated through corporeal signs and through discourse.”<sup>31</sup>

Discussing the rhetoric of cross-dressing, Anna Klosowska notes that:

Cross-dressing allows us to divide identities into segments—clothes (masculine or feminine), social status (independent or dependent), performance of gender norms (heroic or obedient), behavior (bellicose and adventurous or domestic), emotions (courteous or vulnerable), positioning in love scripts (active or passive), facial features (ruddy or smooth-cheeked), body (handsome or pretty), genital (male or female).<sup>32</sup>

Since each heroine fulfills the first of most of Klosowska’s pairs—she is masculine, independent, heroic, bellicose, courteous, handsome, and active—she essentially inhabits all the visibly male segments of identity. Only the final genital pair is lacking, and if it is fair to suggest that majority rules, the cross-dressed woman in these texts plays a man in a world where—at least for the majority of the fiction, only the audience perceives her differently, or, as Klosowska adds, “the pleasure of the

reader consists in the surplus of knowledge: the constantly summoned split between the enacted and the original identity of the cross-dressed figure.”<sup>33</sup> Here Klosowska’s “pleasure” comes into conflict with Szkilnik’s sense that the cross-dressed figure provokes “fear and repulsion,” and that the cross-dressed woman becomes “indeed a monster: a perfect woman surpassing man in all his male prerogatives.”<sup>34</sup>

To examine the best known of these narratives, the *Roman de Silence*, we see that gender is very much a product of discourse and performance. Silence is at various points in the narrative masculine in all the senses Klosowska delineates above. Independent, heroic, and bellicose once she leaves home, and active throughout, she passes successfully, and because she is handsome and courteous, attracts the amorous attentions of Queen Eupheme. If the reader is privy to Silence’s real gender throughout, it almost seems as if the text itself is not; Silence is always gendered through language as masculine, is referred to as “il” (he), as his parents’ “fils” (son), and as a “garçonnet” (boy) by everyone. Pronouns are an issue in *Yde et Olive* as well. Watt points out that “Ide’s [sic] male disguise is also taken so seriously by the narrator that from her marriage night up until the moment at which Ide is forced to reveal her sex to the Emperor, she is referred to by the masculine third-person pronouns.”<sup>35</sup> Since many, if not all, discussions of transgender experience involve a conversation about pronouns, this poem again calls our attention to the role of discourse in the construction of identity and meaning, particularly gender identity and meaning. When the child is born, Cador and Euphemie discuss its name: “He will be called Silentius” (2075), they declare; “And if by any chance / his real nature is discovered, / we shall change this –us to –a, / and she’ll be called Silentia” (2076–79). They note also, “We shall call her Silence, / after Saint Patience, / for silence relieves anxiety” (2067–69).<sup>36</sup> Thus within the poem, *gender is silence*; it is an empty space on which meaning can be written. The name is a response to and antidote for anxiety in the poem and the culture that produces—gender anxiety specifically, but also other kinds of anxiety about inheritance, law, and the ability of those subservient to the power structures to subvert them effectively.<sup>37</sup>

In the text, it is also the body that, for the bulk of the work, remains silent, while actions speak instead. As Kate Mason Cooper notes, in the

work “the role of silence in speech is examined in relation to the ways female sexuality is conceived in romance, for silence within this text is the most profound figure of poetic enterprise, an integral part of poetic production compared time and again to the absent, unheard and unseen female and body.”<sup>38</sup> Despite Nature’s urging that Silence attempt to take up women’s activities, he feels no inclination for it. Heldris comments that “Que poi li valt mains de la mort / Se il s’acostume et amort / A deguerpir sa noreture / Por faire cho que violt Nature” (2611-14). (“If she abandoned her nurture / to take up the habits of nature, / it would be almost as bad as killing herself.”) Seeing that “que moils valt li us d’ome / Que l’us de feme, c’est la some” (2637-38) (a man’s life / was much better than that of a woman), Silence also notes, “Trop dulce boche ai por baisier / Et trop rois bras por acoler. . . . Car vallés sui et nient mescine. Ne voel perdre ma grant honor, / Ne la voel cangier a menor” (2645-51.) (“I have a mouth too hard for kisses, / and arms too rough for embraces / . . . / for I’m a young man, not a girl. / I don’t want to lose my high position; / I don’t want to exchange it for a lesser.”) Even if Silence realizes that “Mais el a sos la vesteüre / Ki de tolt cho n’a mie cure” (2829-30) (“what that boy [herself] has under his clothes / has nothing to do with being male”), he still finds his masculinity inscribed on his body and recognizes that he “Ne sai a us de feme entendre” (2835) (knows nothing of women’s arts). In a sense, Silence “expresses his desire for a manhood that will on some level always elude him,”<sup>39</sup> which Halberstam views as an essential part of the transgender condition. Despite knowing that his biological body “has nothing to do with being male,” Silence still feels no identification with the feminine. What Silence achieves is “Realness,” a category Halberstam calls “not exactly performance, not exactly an imitation,” an appropriation “of the attributes of the real” rather than the thing itself.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps even more overt is Silence’s discussion with himself over his name, once again in reaction to Nature’s attempts to return him to his birth gender. When Nature demands, “Va en la cambre a la costure, . . . Tu nen es pas Scilentius!” (2528-30) (“Go to a chamber and learn to sew! . . . You are not Silentius!”), Silence debates:

Scilencius! Qui sui jo donques?

Scilencius ai non, jo cui,  
U jo sui altrea que ne fui.  
Mais cho sai jo bien, par ma destre,  
Que jo ne puis pas alters estre!  
Donques sui jo Scilentius,  
Cho me's avis, u jo sui nus. (2532-38)

[Not Silentius? Who am I then?  
Silentius is my name, I think,  
Or I am other than who I was.  
But this I know well, upon my oath,  
That I cannot be anybody else!  
Therefore I am Silentius,  
As I see it, or I am no one.]

The French is quite direct; the text reads, “jo sui nus”—“I am nude.” Given the function of the literal body and the perceived body within these sex-change narratives, Silence’s statement is striking: without his male self, he is stripped of identity, an identity made through clothing, behavior, and language. Only nude is Silencius not himself; without the trappings of maleness, he is without identity. Nature again loses to Nurture; identity is written on the body, but does not come from it.

Like Silence, the “Doncella que fue a la Guerra” also repeatedly passes as male in the face of the King’s son who, anxious because he has fallen in love with the seeming Don Martinos, as she calls herself, keeps attempting to test her. In response to each definition of femininity that is supposed to unmask her, the poem repeats “El caballero es discreto,”<sup>41</sup>—The gentleman is discreet: he buys only a dagger instead of coral beads, lies down dressed instead of refusing the invitation to sleep next to the Captain, picks a carnation and tears it to pieces instead of choosing a rose and smelling its fragrance; stomps scattered peas into the floor instead of sending them skittering around the room. In every test but the final bodily exposure, Don Martinos is “el caballero”; again, both language and action define gender, if not sex, within the narrative.

Neither Silence nor Don Martinos remain masculine; each is unmasked through tricks—Silence’s capture of Merlin which she

undertakes to avoid the exposure of her female body; Don Martinos through his inability to show his—and both end up returning to the identities imposed by their biological forms. Silence is married to King Evan, Don Martinos married to the king's son, and order is restored. While that does not change the transgendered nature of their experience, it is ultimately stifled, as they are reincorporated into the heteronormative systems of romance and romancero. However, in two works, the unmasking never comes, and while it is vital to see the transgendering through the same lens as Silence's and Don Martinos's unmasking, it simultaneously destabilizes the normative system of gender into which these figures are apparently incorporated, a system dependent on nature rather than divine intervention and technology as in the other narratives. If in the end, both stories result in a heterosexual, genealogically fruitful marriage, these marriages begin as a union between a woman and a woman passing as a man. And, it may be somewhat obvious to note, the non-normative episode controls the narrative. As in *Silence*, Yde and Blanchandine spend the balance of their stories dressed as, acting like, and passing as men; they are married to women; and they are each given the only thing they lack, the genital sign of maleness, but not the producer of masculinity, since both Blanchandine and Yde essentially define—really embody—masculinity well before acquiring the “member” that finally authenticates them as men.

These two works show the need to take gendered readings a step further than they previously have been. Both suggest that once gender identity is fabricated through these signs and discourses, it becomes real; that these kinds of identities are, or become, transgendered. Certainly Yde and Blanchandine fulfill all the requirements of action that suggest that the ideal man may be a woman, but they push it further inhabiting the visibly male segments of identity that Klosowska defines above in a way that suggests they are indeed fully masculine. Certainly no one ever questions their disguises; the strangers they encounter all think they are men, and neither Yde nor Blanchandine does anything to correct them. If all that remains “feminine” about them is their genitals, these poems suggest that God can play the transition surgeon and “correct” that mistake as well.

*Tristan de Nanteuil* is a text that seems fascinated by the relationship

of masculinity and maleness, offering up a male main character who fails in his masculine duties (at least those defined by the *chanson de geste*), while simultaneously producing two women who pass as men, whose exploits show them far more masculine than several of the text's actual males. A lousy warrior, Tristan abandons his lady to marauders, runs up a tree to escape a fight, and faints at the sight of blood; indeed, it is his lover (the same Blanchandine who later transforms into a man) who has to teach him how to wear clothes and act in a civilized fashion. The text suggests that chivalry is something that can be learned. Describing himself, Tristan says, "Je suis sauvages homs, sans, sense, plain de sotie" (6581). ("I am a savage man, without sense, full of foolishness.") He later asks his friends, "Compains, se dit Tristan, veulles moy enseigner / Commant on se combat loy de chevalier" (6590-91). ("Friends," said Tristan, "please instruct me how to fight by the law of chivalry.")<sup>42</sup> As Kimberlee Campbell notes, "Tristan's very ability to learn these attitudes and behaviors constitutes a first and permanent rupture in the ideology of knightliness as intrinsic to maleness."<sup>43</sup> This assumption depends on an acceptance of Gaunt's sense of masculinity as "monologic" in the *chanson de geste*, that, in Campbell's paraphrase, it has "traditionally served as a benchmark for one extreme of a continuum of representation, a genre expressing the distilled essence of the medieval masculine. The reading of the epic presumes a transparent equivalence of the masculine with the body and actions of the knight, constructing the 'male' as a necessary element in an ideology of chivalric cast and power."<sup>44</sup> This sense of masculinity also presupposes that "male characters are defined as individuals in relation to other men, whilst women are excluded from the genre's value system."<sup>45</sup> *Tristan de Nanteuil*, however, seems determined to undermine these definitions, repeating the idea that the "loy de chevalier" is transferable and learnable, tied to behaviors not to bodies. In contrast to Tristan, the poem offers up Aye d'Avignon who dresses as a man after being shipwrecked to avoid capture, becomes a great fighter and strategist, and eventually leads an army. As Campbell notes, Aye's "strength and ferocity are represented using the same lexicon as would be the case for a male character in the traditional epic. Aye is eager for battle, riding without stopping into the fray."<sup>46</sup> She rides, the text notes, "ou mouillon / a loy de chevalier, vestu de hauberjon"

(1813-14) (astride / following the law of chivalry, dressed in a hauberk). Like a man, she splits her enemies from stem to stern (rider and horse included), and she shows herself quite able with all the weapons of a medieval knight: the battle axe, the lance, and the sword. Aye “is quite proud of the killing she had done and of the military triumph she has obtained,” and, as Campbell notes, her “disguise is very successful; she is able to pass as a man both in battle and in leisure, when, presumably, she would no longer be wearing the chain mail and helmet that would better serve in terms of protecting her biological identity.”<sup>47</sup> She, like Blanchandine later, is even betrothed to another woman, Aigentine the Captive, until another man’s jealousy gets in the way. Aye’s cross-dressing, despite its success, is never confused by the author with the real thing. Unlike some of her counterparts, she is consistently referred to as “dame” or “la reine” throughout, even while the descriptions of her actions are “virtually identical to that used when speaking of a male knight” thus enhancing the masculine quality of her behavior. She acts like a man, she is spoken of as a man, and “in so far as that category is socially constructed as a function of the role of the knight,” she is a man—but the readers are always reminded of her partial inhabitation of that gender.<sup>48</sup>

Not so for Blanchandine, Aye’s fellow cross-dresser in *Tristan de Nan-teuil*. Campbell notes the distinction between them, saying, “Blanchandine’s performance cements the separation of biologically determined sexuality and the socially constructed maleness of knighthood,” adding, “the poet is very careful to emphasize Blanchandine’s transformation.”<sup>49</sup> Blanchandine becomes a knight by assuming male clothing and weapons. The poet once again points to the law of chivalry as something that can be put on, as in this instance it is tied almost directly to clothing: “On lui donna uns draps don’t elle fut vestie, / A loy de chevalier c’est bien appareillie, / Et Tristan l’adouba qui en fist cherie” (12816-18). (She was given clothing, which she put on; by the law of chivalry she was well equipped, and Tristan dubbed her with pleasure.) The poet stresses that Blanchandine becomes unrecognizable when she arrives at the Sultan’s court, and Clarinde, his daughter and Blanchandine’s cousin, falls for her:

La fille du soudant que Clarinde on nommoit

Sur tous les chevaliers tengrement regardoit  
Blanchandine la belle qui sa cousine estoit.  
Germaine au roy son pere, mais ne la congnoissoit,  
Ançois pour chevalier moult bien le tenoit (12939-43).

[The daughter of the sultan who was named Clarinde, of all the knights, most tenderly regarded Blanchandine, the lovely, who was her cousin, through the king her father, but she did not know her. Instead she took her to be a well-made knight.]

When her cousin falls in love with her, Blanchandine insists that she cannot consort with a Saracen woman and is able to avoid a same-sex marriage for a while. However, when the Sultan dies and Clarinde takes over the kingdom (again, in a rather gender-bending moment, as she essentially becomes the Sultan herself), she announces her marriage to the Christian knight Blanchandin. Campbell notes here that “performance aligned with socially constructed conceptualizations of gender is powerful; only the revelation of the female body, through sight or touch, can destabilize Blanchandine’s incarnation of the female knight.”<sup>50</sup> Blanchandine does everything she can to avoid sight or touch, and her measures border on the comical. The audience discovers, for instance, “Qui la endoit dormoit, mais pas n’estoit sorvine; / Aid fut couchee adens la gracieuse fine: / Ne vault pas c’on luy voit tastans vers la boudine” (15444-47). (There she was sleeping, but she was not on her back; / Rather she was lying on her stomach, that clever beauty; / She didn’t want anyone to feel her abdomen.) Finding her reluctant husband irritating and her situation untenable, Clarinde agrees to be baptized but insists that she and Blanchandin must enter the bath together. In a panic, Blanchandine wanders into the woods, where her anxiety about being exposed in a public bathing with Clarinde is assuaged by an angel sent from Jesus, who offers her the choice to become a man or a woman:

Or te made Jhesus qui le monde estora  
Lequel tu aymes mieulx, or ne me celles ja:  
Ou adés ester femme ainsy qu’i te cream  
Ou devenir ungs homs? A ton vouloir sera.

Homs sera, se tu veulx, car il te changera  
Et te donrra tout ce qu'a home appertendra (16142-47).

[Now Jesus who created the world asks you  
Which do you prefer, do not hide it from me:  
From now on to be a woman, just as he created you,  
Or to become a man? According to your desire, it will be.  
You will be a man if you want, for He will change you  
And will give you all that belongs to a man.]

Choosing expedience based on her circumstances, Blanchandine becomes a man, and in the next scene is referred to as Blanchandin, the masculine form of his name, as he strips off his clothes in front of a large audience of young women. This scene appears in great contrast to the Blanchandine who slept on her stomach to hide her body; here “Blanchandins se desvest, ne s’y arrestés, / Et quant il fut tout nuz, vers la cure est allés / Devant mainte pucelle est muz desdan entrés. / La lui paroît le member qu’estoit gros et quarres” (16354-57). (Blanchandin undresses himself without hesitating / And when he was nude, he went towards the tub; / before many young maids he entered into it nude. / And there was his member, large and well formed.) Here the transformed body is the final sign of Blanchandine’s change to Blanchandin; if she had all else “qu’a home appertendra” before, the “member . . . gros et quarres” stabilizes, “through sight and touch,” what previously seemed to be. The graphic assurance of the productivity of Blanchandin’s transformation is apparent in the immediate sexual activity and procreation that takes place: “La en fist Blanchandins et ses bons et ses grés, / Et engendra la nuyt, se dit l’authoriteés / Ung corps said debonnaire, sant Gilles et claimés (16401-3). (Blanchandin did all he wished and wanted with her / And that night as the authority states, he engendered / A noble, saintly body, called Saint Giles.) If here dynastic continuity is less imperative, giving birth to a saint certainly suggests that Blanchandine’s transformation is divinely authorized and his body both functional and holy.

In *Yde and Olive*, when Yde is also forced into a bath that is designed to reveal her female body, an angel announces her sexual transformation: “aler / Il vois avoid dit voir, mais c’est passé: / Hui main iert femee, or

est uns hom carnés” (7270-72). (“See / what you have said and seen, it has come to pass / that which was once a woman, is a now a man incarnate”),<sup>51</sup> and the angel’s words are greeted with assent from the assembled populace. Yde and Olive produce an heir and become the rulers of the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Aragon. The early English translation of the poem adds, “our lorde god hath done her the grace for the goodness that is in her / he doth consent and wyll by his dyuyne pyussaunce / that she be changed in nature, and become a pargeyght man as all other be without any difference” (p. 729). The suggestion here is that Yde was a perfect man with only the single bodily difference, and the transformation which confirms her in her identity is treated as “a miracle that our lord god had sent by the prayer of Yde” (p. 729). The solution turns sorrow into joy as both Olive and the whole city of Rome rejoice in Yde’s ability to escape execution and become their leader. Watt notes that “no one seems remotely perturbed by Ide’s sex change; indeed . . . Ide is reconciled with the Emperor and welcomed back like a prodigal son by the King of Aragon.”<sup>52</sup> Valerie Hotchkiss points out about Yde’s gendered and sexual identity, “Although Yde’s struggle with sexual orientation receives little attention in the work, her marriage to Olive, her willingness to exchange physical signs of love, and her acceptance of sexual transformation indicate a character whose male disguise influenced sexual orientation and resulted in a permanent (and authentic) male identity.”<sup>53</sup>

In a sense, Yde’s disguise becomes her identity. Like the Ovidian story of Iphis and Ianthe from which it is distantly drawn, the only solution to a transsexual dilemma like this one is to transform the body to match Yde’s gendered identity. Indeed, there is a sense within the narrative that Yde’s and Olive’s relationship, even before Yde’s literal sex change, occupies a positive space. Olive is not distressed to learn that her husband is a woman, calling her “my tresdoulce amy” (my very sweet beloved) and expressing horror only that Yde came to Rome to escape the advances of her own father. In a simple sense, Yde is a man in every way that counts, and Olive continues to desire her—the text notes that “Dont ont l’un l’autre baisie et accolee; / En cele nuit n’i [ot] cri ne melle” (7190-91). (Therefore they kissed and caressed each other / in that night neither crying nor fighting.) Watt’s analysis

of the late middle-English translation of this poem studies the phrase “clippen and kissen.” Her examination of the *Middle English Dictionary* suggests that while the phrase certainly means “embracing and kissing” in a variety of affectionate and reconciliatory contexts, a secondary meaning is explicitly sexual, suggesting that “clipping” and “kissing” can have “overtly sexual connotations, and is sometimes used, apparently euphemistically, to refer to (heterosexual) sexual intercourse.”<sup>54</sup> While the specific sexuality of both *Yde et Olive* and *Tristan de Nanteuil* have been discussed in detail, what is important for this discussion is that even the description of their lovemaking has a transgender context. If “clipping and kyssyng” imply heterosexual coupling, then Yde continues to inhabit a male identity while simultaneously confessing to her female body.<sup>55</sup> Or, as Watt comments, “Even in the bedroom, Ide is unwilling to abandon her male identity. Like Olive, she soon begins to value their marital relationship.”<sup>56</sup>

Klosowska sees that “the hierarchy established in the romance privileges same-sex marriage over incest, a heterosexual transgression.”<sup>57</sup> The marriage vows made between Yde and Olive before Yde’s transformation are “the only ones quoted in the text. The public one receives no symmetrical treatment—it is simply reported to have taken place.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the audience who is privy to the private exchange is in the position to authorize this marriage, even before it is normalized through Yde’s sex change. The populace’s anxiety about a female marriage which, like incest, disrupts patriarchal social order and heteronormative assumptions, focuses, as in *Silence*, on inheritance and reproduction. However, the angel’s intervention which transforms Yde allows Olive’s almost instantaneous pregnancy and the production of an heir to both kingdoms, thus resolving all the gaps and fears brought forward in the work. The ability of the transman Yde and Olive to become the rulers of Rome and Aragon (resolving the problem that caused Yde to run away disguised as a man in the first place) shows them productive in work. Producing Croissant, confirming the poem’s generational imperatives, shows how this transformation is authorized. Yde stands for a series of moral principles—the avoidance of incest, bravery, loyalty, faith, and dynastic preservation.

There is no question that all these works expose the disruptive

potential of gender fluidity. Valerie Traub argues that by cross-dressing, women do not simply perform masculinity in an imitative way, nor do they simply occupy a man's position. She suggests instead that they reinscribe gender transgressively by deconstructing the notion of "man" entirely, suggesting that the original or real "man" may itself be an image.<sup>59</sup> Speaking of *Yde and Olive*, Watt notes that "the distinction between sex and gender is an unstable one. It is never entirely clear to what extent Yde's masculine and feminine qualities are either "natural" or performed."<sup>60</sup> Or, to quote Szkilnik, "if women can indeed change their 'nature' and perform as well as men, . . . if gender boundaries are fluid, it might mean that there actually is no female 'nature,' nor is there male 'nature,' outside of biological difference."<sup>61</sup> And once that is changed, even that becomes questionable, or at least alterable, as Szkilnik adds "only flesh can, in its bareness, dispel falsehood and exhibit reality."<sup>62</sup> Richard F. Doctor, a psychologist of transgender experience, finds that "the cross-gender identity seems to grow stronger with practice and with social reinforcements."<sup>63</sup> The longer Yde (or her counterparts) passes as a man, the more fully she inhabits male identity. If Yde's cross-dressing tells us what happens when female identity is changed for male on the surface, Yde's transforming body asks what happens when the flesh itself changes, when the falsehood it dispels is the "truth" of her same-sex marriage to Olive, and the "reality" it exhibits is not the apparent reality under which the romance has operated for the balance of the story. While it is possible to read the ending of the tale as a quest for normativity—medieval romance cannot have two women married to each other—it is also possible to understand this transformation as a rejection of normativity—Yde's dressing and behaving like a man ultimately make her a man. Nature, it would seem, may finally conform to Nurture rather than oppose it.

As in *Silence*, nurture and nature vie with each other in the construction of identity. While Silence is raised as a boy, Yde may be raised more traditionally female, but the narrator often chooses to point out that she does not really mature. She is easily able to pass as a boy at least in part because her breasts have apparently not developed, and her portrait edges on the androgynous. Again, within a transgender framework, it is possible to see Yde as hormonally ambiguous; she may really not

be a woman, or she may be something in between. This, however, is speculative, but it is safe to say that in choosing to facilitate her own escape by turning into a boy, she seems to go through a transformation as psychological and physical as it is visual. As Watt notes, her “values, attributes, and body metamorphose as well. All she lacks is the male organ, although the fact that Yde carries a staff and a sword is crudely suggestive of her new-found virility.”<sup>64</sup> These are not just window dressing either (think, for instance, of Viola’s inability to duel with Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* because she’s not really a man). Yde knows instinctively how to fight and rousts several robbers in her travels even before she distinguishes herself in battle. And in a side note, she also seems quite comfortable in masculine language, calling her foe a “fil a putain” (son of a whore) right before she stabs him, which by medieval standards anyway, is certainly “most unladylike speech,” as Jacqueline de Weever daintily notes.<sup>65</sup> On top of that, she defeats another group of robbers in a wrestling match.

In leaving home and pursuing a quest, she undertakes the traditional romance journey, so often associated with masculine development, growing from squire to knight (and eventually to emperor). If in Yde’s case this is the most literally performed, it is echoed in the others. Don Martinos goes to war; Silence becomes a jongleur, runs away from his fosterage, and later saves King Evan in battle; Christine de Pizan, in her male guise, becomes the breadwinner and salvation of her family. While he does so somewhat derisively, David Valentine notes that many transgender works argue or imply that “transgender practices or identification are potentially socially transformative.” In the case of these narratives, this argument is thus substantiated.<sup>66</sup> Transgendering—whether temporary or permanent—subverts various kinds of masculine and normative power by making it accessible rather than exclusive. It is the process in these narratives by which strict rules and expectations are undermined. Each example is held up against patriarchal social orders that limit and restrict feminine potential. The normal expectations of medieval femininity provide Christine with no solution to her difficulties other than remarriage. By becoming male, she instead finds an alternative through her writing career, and her later praise of Joan of Arc as uniquely able to save a monarchy and country domesticated

to the point of impotence through her male disguise echoes Christine's conviction in the value of subverting gender norms. Silence's masculine upbringing functions as a slap against the repressive legal system that King Evan enacts; undertaken to subvert his laws, it ultimately results in overthrowing them. Nearly forced into an incestuous marriage by dynastic necessity, Yde changes from the passive pawn in a masculine game into its primary player.

The difficulty of these works is reading the balance between normativity and radicalism they offer. While each ultimately delivers a return to conventional order, the methodology of that return is itself transgressive. Each text accepts the primacy of conventional gender roles, heterosexual and productive marriage, and the authority of the biological body in determining identity. However, each of these seemingly normative terms is undermined by its construction, and in a sense the terms undercut each other as well. If masculinity and femininity (or even, perhaps, femaleness and maleness) are stereotypically defined in the works, all of them suggest that one does not need to be sexed male or female to inhabit that gender. Indeed, the texts imply, biological women make more ideal masculine men than biological men do as Yde, Blanchandine, Silence, and Don Martinos all best men at their own game, embodying masculine values more fully than their male-men counterparts do. Therefore, natural sex does not imply success in its linked gender; these works suggest quite the opposite. Heterosexual marriage is twice the result of a same-sex union. The sex change follows the marriage commitment and desire of the couples for each other, and in each case, authorizes the seemingly "problematic" marriage by allowing it to continue rather than destroying it. As a result, the biological body—at least in *Yde et Olive* and *Tristan de Nanteiul*, although this is also suggested in Christine's *Mutacion de Fortune*—may be the ultimate arbiter of one's identity, but that body itself can be fluid and changeable, ready to meet the demands of circumstance rather than controlling them.

The tension in transgender studies is primarily between performance and essentialism, a debate that sounds strikingly familiar to readers of *Silence*. Is gender ultimately only a series of behaviors and actions socially constructed to determine masculinity and femininity, or is it linked to some kind of biological imperative, genetic or chromosomal, and

therefore essential to the person, regardless of what the external body implies? Is a transgender person ultimately choosing a different performance than the one attached to its physical body or inherently “hard-wired” male or female despite the physical body? While the medieval material does not offer any resolution, it certainly replicates the tension, in the debates between Nature and Nurture in *Silence*, and in the resolutions to the poems. While *Silence* and “La Doncella que fue a la Guerra” ultimately suggest an unchangeable, biological creation of gender located in a body that determines identity more than any performance, *Yde et Olive* and *Tristan de Nanteiul* imply that biology is in the service of identity. If it is Merlin who unmasks Silence, it is God who defines Yde and Blanchandine as male, a confirmation of what has become their essential identities. In the medieval responses to a very contemporary debate, we are reminded that everything new is old again.

While explicit reactions to these texts have not survived, their very repetition suggests continued engagement with the questions they raise. “Yde et Olive” appears in a late-Middle-English translation of a later French version of *Huon de Bordeaux* and again as a play in 1454; there are multiple versions of “La Doncella que fue a la Guerra;” and Christine repeats her own formulation in *L’Avison Christine*. *The Roman de Silence* and *Tristan de Nanteiul* exist in unique manuscripts, but they are hardly unique examples of female cross-dressing in medieval narrative, although each presents distinct additions to the debate.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that medieval audiences were, at the very least, intrigued by narratives of gender inversion. Christine de Pizan’s aforementioned praise of Joan of Arc in the “Ditié” implies a kind of support for her own metaphoric translation, and continuation of the cross-dressing plots in Shakespeare and the man-woman from the Mummings Plays also suggests that as a topic, the boundaries of gender and identity are always fascinating and never resolved.

Rather than offering a resolution to the question of the source of gender identity, what unifies these narratives, from Christine’s metaphorical transformation to Yde’s literal one, is a kind of generational imperative. Gender operates in the service of generation: Christine must assume masculine form to rescue herself and her family from destitution and despair; Silencia must become Silentius at first to keep land and

property in the family, and eventually to rescind King Evan's sexist and restrictive laws; the Doncella must fulfill her father's military duties and serve the King; Yde must, in a sense, escape her father to embody him, so that as a man, she can become the King of Aragon. In all cases, we are offered a political vision which allows women a potential entrance, through performance as or transformation into men. Klosowska suggests that this cross-gendering is a kind of segmentation and recombination. She notes, "the elements that constitute a gender syntagm—physiology, clothes, language, emotions—are cut up and pasted together in a new phrase, corresponding to composite gender, inscribed somewhere on a continuum whose extremes—masculine and feminine—are perhaps only theoretical."<sup>68</sup> Thus it is the radical nature of these transforming bodies, both those that change for a time and those that change permanently, that destabilizes the nature and function of gender in romance entirely.

Seton Hall University

#### END NOTES

1. This title is an homage to Virginia Price's book, *How to be a Woman, Though Male* (Los Angeles: Chevalier Publications, 1971). Price is sometimes given credit for inventing the term "transgender": "though she most frequently used other terms, Price is represented as using this concept—or variations of it—to describe those who, like her, lived full time in a gender other than that to which they were ascribed at birth, but with surgical intervention." David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 32.

2. The Kinks, "Lola," *Lola versus Powerman and the Moneygoround, Part I*, prod. Ray Davis, Pye/RCA Records, 1970.

3. Quotations from *La Mutacion de Fortune* are from Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune, publié d'après les manuscrits par Suzanne Solente*. Publications de la Société des anciens textes français, v. 87 (Paris: A&J Picard, 1959) and are cited by line number. Translations are from Diane Bornstein, *Ideals for Women in the Works of Christine de Pizan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981) unless noted otherwise.

4. These two subsequent translations are by Nadia Margolis, "The Mutation of Fortune," in Charity Cannon Willard, ed., *The Writings of*

*Christine de Pizan* (New York: Persea Books, 1994), 127.

5. Christine de Pizan, "The Poem of Joan of Arc," in *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Willard, 359.

6. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), xv.

7. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 49.

8. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge Studies in French 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22.

9. Anne Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, "Fetishizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Staub (London: Routledge, 1991), 81.

10. Michelle Szkilnik, "The Grammar of the Sexes in Medieval French Romance," in *Gender Transformations: Crossing the Normative Barrier in Old French Literature*, ed. Karen J. Taylor (New York: Garland, 1998), 63.

11. *Ibid.*, 64-65.

12. Keith Busby, "*Plus ascenez qu'une popire*: Male Cross-Dressing in Medieval French Narrative," in *Gender Transformations*, 45.

13. *Ibid.*, 48.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 51. The quotations from these texts, cited by line numbers, and Busby's translations are taken from this article.

16. *Ibid.*, 47.

17. *Ibid.*, 48.

18. *Ibid.*, 50.

19. *Ibid.*, 51

20. *Ibid.*, 52.

21. *Ibid.*, 53.

22. *Ibid.*, 45.

23. *Ibid.*, 52.

24. Diane Watt, "Read my Lips: Clipping and Kyssyng in the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Queerly Phrased; Language, Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Anna Livia and Kira Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 168.

25. Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 9.

26. Szkilnik, "Grammar of the Sexes," 62.

27. *Ibid.*, 69.
28. Watt, "Read my Lips," 168.
29. Peggy McCracken, "The Boy who Was a Girl: Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*" *Romanic Review* 85, no. 4 (1994): 517-36; 517.
30. *Ibid.*, 517.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Anna Klosowska, *Queer Love in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 72.
33. *Ibid.*, 73.
34. *Ibid.*, 79.
35. Watt, "Read my Lips," 173.
36. Quotations from the *Roman de Silence* are taken from *Silence: A Thirteenth Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992), cited by line numbers.
37. I would like to thank the *Medieval Feminist Forum* editors, Marla Segol and Ilan Mitchell-Smith, as well as the reviewers, for pointing out the way the name Silence points to various textual and cultural anxieties.
38. Kate Mason Cooper, "Elle and L: Sexualized Textuality in the *Roman de Silence*," *Romance Notes* 25, no. 3 (1985): 344.
39. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 52.
40. *Ibid.*, 51-52.
41. There are many versions of "La Doncella que Fue a la Guerra." Quotations come from the version in Damaso Alonso's collection of medieval Spanish poetry, *Cancionero y Romancero Español* (Estella, Navarre: Cráficas Estella, S.A., 1982). "La Doncella" is found on pp. 198-201. A translation of a different version of the poem can be found in *The Defiant Muse: Hispanic Feminist Poems from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. and trans. Angel Flores and Kate Flores (New York: The Feminist Press, 1986). Their "Doncella" poem, called, "La niña guererra" or the "Warrior Girl" can be found on pp. 2-7. The translations of the version from Damaso Alonso's collection are my own. I would like to thank Matthew Escobar for his assistance with finding editions and information about this poem.
42. Quotations from *Tristan de Nanteuil* are from *Tristan de Nanteuil: Chanson de Geste Inédite*, ed. K. V. Sinclair. (Assen: Van Corcum and Company, 1971) cited by line number. Translations are from Kimberlee Campbell, "Acting like a Man: Performing Gender in *Tristan de Nanteuil*," in *Cultural Performances in Medieval France: Essays in Honor of Nancy Freeman Regalado*, ed. Eglal Doss-Quinby, Roberta L. Kreuger, and E. Jane

Burns (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2007).

43. Campbell, 83.

44. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 22. Also quoted in Campbell, 79.

45. Gaunt, 22.

46. Campbell, "Acting like a man," 85.

47. Ibid..

48. Ibid., 86.

49. Ibid., 86-87.

50. Ibid., 87.

51. Quotations from *Yde et Olive* are from Barbara Anne Brewka, *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive I, Croissant, Yde et Olive II, Huon et les Geants, Sequels to Huon de Bordeaux, as Contained in Turin Ms. L. II. 14: An Edition* ( PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1977; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms). Translations are my own. Additional translations are from *Duke Huon de Burdeux: English Charlemagne Romances. Done into English by Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, . . . 1534*. ed. S. L. Lee, The English Charlemagne Romances [pts. 7-9], Early English Texts Society, Extra Series 40 & 41 (London: Early English Text Series, 1883).

52. Watt, "Read my Lips," 174.

53. Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross-Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York: Garland Press, 1996), 116.

54. Watt, 169.

55. Along with Watt and Klosowska, see Francesca Canadé Sautman, "What Can They Possibly Do Together? Queer Epic Performances in *Tristan de Nanteuil*" in *Same Sex Love and Desire Among Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

56. Watt, "Read my Lips," 173.

57. Klosowska, *Queer Love*, 109.

58. Ibid., 110.

59. Valerie Traub, "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992), 155. Also quoted in Diane Watt, "Behaving Like a Man? Incest, Lesbian Desire, and Gender Play in *Yde et Olive* and its Adaptations," *Comparative Literature* 50, no. 4 (1998): 274.

60. Watt, "Behaving Like a Man," 274.

61. Szkilnik, "Grammar of the Sexes," 79.

62. Ibid., 76.

63. Richard F. Doctor, *Transvestites and Transsexuals: Toward a Theory of Gross Gender Behavior* (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 3.

64. Watt, "Behaving Like a Man," 276.

65. Jacqueline de Weever, "The Lady, the Knight, and the Lover: Androgyny and Integration in *La Chanson d'Yde et Olive*," *Romanic Review* 82, no. 4 (1991), 378.

66. Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*, 249.

67. See John Bourchier, trans. *The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux*. Intro. S. L. Lee, 4 parts. Early English Text Society, Early Series 40, 41, 43, 50 (London: Trubner, 1882-1887); *Miracle de la fille d'un roy*, ed. Gaston Paris and Ulysse Robert, *Miracles de Notre Dame par personnages*, vol. 7 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1883); Christine de Pizan, *L'Avison-Christine*, ed. Sister Mary Louis Towner, *Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures*; 6 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1932); *Le Ditié de Jehanne D'Arc: Christine de Pisan*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

68. Klosowska, *Queer Love*, 96.