

Man or woman?

The representation of gender transgression in Dutch, English, French and German early modern translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.



Masterthesis RMA Dutch Literature

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Introduction

The *Metamorphoses*, the epic poem of Publius Ovidius Naso (34 BC – AD 17) written in the year 1, contains many myths which were and still are controversial. The main subject of the *Metamorphoses* is transformation of the vulnerable, penetrable and porous body and the implications of a transformation for someone's identity.¹ The boundaries between humans, animals and nature in general are dangerously fluid in Ovid's world and 'human and bestial, animate and inanimate, male and female can flow into another.'² In the words of Charles Segal:

Ovid focuses on the moments when stable forms and familiar norms dissolve in order to tap creative, if necessarily disorderly, energies that are usually kept beneath the surface, under the control of political, social, and symbolic systems that insist on coherence and order.³

Among the familiar norms which get dissolved are the boundaries of gender. In several myths in the *Metamorphoses* men and women are able to change to another sex or able to inherit qualities of both sexes. In the myths of Tiresias, Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Iphis and lastly the myth of Caenis/Caeneus this is the case.⁴ In the myth of Tiresias a man transgresses into a woman after hitting two coupling snakes. After seven years Tiresias is able to transform back into his original form. Because of this experience, Tiresias is called upon as a judge for a discussion between Jupiter and Juno about sexual pleasure, being an expert on the (sexual) experiences of both sexes. The myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis deals with the unanswered love of the nymph Salmacis for Hermaphroditus, the son of Mercury and Venus. After Hermaphroditus' rejection Salmacis prays to the gods for an union. Together they fuse into one body, becoming one gender ambiguous person or so called hermaphrodite. The myth of Iphis and lanthe is focused on Iphis, a girl secretly raised as a boy, who transforms into an actual man shortly before her wedding. Lastly, there is the myth of Caenis, who wishes to become a man after being raped by Neptune in order to never suffer from or undergo such a violence again. After she has become a he – named Caeneus – he is still associated with stereotypes of his previous sex and not fully acknowledged as a man.

As simple as gender transgression is in a fictional world, as impossible it was in the early modern world of Europe. Specific gender roles were assigned to each sex, dictated by bodily characteristics and the dichotomies of active/passive and superior/inferior. Rules about clothing, behaviour, occupation and legal rights delineated the differences between both sexes and determined social life.⁵ Gender deviancy was judged heavily and limited by societal and juridical norms. Discourses on religion and biology also regarded gender deviancy as impossible. Women who acted as men, for instance, were seen as monsters. Men on the other hand were warned to never act in a feminine way and the fear of demasculinization, lowering the social position of men, was very

¹ Charles Segal, "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies: Art, Gender, and Violence in the 'Metamorphoses,'" *Arion* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1998): 9-10.

² Segal, "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies," 11-12.

³ Segal, "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies," 12.

⁴ There are also myths in which gods and humans temporarily change into another sex for a sexual conquest or escape and myths in which characters portray specific characteristics of the other sex. The myths in question are the myth of Jupiter and Callisto, Narcissus, Bacchus, Phebus and Leucothoë, Meleager and Atalanta, Metra, Scython and Pomona and Vertumnus. I have not included these myths in my corpus because these myths do not permanently distort the 'natural' order of gender boundaries.

⁵ Thomas Lacquer, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 135; Geertje Mak, *Doubting Seks. Inscriptions, Bodies and Selves in Nineteenth-Century Hermaphrodite Case Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 40.

prominent throughout the early modern period. A figure such as the hermaphrodite was even more problematic: although it practically fulfilled both roles and could change its sex juridically without much trouble, it was seen as a despicable but amusing monster.⁶

Despite these heavy gender norms, the *Metamorphoses* with its controversial content was a very popular text in early modern Europe. The *Metamorphoses* was widely taught at schools in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The myths, furthermore, were used as subjects for paintings, prints, plays, novels, court festivities, architecture and decoration.⁷ Translations, emblem-books and commentaries as well as handbooks which discuss the meaning of the myths appeared in numerous languages. A change can be perceived during this period of the way in which the *Metamorphoses* was framed. In the Middle Ages all myths were endowed with spiritual meaning and connected with astrology, reconciling Christianity with the pagan world. From the Renaissance onwards other modes of interpretation became more prominent and myths were explained increasingly through a moral, historical and biological perspective.⁸ One can imagine that it therefore became harder to describe and interpret the aforementioned myths. How, for instance, can a man transgressing into a woman be biologically explained, when 'Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should become imperfect?'⁹

In this research I would like to analyse this discrepancy between the fictional world of Ovid and the 'real' world of early modern Europe in regards to gender transgression. I would like to know how these four myths are used, manipulated, depicted and/or censured in early modern translations and commentaries. Furthermore, I want to know if interpretations of these myths change over time and if they differ per country. I have chosen to focus on the Dutch Republic, England, France and Germany, four neighbouring Northern European countries.

Studies of the *Metamorphoses* in the early modern period up till now have mostly focused on its influence on art and literature. Jean Seznec's *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1972) is one of the most influential works in this field, inspiring other such as Sluiter (1986), Barkan (1986), Bull (2005), and Moog-Grünwald (2008) for art history and Brown (1999), Oakley Brown (2006), Taylor (2006), Gallagher (2009) and Martindale (1990) for literature. Among the studies of specifically the translation history of the *Metamorphoses* and its reception – Percy (1984), Lyne (2001), Fisser (1994), Van Marion (2011), Walter (1995) and Chatelain (2008) – is a research strand which focuses specifically on the illustrations accompanying translations (Amielle 1995; Boschloo 1980).

In regards to my research, the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis has received the most academic attention. Silberman (1988), for example, has studied the mythographic tradition of Hermaphroditus in England while Sarah Carter (2011) researched how deviant radical concepts in diverse myths of the *Metamorphoses* were adapted and interpreted by the early modern English public. Their focus is however limited to England and a comparison of interpretations of this myth in different countries has not been made. The myth of Iphis, furthermore, has only been studied in regards to lesbianism (Carter 2011; Robinson 2001), while the myths of Tiresias and Caenis/Caeneus

⁶ Lacquer, *Making Sex*, 139; Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites. Sex and Other Stories* (Palgrave Publishers, 2002), 4.

⁷ Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods. Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art* (Penguin Group, 2005), 33-34.

⁸ Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods. The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 37-38, 85.

⁹ Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. and ed. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago, 1982): 32-33, quoted in Patricia Parker, "Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 338-339.

have only been mentioned in passing.

That it is relevant and necessary to view these myths in a wider European perspective and put them into the discourse of gender identity becomes clear if we look at historical notions of gender as well as recent developments in gender theory. The binary system of the sexes – and people who were deviant of that system – is as old as mankind. In the earliest systematic medical texts in the West, the *Corpus Hippocraticum* from the fifth century B.C., attempts were made to explain sex differences in terms of strength versus weakness, greatness versus smallness and mastery versus diminution. People who escaped the binary system included passive men, sexually aggressive women, cross-dressers, homosexuals, and transsexuals.¹⁰

Around 1980 the study of ambiguous sexuality and gender identity became the focus of feminist and deconstructionist theories. Questions were why these sexually ambiguous phenomena were so contested in law, politics, medicine and society and how the binary sex opposition continued to be the norm.¹¹ The boundaries of gender are never stable: they are movable and negotiable and conveyed through the use of language and symbols.¹² To be male or female depends on the meaning language gives to these roles, as well the historical and social context in which their respective boundaries are imagined.¹³ As proclaimed by Joan Scot, language is ‘a system through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices organized and by which, accordingly, people represent and understand their world, including who they are and how they relate to others.’¹⁴ Gender, one aspect of the way people understand themselves and relate to others, is therefore ‘what we make of sex on a daily basis, how we deploy our embodiedness and our multivalent sexualities in order to construct ourselves in relation to the classifications of male and female.’¹⁵ Our manners and choices in clothing, cosmetics and objects construct reality and define the identity of male or female.

There are already some studies who specifically focus on figures who deviate from the norm. Cross-dressing, for example, has been touched upon by Stephen Orgel (1996), Laura Levine (1994), Vern and Bonnie Bullough (1993), Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (1991) and Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol (1989). Hermaphrodites have been studied in a medical context (Dreger 1998) and in the way they are represented (Huet 1993; Jones & Stallybrass 1991; Mann 2006). Gilbert Ruth (2002) and Kathleen Long (2006) have looked specifically on the overall representation of the hermaphrodite in early modern England and France, focusing on culture, literature, politics, science and medicine, while Geertje Mak (2012) has focused on case studies of hermaphrodites in Europe of the nineteenth century. This study complements previous studies because it focuses on the reflections of contemporaries on gender and specifically the transgression of gender in the realm of literature. The use of a comparative approach, furthermore, can delineate general notions and nation specific notions of gender and gender transgression.

In this research project I have chosen to focus on early modern Northern European translations in which a commentary and/or illustrations are added, providing a direct insight in textual and visual

¹⁰ Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, *Body Guards. The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), 4-5, 19.

¹¹ Epstein and Straub, *Body Guards*, 4-5, 21.

¹² Joan W. Scott, Jill K. Conway & Susan C. Bourque, *Learning about Women: Gender, Politics, and Power* (The University of Michigan Press, 1987), p. xxiii, xxix.

¹³ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 10.

¹⁴ Joan W. Scott, “Deconstructing Equality vs. Difference: or, the Uses of Post-structuralist Theory for Feminism,” *Feminist Studies* 14 (Spring 1988): 34.

¹⁵ Epstein and Straub, *Body Guards*, 3.

interpretations of the four myths. Prior to making my final selection, I analysed translations of the *Metamorphoses* from the period 1500-1800 coming from the Dutch Republic, England, France and Germany, making up a total of 34 translations. The most interesting of these texts were always the ones in which illustrations were included as well as a commentary. In these ones early modern thought on gender transgression is the most explicit. In regard to the commentaries, I have included one of the most influential commentaries specifically focused on the *Metamorphoses*, the *Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis* (1604) by Karel van Mander (1548 – 1606), which was later on also translated into German.¹⁶ Other mythographs were often more concerned with the whole scope of ancient mythology and the origins of gods, instead of the myths in the *Metamorphoses*. In regards to the illustrations I have added several emblem books in which a summarized vernacular version of the myth is published alongside it. Many illustrations of engravers such as Bernard Salomon, Virgil Solis and Antonio Tempesta were republished in other sources. I have chosen to limit myself to translations in which illustrations appeared alongside commentaries, and not include translations in which such a commentary is not apparent.¹⁷ I included the literal translation of schoolmaster and classical scholar John Clarke, whose work will be used to compare the Ovidian text with the freer early modern adaptations of the *Metamorphoses*. Clarke's work, in which the Latin original is printed next to a word-for-word English rendering, was specifically created to learn beginners and children 'the *Latin* tongue.'¹⁸ This brings me to the following selection:

Sixteenth century

- *Der wunderbarlichen Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Thier und anderer Creature* (1551) by Jörg Wickram (DU).
- *La Métamorphose d'Ovide figurée* (1557) (FR).
- *Excellente figueren ghesneden uuyten uppersten Poëte Ovidius* (1557) by Guilliaume Borluit (NL).
- *Tetrasticha in Ovidii Metamorphosis* (1563) by Posthius von Germersheim (DU).
- *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung* (1564) by Johannes Sprengius (DU).

Seventeenth century

- *Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis* (1604) by Karel van Mander (NL).
- *P. Ovid. Nasonis XV Metamorphoseon librorū figuræ* (1607) by Crispijn de Passe (DU).
- *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (1619) and *XV Discours sur le Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Contenant l'Explication Morale des Fables* (1636) by Nicolas Renouard (FR).
- *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished, Mythologiz'd* (1632) by George Sandys (EN).
- *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres* (1660) by Pierre Du Ryer (FR).
- *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux* (1676) by Isaac de Benserade (FR).

¹⁶ *Metamorphosis, oder: des verblühten Sinns der Ovidanischen Wandlungs-Gedichte gründliche Auslegung*. Nürnberg (1679).

¹⁷ See for a full overview of the dissemination of these illustrations chapter 2.

¹⁸ John Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses. With an English Translation, as Literal as possible* (London: W. Clarke, 1752), iii. Copy from Harvard University. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=gcAOAAAAYAAJ>

Eighteenth century

- *De vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen* (1700) by Abraham Valentyn and Ludolf Smids (NL).
- *Les Metamorphoses D'Ovide, Avec des Explications à la fin de chaque Fable* (1701) by De Bellegarde, Jean-Baptiste Morvan (FR).
- *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, en Latin, Traduites en Francois* (1732) by Antoine Banier (FR).
- *Ovid's Metamorphoses. With an English Translation, as Literal as possible* (1752) by John Clarke (EN).
- *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide, en Vers Francois* (1784) by Mathey De Massilian (FR).

The countries which I have chosen – the Dutch Republic, England, France and Germany – were highly connected in the exchange of texts, using the same mythographies for their interpretations of the myths and even translating each-other's works.¹⁹ In studying these four countries I can delineate how the myths articulate/describe gender roles and if the use of images and the interpretation given by the commentaries are specific for the language (and country) it appeared in. Are there transnational similarities in the Dutch, English, German and French adaptations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*?

For this research, I used the conceptual framework of 'cultural translation', the notion that translations are negotiations: the original text is decontextualized and thereafter recontextualized to fit in its new environment, thereby adapting the cultural norms of its new host.²⁰ Texts were amplified, shortened, bowdlerized, paraphrased and modified and passages might be omitted for religious, moral or political reasons.²¹ Although ancient literature enjoyed the highest cultural prestige – in England and France the versions in the vernacular grew significantly in the 1530, while in the Dutch Republic they saw the light of day around the 1550s – translating classical literature was overall problematic. First of all, it was assumed that these works contained dangerous lies. The pagan myths with their multiple divinities were not reconcilable with Christian doctrine. Humanists, furthermore, despised the thought that the high Latin culture would be diminished in the vulgar tongue. This criticism was often refuted with the argument that ancient Romans translated Greek into Latin themselves, also using their vernacular, and that it was done by other European nations.²²

There were two methods of translating which a translator could follow. The first method was source-oriented, translating word-for-word and making a most accurate and literal translation possible. The other method was target-oriented, translating with the future audience in mind and conforming to literary and other conventions of the recipient language. This last method was closely aligned with adaptation and imitation, employed especially by translators of England and France in the middle of the seventeenth century. The Low Countries, on the other hand, were more inclined to the stricter conception of translation.²³

¹⁹ Works which were circulating in early modern Europe were for instance Boccaccio's *De genealogia deorum* (1472), Giglio Gregorio Giraldi's *De deis gentium varia & multiplex historia* (1548), Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* (1567) and Francois Pomey's *Pantheum Mythicum* (1659).

²⁰ Burke, 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe,' in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke, and R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9-10.

²¹ Burke, 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe,' 31-33.

²² Theo Hermans, 'Translating 'Rhetorijckelijck' or 'Ghetrouwelijck': Dutch Renaissance Approaches to Translation,' in *Standing Clear: A Festschrift for Reinder P. Meijer*, ed. Jane Fenoulhet, and Thomas Hermans (London: Centre for Low Countries Studies, 1991), 151, 154.

²³ Hermans, 'Translating 'Rhetorijckelijck' or 'Ghetrouwelijck',' 161-162.

In my first chapter I will discuss general notions of gender and gender ambiguity in early modern Europe and compare these with gender notions in the Ovidian world. My second chapter focuses on methods employed by mythography in order to understand mythology and the visual tradition of mythology in early modern Europe. In this chapter, I will also briefly introduce the sources I have selected and go into translation specifics. In chapter 3-5 I will discuss my analysis of the myths of Tiresias, Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Iphis and Caenis/Caeneus in text, commentary and illustrations.

Chapter 1: Ovid, gender and the early modern period

The gender transgressions portrayed in the four selected myths tell us a lot about gender roles in the classical period. In the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, for instance, the appropriate behaviour for both sexes is made explicit in their role reversal. Hermaphroditus is a passive man, while Salmacis is an active women, which should be the other way around. The cruel fate of Hermaphroditus, becoming a gender ambiguous monster, is the extreme result of the reversal of familiar gender roles. The myth of Iphis on the other hand shows the normativity of heterosexuality and the importance of having a male child, making cross-dressing a necessary tool to survive. The myth of Caenis/Caeneus shows the benefits that women gain when they become men, freeing them from the threat of injury, outrage and rape.²⁴ The myth of Tiresias, finally, is foremost an expression of the fear of emasculation.

When the first translation of the *Metamorphoses* in my corpus appeared, *der wunderbarlichen Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Their und anderer Creature* by Jörg Wickram (1545), more than fifteen centuries had passed since the original publication by Ovid. The gender notions of the Ovidian world, however, were still very prominent and the basis of the patriarchal society of the early modern European world. In the following I will explore classical and Ovidian notions of gender in comparison with early modern ones, seeking for similarities and differences. In order to identify specifically the early modern perspective on gender and gender transgression it is important to filter the myths from their classical content, leaving behind words, phrases, metaphors and interpretations which signify early modern thought. I will focus on discourse of religion and biology, as well as notions of gender in regard to societal and juridical norms. I will, moreover, briefly link the gender transgressions in the myths with gender notions of Roman society and explore the practice of cross-dressing and the figure of the hermaphrodite.

1.1. One or two biological sexes? Characteristics of body and mind.

One of the most influential and long lasting theories of biology was the humoral or temperamental theory of physician Claudius Galenus (AD 131 – between AD 201-216), based on the ancient works of Hippocrates (460 BC – 370 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC).²⁵ Galenus believed that the human body was filled with four different bodily fluids – blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm – which controlled the body and determined a human's character. The four types of characters – the sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic – were common to both sexes and through seminal emission, bleeding, purging and sweating could the bodily fluids be balanced. A disbalance of these bodily fluids would cause illnesses or other disturbances.²⁶

The difference between men and women was based on their internal elements. Women were considered to be cold and moist, while men were hot and dry. Blood had the function to warm and moist the body and because women lost a lot of their blood through menstruation, they were cooler. In fact, women were essentially male, but through a lack of vital heat their reproductive organs had retained inside their bodies instead of becoming visible. The womb was nothing more than a penis turned inward.²⁷ It was possible, therefore, in Roman as well as in early modern society, for a

²⁴ Segal, "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies," 22, 24

²⁵ Lacquer, *Making Sex*, 35-43.

²⁶ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 44.

²⁷ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 33-34, 45.

woman to change into a man later in life, because the penis could always show itself when the internal heat was enlarged.²⁸ Some cases of hermaphrodites illustrate this transformation. Marie Germain, for example, lived as a girl until the age of twenty-two. His masculine organs appeared when he strained himself while jumping. He lived thereafter as a man with a full beard.²⁹ Another case is that of Marin/Marie le Marcis, described in *Des Hermaphrodites* (1612) by Jacques Duval (1555 - 1615). Marin/Marie, from birth brought up as a girl, possessed functional, but hidden male genitalia. Before Duval was able to examine her, she was condemned to death because she supposedly had committed sodomy.³⁰ Duval prevented the execution of this sentence by 'discovering the hidden member and its capacity to urinate and ejaculate.'³¹

women have as much hidden within the body as men have exposed outside; leaving aside, only, that women don't have so much heat, nor the ability to push out what by the coldness of their temperament is held as if bound to the interior. Wherefore if with time, the humidity of childhood which prevented the warmth from doing its full duty being exhaled for the most part, the warmth is rendered more robust, vehement, and active, then it is not an unbelievable thing if the latter, chiefly aided by some violent movement, should be able to push out what was hidden within. Now since such a metamorphosis takes place in Nature for the alleged reasons and examples, we therefore never find in any true story that any man ever became a woman, because Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should become imperfect.³²

Men's and women's virtues were derived from their internal temperaments. The cold temperament which prevailed in women made her tender, beautiful, virtuous, chaste, silent and yielding. Women were also however physically weak, fearful and timorous and subject to sickness and disease. Their body-fluids controlled women and made them morally and mentally weak. Their lack of self-control made women obstinate, perverse, jealous, greedy, vain, hypersexual and deceitful.³³

The heat in men, on the other hand, made men bold and hardy: they were rational and strong and therefore fit to rule the country and govern their disorderly wives.³⁴ Especially their ability of self-control was important: a man had to control his passions and emotions and never lose his reason, otherwise he would become effeminate.³⁵ The effeminate man supposedly lacked virility and all social assertiveness. He was basically a woman and therefore did not deserve a good reputation.³⁶

In Roman society vices and virtues were equally distributed over the sexes. According to Juvenal, a Latin author of satirical poems, the sexes both shared the vice of anger, cruelty, gossip,

²⁸ Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 36.

²⁹ Patricia Parker, "Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 342.

³⁰ Kathleen P. Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 80-81.

³¹ Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe*, 81.

³² Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 32-33.

³³ Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24.

³⁴ Caroll Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman. A Panorama of English Womanhood, 1540 to 1640* (London: Cleaver-Hume Press Limited, 1952), 18-19, 24-27, 30; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 5-7, 12, 19-21; Michel Ketelaars, *Compagnies dochters. Vrouwen en de VOC (1602-1795)* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2014), 21-22; Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 30-33.

³⁵ Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England. Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London & New York: Longman, 1999), 30-32, 55-56.

³⁶ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 95-96.

drinking, greed, avarice, prodigality, lying, murder, lust and adultery. The most prominent virtues were sensitivity and courage. Women were considered to be intelligent and capable of reading literature in Roman society.³⁷ The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus (AD c. 20-30 – AD 101) argued that ‘boys and girls should be given an equal education since they have the same natural abilities, and since women are no less philosophical beings than men and have the need for the same virtues.’³⁸

The difference between the two sexes was therefore not based on personal characteristics, but on personal achievements. Men enjoyed the privilege over women in regards to public recognition of achievements.³⁹ Two other important markers for the difference between the sexes was status and the dichotomy of penetrator/penetrated. The active male was the penetrator while the passive female was the penetrated. Social order was threatened when this essential dichotomy was reversed:

It was the weak, womanly male partner who was deeply flawed, medically and morally. His very countenance proclaimed his nature: *pathicus*, the one being penetrated; *cnaedus*, the one who engages in unnatural lust; *mollis*, the passive, effeminate one. Conversely it was the *tribade*, the woman playing the role of the man, who was condemned and who, like the *mollis*, was said to be the victim of a wicked imagination as well as an excess and misdirection of semen. The actions of the *mollis* and the *tribade* were thus unnatural not because they violated natural heterosexuality but because they played out – literally embodied – radical, culturally unacceptable reversals of power and prestige.⁴⁰

Tiresias breaks the dichotomy of penetrator/penetrated, by his experiences as both man and woman. In Roman eyes, he is the *mollis*, unnatural in his behaviour and violating heterosexuality.

1.2. The public and private sphere

In Roman society, there was a clear division between the masculine public and the feminine private sphere. ‘Roman women’s gender role is related to their traditional realm, the home, and their ideal activities are within it.’⁴¹ As housewives and especially as reproductive agents, women were not allowed to participate in politics, were restricted in commercial-professional activities and were banned from gymnasia.⁴² Women’s worth was based on their ability to reproduce and ‘a woman having not experienced motherhood defeats the purpose of Nature as much as an infant who does not grow to adulthood.’⁴³ Caenis/Caeneus is clearly derivate from this norm: she rejects the many marriage offers she receives and wanders alone at the shores of the beach, denying furthermore her status as penetrated after her rape by becoming a penetrator herself.

This norm of ‘staying-inside’ was not applicable, however, to all public realms of Roman society. Women could act in the realm of religion as priestesses and other female religious specialists and religious officials in specific festivals and rites. The Roman Senate, consisting only of men, was

³⁷ Claude-Emanuelle Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman. Roman Women, Gender Qualities and Conjugal Relationships at the Turn of the First Century* (Wien: Peter Lang, 2013), 57, 60-73, 74-83.

³⁸ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman*, 54.

³⁹ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman*, 83.

⁴⁰ Lacquer, *Making Sex*, 53.

⁴¹ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman*, 22.

⁴² Monika Trümper, ‘Gender and Space, ‘Public’ and ‘Private’,’ in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, ed. Sharon L. James, and Sheila Dillon (Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 296-297, 299.

⁴³ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, like Woman*, 29.

however the main actor of communication with divine powers.⁴⁴ 'The legal status of a woman was inferior to that of a man and was closer to that of a child than to that of an adult.'⁴⁵ As Claude-Emanuelle Centlivres Challet shows, however, women did engage in activities that were not related to the household:

In Pliny's world we see women spending important sums of money on buying a property or a title for themselves or their male relatives, suing to recover their patrimony, managing it as they like by means of wills, standing as accusers, or taking an active part in the political life of their time. These activities are part of a man's gender role, according to traditional stereotypes which are paradoxically also conveyed by Pliny himself, but can be engaged in by women in such a natural fashion that Pliny does not feel the need to comment on them as activities unusual for women of his class. [...] male and female spheres of activity overlap, or, from a traditional point of view, women invade the male sphere, in a way that shows that gender roles were flexible and not strictly separate.⁴⁶

Compared to Roman society, the early modern European world seems more limited. The same separation of public and private sphere was active in the shape of patriarchy. The idea of patriarchy has its origins in the story of Genesis from the Bible: Eve, the woman, was created after Adam, the man, which made her intellectually, physically and morally inferior to him. Eve, furthermore, governed by her passions, had been the first one to yield to the serpent's temptation of the forbidden fruit. Eve had urged Adam to disobey God and had to be punished for the major part she had played in the fall of humankind.⁴⁷ This punishment was firstly the pain of childbirth and secondly the subjection of women to men, who, as disorderly 'weaker vessels', lacked man's strength, initiative and authority and were therefore not able to take care of themselves.⁴⁸

Women were not allowed to speak in church because of their moral and mental weakness. The only way for women to get rid of their inheritance of the sinful Eve, was to live a celibate and chaste life and denounce their sexuality.⁴⁹ In other public realms women were expected to be silent as well: 'Women were too weak to control their passions, and for this reason should not get involved in areas of public life where passions were liable to run high, such as politics and religion.'⁵⁰ The equality of the sexes ran contrary to nature and reality. The cultivation of masculine qualities, such as strength, majesty, courage and reason, would only lead women to neglect the qualities of grace, beauty, finesse and sentiment, that were peculiar to female sex.⁵¹ Although women from lower classes were obliged to work and navigate in the public sphere – they worked in textile, leather and clothing, ran inns and taverns, were painters, midwives and servants – women in general were subjected to the household.⁵² A favourite depiction of a virtuous wife 'was either the snail or the

⁴⁴ Lin Foxhall, *Studying Gender in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 142.

⁴⁵ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, like Woman*, 28.

⁴⁶ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, like Woman*, 48.

⁴⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 124; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, xvii; Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres* (London & New York: Longman, 1998), 16-17; Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 15, 17.

⁴⁸ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 60, 76.

⁴⁹ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 13.

⁵⁰ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850*, 28.

⁵¹ Vera Lee, *The Reign of Women in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1975), 50.

⁵² Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 70.

tortoise, both animals that never leave their "houses" and are totally silent.⁵³

Marriage was viewed as a mystical union ordained by God.⁵⁴ Marriage had three purposes: 'the procreation of children, the avoidance of sin, and mutual help and companionship.'⁵⁵ Although mutuality was central in marriage, this did not mean equality: the importance of husbandly authority and wifely obedience was still stressed.⁵⁶ In a familial setting, the husband had to be wise, knowledgeable, and deliberate, governing and protecting his family. The wife on the other hand was the help of her husband, a comrade and subordinate and was obliged to live in her husband's residence. She should be pious and God fearing, have a good upbringing and education and had to set an example for the children and servants. Together, they had to possess specified household virtues: thriftiness, vigilance, frugality, moderation and diligence.⁵⁷ 'Marriage was a woman's highest calling, even though it brought physical dangers and restraints on her freedom' and unmarried women were viewed with suspicion, 'both because they were fighting their natural sex drive and because they were upsetting the divinely imposed order, which made women subject to man.'⁵⁸

Women were legally also subject to men, always under their guardianship as a wife or daughter. A woman (and a man for that matter) became an adult when she reached the age of 25. Under that age, her property was in the hands of her father or guardian. The possessions of married women were legally owned by their husband who was free to do with her property as he pleased.⁵⁹ A married woman 'could not sue, make contracts or go to court for any reason without his approval, and in many areas of Europe could not be sued or charged with any civil crime on her own.'⁶⁰ Women and men were judged in different ways, especially when it concerned sex. While sexual adventures of men were seen as a part of growing up, women were ferociously condemned when they were associated with premarital sex, and, when this news became public, were ruined for life. Specifically a wife's adultery was hurtful for the reputation of the husband, which was perceived as a clear sign of a man's inability to maintain household control.⁶¹

1.3. Cross-dressing

The myth of Iphis and Ianthe is mostly an example of lesbianism, defying the patriarchal, heterosexual society of the classical period. Although the transformation of Iphis into a real man resolves this disorder, the fact stays that two women loved each other. The homosexual love, however, is one-sided: Ianthe, namely, considers Iphis as a boy and assumes she is heterosexual in her love to Iphis. For Iphis, cross-dressing is a necessary means to survive: only by pretending to be a boy, in clothing but also in actions, she escapes the death sentence of her father Lyctus who regards girls to be too costly for his family.

Cross-dressing of men and women was interpreted in different ways. For a man, it was a sign

⁵³ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

⁵⁴ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

⁵⁵ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 22.

⁵⁶ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 22.

⁵⁷ Marion W. Gray, *Reproductive Men, Reproductive Women. The Agrarian Household and the Emergence of Separate Spheres during the German Enlightenment* (New York & Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2000), 28, 61, 74.

⁵⁸ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 23.

⁵⁹ Ariadne Schmidt, 'Vrouwen en het recht. De juridische status van vrouwen in Holland in de vroegmoderne tijd,' in *Jaarboek van het Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* (Den Haag: Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, 2004), 28-30, 32-33, 36, 38.

⁶⁰ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 31.

⁶¹ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 66-90.

of weakness and a loss of status. The earliest reference to male cross-dressers in the ancient world, for instance, is to Sardanapalus, the last of the Assyrian kings. Sardanapalus spends too much time dressing up in his castle which causes an uprising. This revolt was justified by the fact that Sardanapalus displayed feminine weakness, therefore not being fit to rule the country. On the other hand, men could justify their cross-dressing if they had a good reason. An erotic escapade for example, which is portrayed in Ovidian myths such as Jupiter and Calisto, Apollo and Leucothoe and Vertumnus and Pomona. Another good reason was to infiltrate enemy lines or to escape danger, as can be seen in the myth of Achilles.⁶²

For women, on the other hand, cross-dressing could help them to achieve things normally only possible for men. The queen of Hatshepsut, for instance, cross-dressed in order to rule. Women cross-dressed to overcome the many barriers that handicapped them and in the case of Iphis, this handicap was her misogynist father Lyctus.⁶³

Cross-dressing was often a part of the Greek and Roman ceremonies that symbolized life's transitions. Especially men were allowed to cross-dress, for women were not allowed to expose themselves in public. Men therefore had to perform activities usually done by women in the context of religion and theatre.⁶⁴ The ubiquity of such festivals and events in which cross-dressing was allowed, 'might well indicate that the Greeks, who drew strict lines between sex roles and assigned a restricted role to women, needed periods during which the barriers were removed.'⁶⁵

Natalie Zemon Davis has shown in her study 'Woman on Top' (1978) that in the early modern world similar cross-dressing practices took place. Men dressed up to 'save themselves from an enemy or from execution, to sneak into the opponent's military camp, or to get into a nunnery or women's quarters for purposes of seduction.'⁶⁶ Women cross-dressers, on the other hand, go beyond what is normally expected of them as a woman, defending established rules or values. Furthermore, in popular festival and customs, set to the changes of season and on holidays, was much attention to the switching of sex roles, mostly having carnivalesque functions of mocking and unmasking the truth.⁶⁷ According to Davis, these festivals:

afforded an outlet for conflicts about authority within the system and occasions by which the authoritarian current in family, workshop, and political life could be moderated by the laughter of disorder and paradoxical play. Accordingly, they served to reinforce hierarchical structure.⁶⁸

Although cross-dressing was accepted in such occasions, cross-dressing by individuals was frowned upon and criticized. A clear example of criticism can be seen in a series of pamphlets appearing in 1620 in England. In the three pamphlets – *Hic Mulier, Haec Vir* and *Muld Sack* – the gender confusion caused by men and women was disputed. Especially women were keen to dress as the other sex and disrupted the social order with their manly attire, short hair and bold aggressive speech. According to a pamphlet of 1576, women started wearing doublets in place of gowns and hats instead of

⁶² Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 23-24, 30, 36.

⁶³ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 24.

⁶⁴ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 27-28.

⁶⁵ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 29.

⁶⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Woman on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe," in *The Reversible World. Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock, and Victor Turner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 155.

⁶⁷ Davis, "Woman on Top," 155-156, 163, 167.

⁶⁸ Davis, "Woman on Top," 171.

kerchiefs.⁶⁹ Philipp Stubbes (1555 - 1610) quotes in his popular book *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583): 'Our Apparell was given us a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therefore one to weare the Apparell of another sex is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kind.'⁷⁰ The crime of clothing is a crime against God's law and makes the offender, male or female, a monstrosity.⁷¹

In the research of Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol (1981), the stories of more than 90 women who took on man's clothes for a better life and/or to follow their lovers were gathered. The girls always came from the lower classes, lost their parents on a young age, had a bad relationship with their family and had to provide for themselves. Almost all the women took a position as soldier or sailor, for these occupations made masculine activities such as traveling, fighting and sailing possible.⁷² Anne Bonney (1700 – 1782), for instance, was a pirate who 'chose to dress in men's clothing to live a more independent life, and became an almost mythic figure.'⁷³ Another well-known female cross-dresser is Mary Frith (1584 – 1659), better known as Moll Cutpurse, the subject of the play *The Roaring Girl* (1611) by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton (Image 1). A famous German cross-dressing case is that of Anna Ilsabe Buncke, or *die Junfer Heinrich*, who worked as a dyer, a farmhand and a soldier in man's clothing in order to earn more money.⁷⁴ Banishment was the most usual punishment for cross-dressing. Only in the case of other delicts, such as the marriage of a disguised woman to another woman – a fine, flogging, a prison or even death sentence could be demanded.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 24.

⁷⁰ Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* (1877): 73, quoted in Simon Shephard, *Amazons and Warrior Women. Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), 67.

⁷¹ Simon Shephard, *Amazons and Warrior Women. Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (The Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), 84-85.

⁷² Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *Daar was laatst een meisje loos. Nederlandse vrouwen als matrozen en soldaten een historisch onderzoek* (Baarn: Amboboeken, 1981), 21, 23, 36.

⁷³ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 55.

⁷⁴ Mary Lindemann, 'Gender tales the multiple identities of Maiden Heinrich, Hamburg 1700,' in *Gender in Early Modern German History*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131, 138.

⁷⁵ Dekker and Van de Pol, *Daar was laatst een meisje loos*, 94-96; Lindemann, 'Gender tales the multiple identities of Maiden Heinrich,' 141.

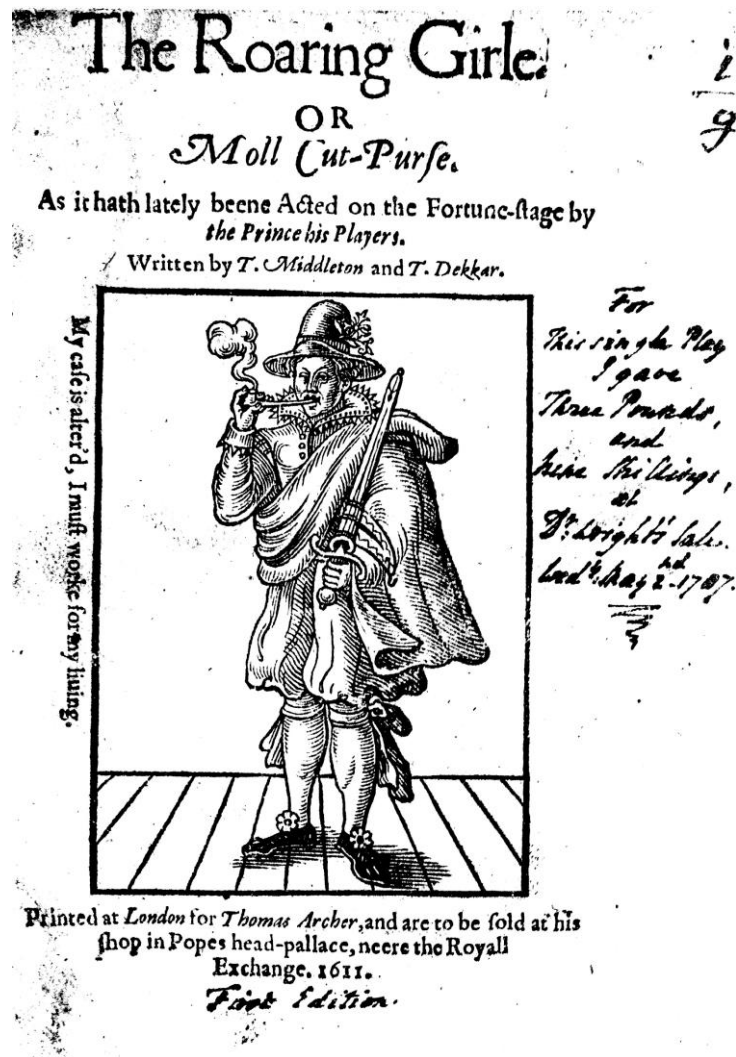


Image 1, titelpage of *The Roaring Girl*

The cross-dressing of women, who, with their loose morals, could be called prostitutes, 'indicated that their husbands, fathers, or brothers were weak and effeminate,' for they could not control their women.⁷⁶ The cross dressing of men, however, was a larger threat to patriarchal society. In 1580 Barnaby Rich complained of the London gentry who looked like courtesans to him, while Puritans heavily criticized the Shakespearean transvestite theatre, where boys played women's parts.⁷⁷ Although youths were officially no men yet and could therefore experiment with femininity, the fear for weakness, softness, delicacy and self-indulgence was great.⁷⁸ Woman's clothing made a man weak. It undermined his authority as the superior sex and made him prone to play the woman's role in sexual congress.⁷⁹ Masculinity, furthermore, stood for political power while effeminacy was linked with passivity, servitude and powerlessness.⁸⁰

Especially France was troubled with male cross-dressers. Figures such as Henri III of France (1574 - 1589)(Image 2), François-Timoléon de Choisy, known as the Abbé de Choisy (1644-1724) and

⁷⁶ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 79.

⁷⁷ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 76; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 89-91, 96.

⁷⁸ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 87.

⁷⁹ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 79.

⁸⁰ Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe*, 204-206.

Le Chevalier d’Eon de Beaumont (1728 – 1810)(Image 3) were known for their love of women’s clothing, make-up and jewellery.⁸¹ Their cross-dressing provoked questions about their suitability for political, diplomatic and military functions, functions which required masculine behaviour.



Image 2: Henry III by Hieronymus Wierix (after 1585 - 1619)



Image 3: Chevalier d’Eon by Thomas Stewart (1792)

1.4. Hermaphrodites

The ultimate symbol of gender ambiguity is the hermaphrodite. He/she was a mixture of both sexes and neither male or female. In the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis the dreadful fate of being a hermaphrodite is exploited. The prayer of Hermaphroditus to his parents is a wish for revenge, making other young men who are as naïve as him a similar monster when they dare to bathe in this fountain.

In the Roman world hermaphrodites were seen as an omen, a sign for the disturbance of the order in the natural world. All hermaphrodites, therefore, were investigated by the political and religious authorities with scrutiny for they were thought to influence the well-being of the whole community. In most cases, the hermaphrodite, often an infant, was put to death, by drowning he/she in the sea.⁸² Whenever the sex was doubtful at birth or when it seemed to change at puberty – when the inward genitals turned outwards, changing a ‘girl’ into a boy – no risk was taken and the children were drowned or burnt to prevent the wrath of the gods.⁸³

Although the treatment of hermaphrodites in the early modern world was less extreme, similar meanings were attached to the birth of a hermaphrodite, incorporating a range of physical,

⁸¹ Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 104-105; Gary Kates, ‘D’Eon returns to France: Gender and Power in 1777,’ in *Body Guards. The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein, and Kristina Straub (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), 179.

⁸² Anthony Corbeill, *Sexing the World. Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 151, 156, 158.

⁸³ Marie Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite. Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity* (London: Studiobooks, 1961), 44-45.

social and sexual possibilities.⁸⁴ The hermaphrodite was foremost a monster, created by God as a political, social or religious sign of collective culpability.⁸⁵ Women and men, furthermore, were called hermaphrodites when they transgressed gender roles. Hermaphroditism was associated with male effeminacy and sodomy as well as vices such as greed, luxury, inconstancy, pride and worldliness.⁸⁶ The hermaphrodite was also closely connected with 'horror', 'pleasure' and 'repugnance' as an entertaining exotic figure. Especially the mysterious genitalia of an hermaphrodite were a source of amusement and were exposed in public. Anne Wilde for example, a girl with a penis and a beard, was viewed for entertainment between 1667 and 1669 in London and, according to Dutch physician Isbrand van Diemerbroeck, also in Utrecht.⁸⁷

In the seventeenth century, several medical experts argued against this perspective of hermaphrodites as monsters. According to Ambroise Paré (1510 - 1590) in his study *Des monstres et prodiges* (1573) were hermaphrodites not unnatural and should therefore not be ostracized and treated as freaks. There was always one sex that prevailed in a hermaphrodite and it was that sex which defined the hermaphrodite as male or female. Defining a hermaphrodite in one of the two sexes was necessary in order to fit in society and in the legal system.⁸⁸ Traditionally parents or the midwife decided the sex of a child, but throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century this role was given to medical experts.⁸⁹ Extended monographs on individual hermaphrodites who had come to the attention of civil authorities were published. In works such as Jacques Duval's *Traite des Hermaphrodites* (1612), Jean Riolan's *Discours sur les Hermaphrodites* (1614) and Gaspard Bauhin's *De Hermaphroditum* (1614) the dominant gender of a hermaphrodite was determined through personality, external traits and genital composition.⁹⁰ 'Where neither sex could be proved to predominate, an adult hermaphrodite was, in theory, allowed to choose their own sexual identification, but having done so was legally bound to stay within the prescribed social and legislative confines of that sex.'⁹¹

The case of Marguerite Malause shows how many people were involved in defining a hermaphrodite. At the age of twenty-one, the young attractive Marguerite was discovered by several doctors to possess a penis and thereafter had to adopt the clothes and life-style of a man. She wasn't happy with her life as a man and reverted back to her female identity, but was soon arrested for the transgression of gender. Only after a consultation of the famous physicians Helvétius and Saviard she was allowed to become a woman again.⁹²

⁸⁴ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 9.

⁸⁵ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 21-24.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 26-29; Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe*, 137.

⁸⁷ Gilbert, "Seeing and Knowing," 159-160.

⁸⁸ Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe*, 42-43, 70.

⁸⁹ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 33.

⁹⁰ Jenny C. Mann, "How to Look at a Hermaphrodite in Early Modern England," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 1, no. 46 (January 1, 2006): 71.

⁹¹ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 43.

⁹² Ruth Gilbert, "Seeing and Knowing: Science, Pornography and Early Modern Hermaphrodites," in *At the Borders of the Human. Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman (Palgrave Publishers, 1999), 162-163.

Chapter 2: Mythology and the *Metamorphoses* in early modern text and imagery

Everybody who has read an ancient Greek or Roman myth knows of its violent, erotic and fantastical content. Especially the *Metamorphoses* was full of controversial stories and it seemed hard to justify the teaching of these stories. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, however, was very popular and widely taught at schools in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.⁹³ The myths were used as subjects for paintings, prints, plays, novels, court festivities, architecture and decoration and although mythology was difficult to integrate in Christian doctrine – Christian Church Fathers were very hostile to this classical heritage – various methods were applied to justify the survival and use of pagan fables. In *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1972) by Jean Seznec, the most prominent traditions of interpreting and justifying mythology are discussed. These methods, the historical, physical and moral tradition, were often intermingled with each other: Scholars employed all three methods for a single personage or fable, fusing them into an organic whole to give a general overview of human knowledge.⁹⁴

In the following I will discuss various earlier interpretations, translations and illustrations of the *Metamorphoses* in regards to the historical, physical and moral tradition. As most of my primary material consists of commentary, this chapter will function as an analytical framework, preparing me for the analysis of specifically early modern interpretations of these myths. At the end of this chapter the primary sources I used for this research will be shortly introduced, providing some background information on the goals these translations had.

2.1. Interpretations and translations of the *Metamorphoses*

Ovid's writings were initially viewed with hostility, for 'his work seemed much more difficult to reconcile with philosophy and theology than did that of the graver Virgil.'⁹⁵ A positive attitude began with Theodulph (750/760 - 821), bishop of Orléans, who urged readers of these classical works to search for the truth which lay hidden under the false covering of paganism. In the prose commentary by Arnolphe of Orléans, the *Integumenta* by John of Garland and the *Ovide Moralisé*, the explanation of the *Metamorphoses* is the main subject, linking classic mythology with Christian morality and the Bible. In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, numerous commentaries appeared, interpreting the vices practiced by the pagan gods and translating them in contemporary vices. An example is Christine de Pizan who mixed the tradition of mythography with mythmaking in her poetry, rewriting the fables with her own allegorical interpretations.⁹⁶ Another example is Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Gods* (1360), who subscribed moralizing meanings to the fables, using Greek, Latin and contemporary sources next to each other.⁹⁷ The work was incredibly successful, with a large number of manuscripts circulating and printed editions in Latin, Italian and Spanish, and remained for two centuries the classical mythological guide for every scholar.⁹⁸ Boccaccio's work was renewed by George Pictor's *Mythological Theology* (1532) almost 200 years later, who provided a more systematic treatment of the diverse notions on paganism with 'information on the origins and pedigrees of the gods, their attributes, the places, offerings, and festivals sacred to them.'⁹⁹ The

⁹³ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 33-34.

⁹⁴ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 122-123.

⁹⁵ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 91.

⁹⁶ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth. Classical Mythology and its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 171.

⁹⁷ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 220-223.

⁹⁸ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 224.

⁹⁹ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 224, 227-229.

most common used source by mythographers is the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius (sixth century), whose knowledge was still highly valued in the Renaissance.¹⁰⁰

The first editions of the *Metamorphoses* in the vernacular are *Ovide Moralisé* from Colard Mansion (1484) and the *Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare* (1497), who combined explanations of allegory with illustrations. They were prose-adaptations of the original Latin, summarizing the text and dividing the poem in separate fables. Humanistic commentary of Raphael Regius in Latin was included, in which paragraphs, sentences, words and grammar are explained in a rhetorical, historical, etymological, genealogical, geographical, scientific and astrological way. The vernacular editions go both back to the medieval editions of the *Vulgare* (1377) and Pierre Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus* (1340), the most influential works of their times and reprinted till far in the sixteenth century.¹⁰¹

Between 1550 and 1570 a great number of new translations and paraphrases appeared in numerous languages: Dolce (1553) and Dell'Anguillara (1561) in Italy, Florianus in Dutch (1552), Golding in English (1565), Marot and Aneau in French (1557) and Posthius (1563) and Sprengius (1564) in German.¹⁰² For these translations, new illustrations were made, which were often reused in later editions in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

The handbooks most often used in vernacular editions were Natale Conti's *The Mythology* (1551) and Sabinus commentary.¹⁰³ Conti's book was part of three Italian works of great importance: *The History of the Gods* by Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1548), *The Mythology* of Natale Conti (1551) and *The Images of the Gods*, by Vincenzo Cartari (1556):

Giraldi, the learned philologist, concentrates upon names, epithets, etymologies, to the detriment of the myths themselves: Conti professes himself a philosopher, and takes special interest in a more profound interpretation of the fables; Cartari is essentially an iconographer – his dominant if not exclusive preoccupation being to describe the gods.¹⁰⁴

For the interpretation of the myths they used the historical, physical and moral tradition next to each other, looking for their literal meaning and the origins of myth. According to new insights by the Reformation and Bible studies all myths could be considered as derivatives of the original story of Revelation.¹⁰⁵

The commentary of Sabinus, published in Latin in 1555, focused specifically on the *Metamorphoses*. Sabinus explained philological and rhetorical problems of the text and offered moral-philosophical, nature-philosophical and historical explanations. Sabinus completely rejected the Christian-theological allegories, focusing instead on the notion that the events described in the poems were derived from history.¹⁰⁶

Another famous manual was the Dutch *Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij*

¹⁰⁰ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 21.

¹⁰¹ Sluijter, Eric Jan. *De 'Heydensche Fabulen' in de Schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw. Schilderijen met Verhalende Onderwerpen in de Klassieke Mythologie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, circa 1590-1670* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 1986), 170-172.

¹⁰² Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 172-173.

¹⁰³ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 174.

¹⁰⁴ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 233.

¹⁰⁵ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 247, 250.

¹⁰⁶ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 174.

Nasonis, written by Karel van Mander (1548 – 1606) and later translated in German.¹⁰⁷ Van Mander is mostly concerned with the discovery of treasures hidden inside the *Metamorphoses* and defends the use of Fables who many consider as old-wives' tales.¹⁰⁸ His arguments are very similar to that of Conti: people want to learn new things and the fables can 'ghedacht matighen, begheert en lust temmen, sin stadighen, ghemoed stillen, gheest beredenen, zeden gladden, en eyndlijck de schadighe Siel-sieecten ghenesen.'¹⁰⁹ Van Mander, like Conti and Sabinus, rejects the direct link of the Bible with mythology and the fables: zij 'leyden tot een oprecht, deugdigh, eerlijck, borgherlijck leven, en om ander natuerlijcke dinghen te leren kennen: verder zijn sy niet te trecken.'¹¹⁰ Later mythographers, such as Antoine Banier, Francois Pomey and David van Hoogstraten based their work on the above mentioned authors, whose influence would be prominent for centuries.

Mythological manuals were especially useful for artists: their subjects of paintings were often drawn from Scripture or Fable and therefore information about the gods was indispensable. Theorists even urged artists to read these instructive texts, for a most accurate representation of mythology was an essential element of art. Furthermore, the painter could display his learning through the use of manuals, and the public its ingenuity in recognizing the figures through their appropriate attire and attributes.¹¹¹

2.2. The visual tradition of mythology

The pagan gods had their own tradition in visual media. A distinction can be made between two groups of illustrations: the first groups are figures where visual models were used as proto-types and the second groups are figures based on descriptions in text. The first group is made up of three great families and were marked by their occidental source and character. They invaded the manuscripts of the late Middle Ages, and, becoming more fanciful, slowly lost their Greco-Roman outlines. Only the general outlines of each figure remained and mythological specifics of costume and attributes were dismissed. The third family of this group is the most curious of all and is derived from the astronomic-astrological treatise of Michael Scot (1175 – 1235). The divinities have all lost their customary appearance and are presented in contemporary familiar functions, such as the bishop, the warrior and the scholar.¹¹²

The second group of figures is based on descriptions in text and originate exclusively in literary sources from around the year 1100 onwards. In these treatises an outline is provided of the figure and attributes of each pagan god and also a moral section with the correct interpretation of each figure. The accessories normally used to identify the gods now completely disguised them and the images became completely non-classical.¹¹³

In the second half of the fifteenth century, however, the original form of the gods was reintegrated. At first, bourgeois representations of the gods were often mixed with their classical

¹⁰⁷ *Metamorphosis, oder: des verblühten Sinns der Ovidanischen Wandlungs-Gedichte gründliche Auslegung.* Nürnberg (1679).

¹⁰⁸ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 179.

¹⁰⁹ Karel van Mander, 'Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,' in *Het schilder-boeck* (Utrecht: Davaco Publishers, 1969), *3v. Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren. Accessed November 26, 2015. http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/mand001schi01_01/mand001schi01_01_0281.php

¹¹⁰ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 182; Van Mander, 'Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,' *4v.

¹¹¹ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 257, 260-261, 263.

¹¹² Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 150-156.

¹¹³ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 167-168.

forms, gods having classical attributes but contemporary costume. Especially Albrecht Dürer (1471 - 1528) gave the demigods their traditional attributes back. The figures reappear in their nude ancient look, based on classical marble statues and bas-reliefs, and regain their original graceful positions and postures.¹¹⁴

Not everybody was happy with the extensive portrayal of pagan mythology through art. Especially theologians were critical, who considered mythology to be dangerous: 'images of the gods are "filthy and criminal", and are admissible only under the express reservation that they be kept out of sight, where they cannot exert harmful influence on the public.'¹¹⁵ Artists argued that superstition had disappeared from the world, so there was no risk in preserving their memory in paintings and sculptures. Furthermore, there was a high demand for mythological figures by nobles and princes, who used them as decoration for their palaces. Moreover, mythology was used by the painter to show erudition and variety, qualities which were expected of him. The figures of the gods, finally, had to be interpreted symbolically, as figures which can teach about good and evil and inspire virtue instead of vice. Allegory became the most used explanation for the depiction of fables and to avoid censure, for it was always possible to read an edifying moral interpretation in the fable.¹¹⁶

2.3. Illustrations in the *Metamorphoses*

Peculiar to vernacular translations of the *Metamorphoses* is that they were illustrated. Latin editions had in general no illustrations and although sometimes illustrations of vernacular translations were used for Latin editions, only for vernacular translations new illustrations were routinely commissioned.¹¹⁷ The *Ovide Moralisé* from Colard Mansion (1494) was the first illustrated edition and the woodcuts of the first Italian translation of 1497 were used in multiple other editions: they appeared in the translation of Niccolò Agostini (1522) and in every other Italian edition until Ludovico Dolce's edition of 1553.¹¹⁸

Especially the wood engravings of Bernard Salomon (1506 - 1561) set a trend. His woodcuts were used in French, Dutch and Italian editions and inspired image-based editions of the *Metamorphoses*, pocket-size volumes with summarized fables.¹¹⁹ *La Métamorphose d'Ovide figurée* (1557) for example is shaped like an emblem book, with an inscriptio, picture and subscriptio. Every fable is brought back to a short summary, without references to allegorical or moral meanings.¹²⁰

Similar to Salomon's engravings were the 178 illustrations of Virgil Solis (1514 – 1562), employed in the German editions of the *Metamorphoses* by Posthius (1563) and Sprengius (1563/1564). In their work, the illustrations are mostly employed to educate and, together with the text, they form examples of vice and virtue. Solis' engravings were also used in the Dutch translation of Florianus (1566).¹²¹ Solis inspired later artists such as Antonio Tempesta (1555 – 1630) and Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617), who designed illustrations independent of the text.¹²²

¹¹⁴ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 187, 197, 207-209.

¹¹⁵ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 267.

¹¹⁶ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 268-271.

¹¹⁷ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 17.

¹¹⁸ A.W.A. Boschloo, *Ovidius Herschepen. Geïllustreerde Uitgaven van de Metamorphosen in de Nederlanden uit de Zestiende, Zeventiende en Achttiende Eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage: Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreeniaum, 1980), 10; Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 18.

¹²⁰ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 175.

¹²¹ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 176-178.

¹²² Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 18.

In other Dutch translations, the engravings of Pieter van der Borcht (1540 - 1608), C. Decker (1650 - 1685) and again Tempesta were used. Two separate Latin emblematic books were also created. The book of 1591 contained prints from Van der Borcht and in 1607 an emblem book appeared with engravings from Crispijn de Passe senior (1564 - 1637). These orderly and easy to consult emblematic editions functioned as mythological manuals. As Borcht and de Passe mention in their introductions, the books were specially made for artists, to furnish them with clear examples for their future paintings, engravings and statues.¹²³ Later engravers, such as Bernard Picart, Jaspard Isaac, Charles le Clerc, Charles le Brun, Francois Chauveau and Jean Mathieu, were inspired by these previous masters; many similar characteristics are visible in their illustrations.

2.4. Earlier interpretations of the *Metamorphoses*

As mentioned above, translators and commentators employed three different interpretations strategies in their works throughout the whole early modern period. In the following, I will explain these three strategies.

2.4.1. Euhemerism (the historical tradition)

The first one is the historical tradition, instigated by the Greek mythographer Euhemerus in 316 BC. According to this tradition, the Gods were merely earthly rulers who, through the adoration of their subjects, were raised into heaven. Myths, therefore, were historical events, gaining their mythical status through time, oral transmission and cultural changes.¹²⁴

Although euhemerism was used by Christian polemicists to attack the pagan gods and dismiss their reality as divinities, it was also used for historical research. The mortal gods were placed in the general course of human history. In this way, the dignity and independence of ancient mythical figures could be restored. They were, as historical figures, allowed to be remembered next to Biblical figures.¹²⁵

Medieval compilers pictured themselves as heirs of these great men. They could proudly claim their heritage of antiquity and boast their supposedly supernatural origin. This tradition continued in the Renaissance, with works such as the *Prosopographie, description des personages-insignes, avec portraits* of Antoine du Verdier (1573). In the *Prosopographie*, gods and heroes are secured in a historical framework among patriarchs, philosophers and Caesars; gods are seen as ancestors, progenitors and patrons.¹²⁶

2.4.2. The Physical Tradition

The physical tradition placed gods in heaven as celestial bodies and fused astronomy with mythology. The sun, moon and stars were divine and every constellation was given mythological significance:¹²⁷

The stars are alive: they have a recognized appearance, a sex, a character, which their names alone suffice to evoke. They are powerful and redoubtable beings, anxiously prayed to and interrogated, since it is they who inspire all human action. They reign over human life and hold in their keeping the

¹²³ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 177-178.

¹²⁴ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 11-12.

¹²⁵ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 13-15.

¹²⁶ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 18-23.

¹²⁷ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 37-38.

secrets of man's fortune and of his end. Benevolent or deadly, they determine the fate of people and individuals by the mere accident of their movements, their conjunctions and oppositions.¹²⁸

Although Christianity was initially hostile to this absorption of the gods by the stars – it was a crime to deify the physical world – they were unable to deny it: Christianity itself contained many Hellenistic astrological elements and astrology had invaded all the natural science. By mingling the pagan gods with demons, who exerted their negative influence through the stars, this issue was partly resolved.¹²⁹ Furthermore, during the Renaissance, the astrological concept of causality penetrated all natural philosophy and other natural science and ‘the dominion of the heavenly bodies over all earthly things was viewed by some as the natural law par excellence, the law which assures the regularity of phenomena.’¹³⁰ Everything in the cosmos was connected, ‘the planets and zodiacal signs served as the basis of classification of the elements, seasons, and humors.’¹³¹

2.4.3. The moral and allegorical tradition

The search for an edifying meaning in mythology is a tradition which originated with the Stoics. They sought for spiritual significance in the shapes and names of the gods, and for moral lessons in their stories.¹³²

The interpretation method of allegory was used to endow every great myth with spiritual meaning. The tendency of Christian Church Fathers to look for hidden meanings behind the words of Scripture justified the application of the same method on mythology. By moralistic interpretations, the gods could be reduced in mere ornaments, themes for the composition of lessons on virtue and vice.¹³³ The gods ‘had come to represent, for the loftiest spirits, magnificent metaphors – signs of steps along man’s way to an understanding of the nature of divinity.’¹³⁴ The *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius (sixth century), for instance, ‘offered brief explanations of ancient fables in terms of etymology, natural processes, and social morality’ and, quoting a numerous amount of different Latin authors, gave alternative versions of the same myth.¹³⁵ In the twelfth century, ‘when allegory became the universal vehicle of all pious expression, mythological exegesis in this sense grew to astonishing proportions,’ and ‘the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid were exploited as a mine of sacred truth.’¹³⁶

The Renaissance continued this allegorical tradition of looking for moral sustenance and Christian aspects in classical mythology. The moralizations of Ovid, starting out in France and Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century and spreading all over Europe, were the last representations of paganism and an important study object of humanists.¹³⁷

¹²⁸ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 41.

¹²⁹ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 42-45.

¹³⁰ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 57.

¹³¹ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 49.

¹³² Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 84.

¹³³ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 85, 88.

¹³⁴ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 86.

¹³⁵ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 21; John Mulryan and Steven Brown, ed., *Natale Conti's Mythologiae. Vol.1: Books I-V* (Tempe Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), xvi.

¹³⁶ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 90-91.

¹³⁷ Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 95-96.

2.5. Primary Sources

In my analysis I studied 15 sources: 5 from the sixteenth century, 6 from the seventeenth century and 4 from the eighteenth century. In the following I will discuss briefly the historical background and peculiarities of each source.

2.5.1. Sixteenth century

The first translation of my corpus, *Der wunderbarlichen Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Thier und anderer Creature* by Jörg Wickram (1545) was based on the remaining 432 verses of the medieval translation of Albrecht van Halberstadt (approximately 1180 – 1251).¹³⁸ The translation of Jörg Wickram (1505 - 1555/1560), which knew five editions in total in the following hundred years (in 1545, 1551, 1581, 1609 and 1631), was enlightened with the moralisations and allegorisations of Gerhard Lorichius (1485 - 1553) and ornated with his own engravings.¹³⁹ Wickram replaced names and words into their more familiar germanic equivalent. Besides these alterations, Wickram removed those passages which needed too much explanation because of their reference to the Roman period.¹⁴⁰ The fables have, according to Wickram, 'ihren ursprung auss den waren Historijs' and show 'des armen und sehr swachen glaubens so die Heyden gehabt.'¹⁴¹ 'Ovidius der lert dich gschwind Wo man den weg hinfärt zur Hell Darvor uns Gott bewaren well.'¹⁴² The commentary in this translation was written by the catholic Gerhard Lorichius and refers to the tumultuous times he was in, explaining the myths in moral terms in disregard to the heretics. According to Lorichius, the fables were, moreover, useful to learn about ancient philosophy, cosmography and history.¹⁴³

The illustrations by Bernard Salomon, the basis for many later illustrations of the *Metamorphoses*, were published by Jean de Tournes in 1557 in French and Dutch, called *La Métamorphose d'Ovide figurée* and *Excellente Figuren*. The most important fables are depicted and underneath each print a short summary of the fable can be found, providing an emblematic version of the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁴⁴

The *Tetrasticha in Ovidii Metamorphoseon libros 15* (1563) is the first German emblem book, written by doctor Johannes Posthicus von Germersheim (1537 - 1597). The illustrations, engravings of Virgil Solis, were taken from the *Metamorphoses Ovidii* from Johannes Sprengius, which appeared in

¹³⁸ Helmutt Rosenfeld, "Albrecht von Halberstadt," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 1 (1953), 177 f. Accessed May 5, 2015. <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn118501623.html>

¹³⁹ Brigitte Rücker, *Die Bearbeitung von Ovids Metamorphosen durch Albrecht Halberstadt und Jörg Wickram und ihre Kommentierung durch Gerhard Lorichius* (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1997), 259, 275; Erich Schmidt, "Wickram, Jörg," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 42 (1897), 328-336. Accessed May 5, 2015. <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn118632272.html?anchor=adb>; Karl Stackmann, "Die Auslegungen des Gerhard Lorichius zur 'Metamorphosen'-Nachdichtung Jörg Wickrams. Beschreibung eines Deutschen Ovid-Kommentar aus der Reformationszeit," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 86 (1967): 153.

¹⁴⁰ Rücker, *Die Bearbeitung von Ovids Metamorphosen*, 167, 175.

¹⁴¹ Jörg Wickram and Gerhard Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis, das ist von der wunderbarlichen Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Thier und anderer Creature* (Meinz: Ivo Schöffler, 1545), A IIIv-A IVr. Copy from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Accessed November 26, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=QOEYMKuL3P8C>

¹⁴² Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, A IVv.

¹⁴³ Rücker, *Die Bearbeitung von Ovids Metamorphosen*, 320-321; Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, B IIIv.

¹⁴⁴ Bodo Guthmüller, "Picta Poesis Ovidiana," in *Renatae Litterae. Studien zum Nachleben der Antike und zur Europäischen Renaissance*, ed. Klaus Heitmann and Eckhart Schroeder (Frankfurt: Athenäum Verlag GmbH, 1973), 173.

the same year by the same publishers.¹⁴⁵ The 'Schöne Figuren' are 'allen Malern, Goldtschmidern, und Bildthauwern, zü nuss', as the titlepage proclaims. Also the youth can learn a great deal from the *Metamorphoses*, which speaks of 'schand', 'unrecht', 'tugent' and 'Gerechtigkeit'.¹⁴⁶

The edition of Sprengius, originally in Latin with diverse allegorical commentary, was reprinted in 1564 with the addition of German translations.¹⁴⁷ In Sprengius' 'Vorred' is virtue and honour emphasized, hidden 'als ein süsser kern unter einer bitteren schelffen'.¹⁴⁸ Sprengius translated his earlier Latin work 'in Teutsche Sprach' 'dass sich darinnen auch der gemeine Lan zu ersehen, und ab dem wunderbaren geticht mit nuss zu erlustigen hette'.¹⁴⁹ Every fable is explained in direct connection with Christian doctrine, in order to learn moral lessons on honour, shame and virtue and to 'die mittel strass der tugent wandlen, dess Satans renck unnd hinderlist vermeiden, unsere eigne begirden dempffen, unnd in summa das gut und löblich jeder zeit verrichten'.¹⁵⁰

2.5.2. Seventeenth century

In 1604 the first commentary in the Dutch language appeared, called the *Wtlegghinge op den Metamorphosis* by Karel van Mander. Van Mander's *Wtlegghing* would stay the only commentary of the *Metamorphoses* in the Dutch language. Apparently the Dutch had no particular interest in the explanation of this work.¹⁵¹ See section 2.1. for a more detailed description of Van Mander's work.

In 1607, Crispijn de Passe published the *P. Ovid. Nasonis XV Metamorphoseon librorū figuræ*, an emblematic edition of the *Metamorphoses* with short Latin and German summaries of each myth in rhyme. The work is prized in the 'Vorrede' to be useful for 'Mahler', 'Goldtarbeiter', 'Glasschreiber' and 'Sticker' as well as common people, who will find 'Heimliche weissheit und gros gewicht' in the fables.¹⁵²

Nicolas Renouard published in 1614 *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide traduites en Prose Françoise* together with his own commentary *XV Discours sur le Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Contenant l'Explication Morale et Historique*. The commentary is a dialogue between two adult modern men who criticize the licentiousness of the work. In their discussions, however, the real and moral meaning of the fables are unveiled.¹⁵³ The banned poet is restored in France as well as in the France language and 'les plus rare thresors de l'ancienne sagesse' are disseminated 'sous le voile subtil de ses

¹⁴⁵ Hans-Jürgen Horn, "Die Tetrasticha des Johannes Posthius zu Ovids Metamorphosen und ihre Stellung in Der Überlieferungsgeschichte," in *Die Rezeption der Metamorphosen des Ovid in der Neuzeit. Der Antike Mythos in Text und Bild*, ed. Hermann Walter and Jürgen Horn (Berlijn: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1995), 216; Daniel Kinney and Elizabeth Styron, "Ovid Illustrated: The Renaissance Reception of Ovid in Image and Text," *The Ovid Collection. Metamorphoses*, accessed May 6, 2015, <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/abouttextold.html#tetrasticha>;

¹⁴⁶ Johannes Posthius von Germersheim, *Tetrasticha in Ovidii Metamorphoseon libros 15* (Frankfurt: Georgius Corvinus, 1563), A IIIr. Copy from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Accessed November 27, 2015.

<https://books.google.nl/books?id=R1JAAAAcAAJ>

¹⁴⁷ Horn, "Die Tetrasticha des Johannes Posthius zu Ovids Metamorphosen," 215.

¹⁴⁸ Johannes Sprengius, *P. Ovidij Nasonis, dess Sinnreichen und hochverstendigen Poeten, Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung mit schönen Figuren gezieret* (Frankfurt: Rabe, Feyrabend und Han, 1564), A IIv. Copy from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=T7MVXW7mXLcC>

¹⁴⁹ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, A IIIr-A IIIv.

¹⁵⁰ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 176-177; Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, A VIIr.

¹⁵¹ Sluijter, *De 'Heydensche Fabulen'*, 182.

¹⁵² Crispijn de Passe, *P. Ovid. Nasonis XV Metamorphoseon librorū figuræ* (Cologne: Maarten de Vos and Wilhelm Salsmann, 1607), *2r-*2v. Copy from The Getty Research Institute. Accessed November 27 2015. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100238678>

¹⁵³ Ghislaine Amielle, *Recherches sur des traductions francaises des Métamorphoses d'Ovide, illustrées et publiées en France à la fin du XVe siècle et au XVIe siècle* (Paris : J. Touzot, 1989), 268-270.

fabuleux changemens.¹⁵⁴

In 1626 George Sandys (1577-1644) published *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures*. Sandys adapted the word-by-word method of translating, using as many stylistic features of the Latin language and poetics as he could.¹⁵⁵ 'To the Translation I have given what perfection my Pen could bestow; by polishing, altering, or restoring the harsh, improper, or mistaken, with a nicer exactnesse then perhaps is required in so long a labour.'¹⁵⁶ Sandys's translation, reprinted seven times in the seventeenth century, is mostly famous for his extensive commentary, partly influenced by Francis Bacon's ideas on the historic origin and truth value of myths.¹⁵⁷ Myths had, according to Bacon, the function to teach and to conceal and Sandys, as an educator, specifically emphasized the moral and political interpretations of the myths, negligent of the physical and scientific ones.¹⁵⁸ In his commentary, furthermore, he often reconciles myth with Scripture, using a multitude of sources from over 200 ancient and modern authors as well as church fathers.¹⁵⁹

The French dramatist Pierre du Ryer (1606-1658) published *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres* in 1655 with his own commentary. Du Ryer gathered previous interpretations, mostly using Natale Conti's mythography, and simplified its explanations.¹⁶⁰ Du Ryer calls the fables 'fictions', written by 'des anciens Poètes,' in which, however, 'qu'il n'y ait quelque verité parmy tant de mensonges.'¹⁶¹ They inhabit the most beautiful secrets of moral and physics and fables can therefore be seen as the custodian of philosophy:¹⁶² 'que si c'est un corps fantastique, il a au moins une ame raisonnable; & que c'est un beau mensonge, qui ne cache la verité, que pour la faire paroistre plus pompeuse, & plus triomphante.'¹⁶³ The transformations portrayed in the *Metamorphoses* were caused by vice and in order to protect ourselves from similar devastation Du Ryer urges his readers to learn from it.¹⁶⁴

A quite distinct work of translation is the *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux* (1676) by the dramatist Isaac de Bensérade (1613 - 1691), a collection of 226 rondeaux or emblems by Sébastien le Clerc, Francois Chauveau and Charles le Brun with short summaries of the fables. It was specifically written for the Dauphin, the son of Louis XIV, who would find moral lessons hidden inside

¹⁵⁴ Nicolas Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Contenant l'Explication Morale des Fables* (Paris: Pierre Billaine, 1636), 5. Copy from the University of Virginia Library, PA6523 M2 R4 1637. Accessed November 27, 2015. <http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/uva-lib:1093355/view#openLayer/uva-lib:1116199/2396/2825/1/1/1>

¹⁵⁵ Deborah Rubin, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished. George Sandys as Translator and Mythographer* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1985), 11-13.

¹⁵⁶ George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures* (New York: Garland, 1976), 'To the Reader' (no page number given). Reproduction Oxford: Lichfeld, 1632.

¹⁵⁷ Lee T. Percy, *The Mediated Muse. English Translations of Ovid 1560-1700* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1984), 38.

¹⁵⁸ Percy, *The Mediated Muse*, 50-51.

¹⁵⁹ Percy, *The Mediated Muse*, 53, 60; Rubin, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 105-106.

¹⁶⁰ Marie-Claire Chatelain, *Ovide Savant, Ovide Galant. Ovide en France dans la Seconde Moitié du XVIIe Siècle*. Paris: Honoré Champion éditeur, 2008), 169-170.

¹⁶¹ Pierre du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres. Avec de nouvelles Explications Historique, Morales & Politiques sur toutes les Fable, chacune selon son sujet* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1660), A IIr-A IIv. Copy from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=BjVQAAAACAAJ>

¹⁶² Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, A IIIv.

¹⁶³ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, A IIIIr.

¹⁶⁴ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, A IIIIr-A IIIIv.

the fables:¹⁶⁵ ‘Que devant luy ton Fils a de clartez! Qu'il trouve en toy d'exemples admirables! *Que de vertus, & de prospéritez!*’¹⁶⁶ The mystical characteristics of the fables are explained away by using the natural laws of the human world and through the playful, ironic style of writing only the core of the myth remains.¹⁶⁷

2.5.3. Eighteenth century

The translation of Abraham Valentijn was a prose translation and published in 1678 in Leiden by Daniël van Gaasbeek. The illustrations are from C. Decker, partly inspired by Antonio Tempesta.¹⁶⁸ For this research, I used a later edition by Ludolf Smids, in which the translation of Valentijn and the commentary on the *Metamorphoses* of Smids are published together (1700). The explanations of Smids are ‘nu seedelijk, dan sinnebeeldelijk, en dan weder historiaal, op het spoor van Sabinus en andere.’¹⁶⁹

In 1701 Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde (1648 – 1734) published *Les Metamorphoses D’Ovide, Avec des Explications à la fin de chaque Fable*, in which the moral importance of the fable is emphasized and interpretations of the sixteenth century are reused. De Bellegarde is critical of Du Ryer’s translation, judging it not accurate enough and not morally exemplary.¹⁷⁰ According to De Bellegarde, the fables are written to correct the weaknesses of men:¹⁷¹

Les Anciens s'en sont servi utilement pour instruire les hommes, & pour les corriger des vices où ils étoient le plus enclins, en leur faisant voir le desordre des passions qui leur font en quelque maniere ressembler aux bêtes.¹⁷²

Antoine Banier (1673 - 1641) had similar intentions with his word-by-word translation, printed next to the Latin original with illustrations and a commentary which was based on Banier’s extensive mythography *Explication historique des fables* (1711). The book is published by the publisher group R. and J. Wetstein and W. Smith, who published a Dutch and English version of Banier’s commentary alongside original Dutch and English translations. In his preface, Banier criticizes the ancient philosophy, emphasizing the preponderance of Christianity and the moral lessons which can be learned from fables. The transformations symbolize immorality.¹⁷³ The origin of myths is discussed,

¹⁶⁵ Robert Finch, “‘Je Suis Dehors’: Benserade’s Declaration of Independence.” *French Studies. A Quarterly Review* 33, no. 2 (April 1979): 139-140.

¹⁶⁶ Isaac de Benserade, *Métamorphoses d’Ovide en rondeaux: imprimez et enrichis de figures par ordre de Sa Majesté et dediez à Monseigneur le Dauphin* (Paris: Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1676), A IVv. Copy from the Université de Gand. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.fr/books?id=qGcTAAAAQAAJ>

¹⁶⁷ Chatelain, *Ovide Savant, Ovide Galant*, 374, 391; Maria Moog-Grünwald, *Metamorphosen der Metamorphosen. Rezeptionsarten der Ovidischen Verwandlungsgechichten in Italien und Frankreich im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1979), 178.

¹⁶⁸ Boschloo, *Ovidius Herschapen*, 46-47.

¹⁶⁹ Ludolf Smids, *Alle de Werken van Publ. Ovidius Naso. Het tweede deel: Bestaande in de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen, in de Nederlandse Taale overgebracht, door Abraham Valentyn. Met Verklaaringen, en Uitleggingen verrijkt, Door Lud. Smids* (Amsterdam: Pieter Mortier, 1700), *v. Copy from the Universiteit Gent. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=eHxMAAAcAAJ>

¹⁷⁰ De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide, Avec des Explications à la fin de chaque Fable. Tome Premier* (Paris: Michel David, 1701), A Vr. Copy from the Bibliothèque jésuite des Fontaines. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=p7Gj1JugPP8C>

¹⁷¹ Amielle, *Recherches sur des traductions francaises des Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, 276.

¹⁷² De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, A IIIIr.

¹⁷³ Amielle, *Recherches sur des traductions francaises des Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, 278-279.

the extravagance of Ovidius' imagination and the explicitness of the passion of the gods.¹⁷⁴ Banier emphasizes that he does not focus on moral or allegorical interpretations – 'La morale, par exemple, qu'on en peut tirer est souvent arbitraire, ou si elle sort naturellement du fonds du sujet' – but focuses instead on historical explanations of the fables.¹⁷⁵

In *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide, en Vers Francois* (1784) by Mathey de Massilian is the history of the *Metamorphoses* explained. The composition and the uniqueness of the poem are written 'd'une maniere à ne jamais l'oublier,' and Massilian emphasizes his practice of free translation and the employment of French.¹⁷⁶ More importantly, however, is Massilian's defence of Ovid, criticized for his contradictions, wordplay and prolixity, which is, according to Massilian, 'd'injuste & de ridicules.'¹⁷⁷ Massilian does agree with the critique on the obscenity of the poem and has omitted overly obscene passages which is not suitable for the youth of France, his intended audience:

J'ai donct fait cette réformation moi-même: j'ai fait disparaître l'indécence par l'entiere soustraction, lors qu'elle n'a pu disparaître autrement, & lorsque la soustraction n'a pas nui à l'unité, & à la suite du poëme; & j'ai pu la supprimer par-tout, parce que la suppression ne nuisoit jamais a cette suite & à cette unité; mais j'ai étudié long-temps l'ouvrage d'Ovide avant de rien décider à cet égard.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Antoine Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, en Latin, Traduites en Francois, Avec des Remarques, et des Explications Historiques. Tome Premier* (Amsterdam: R. & J. Wetstein & W. Smith, 1732), **v - **2v. Copy from the Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht. MAG: MAZ 2195.

¹⁷⁵ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, **3r - **3v.

¹⁷⁶ Mathey De Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide, en Vers Francois. Tome Premier* (Paris : Chuchet, 1784), vii-viii, xiv-xv. Copy from the Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht. MAG: X oct 465.

¹⁷⁷ De Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, viii-ix.

¹⁷⁸ De Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, x.

Chapter 3: Overcoming femininity: the transformations of Iphis and Caenis

The myth of Iphis and the myth of Caenis/Caeneus have two things in common. Firstly, they both struggle with the burden of femininity. Iphis can't marry the woman she loves as a woman, while Caenis is the victim of sexual violence. Secondly, they both change into men in order to pursue their goals, gaining the various advantages men enjoy. These advantages, however, are typically early modern in the translations. Feminine attributes of beauty and weakness are exchanged for manly attributes of strength and courage and the two myths are used to define explicit distinctions between the two sexes, placing superior men above inferior women.

3. 1. Burdensome femininity

Women are considered to be a burden, both in the world of Ovid and in the early modern world. Their weak nature makes women more demanding, unable to take care of themselves and therefore needing constant protection. In Ovid's text Lyctus emphasizes that women do not have the ability to follow a proper education, making them a greater burden. Although women were considered to be intelligent in Roman society, they did not have the right on personal development and achievements and were less able to provide for themselves.¹⁷⁹

In the early modern translations, other negative female aspects are emphasized, often in contrast with qualities men possess. Women are for instance weak and, according to Renouard, 'ne peuvent pas courir plusieurs fortunes avantageuses que courent les garçons.'¹⁸⁰ This inherent weakness of women is especially emphasized by Van Mander, who is amazed by the qualities of Iphis. Iphis, 'een dochter wel opgevoedt, wel gheleert, en gheschickt in vernuftighe Consten, die den Vrouwen onghemeen zijn'¹⁸¹ is not like other women in this respect, for normally, a woman would not be able to be this well-educated.

The heaviest burden of having a female child, however, is the dowry parents have to pay at a future marriage. Getting married was the only honourable future for a woman in the early modern world. In many translations, therefore, Lyctus' motive for killing an infant girl is explained by his poverty. Sprengius is the most explicit in this narrative, representing Lyctus, in 'schweren armut,' as a honourable father who only wishes his future daughter a good marriage.¹⁸²

Wusst der Tochter kein Heurat gut
Zu geben, wenn sie mit der zeit,
Wolt greiffen zu der Ehe bereit,¹⁸³

In the interpretation of Sprengius, however, the decision of Lyctus is criticized. Poverty is never a reason to distrust the ways of God and 'Ein starker Mann hat starcken mut, Und nit leichtlich verzagen thut.'¹⁸⁴ This interpretation is shared by other commentators such as Sandys, Lorichius and Du Ryer. Piety, even in the most desperate situations, is presented as a great virtue and, according to Du Ryer, can make the impossible possible:

¹⁷⁹ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman*, 83.

¹⁸⁰ Nicolas Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide, traduites en Prose Françoise* (Paris : Langelier, 1619), 268. Copy from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. G-Yc-430. Accessed November 27, 2015. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb31046661n>

¹⁸¹ Van Mander, 'Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,' 83r.

¹⁸² Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 229v.

¹⁸³ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 229v.

¹⁸⁴ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 232v.

Voulant monstrier par ce moyen que les personnes extraordinaire en vertu & en probité, ne manquent pas de recevoir dans les plus grandes extremités des consolations extraordinaires, que les hommes ne peuvent donner.¹⁸⁵

The weakness of women and the dangers of the outside world are furthermore illustrated by the fate of Caenis. The world is cruel for women because, as De Bensérade explains, 'Dans un combat d'amour & de pudeur Souvent l'amour demeure le vainqueur.'¹⁸⁶ Caenis gets raped by Neptune which ruins her life. Premerital sex was a great sin for women who had to live with this shame for the rest of their lives.¹⁸⁷ Although the German translations refrain from using the exact words of rape, all translations describe this act of sexual violence.¹⁸⁸ The earlier French translations of *Ovide Figurée* and Renouard are the most explicit, referring specifically to her stolen virginity. In *Ovide Figurée* 'si lui ravit ce Dieu son pucelage'¹⁸⁹ and in Renouard, 'la força de luy quitter la chere fleur qu'elle avoit tousiours si soigneusement conservée.'¹⁹⁰

Caenis is ashamed of her lot and in all translations she wishes to suffer this same fate never again in the future. In Renouard's translation, however, the differences between men and women are employed to support her wish. Caenis doesn't want to be subject, as 'ce foible sexe', to 'un plus robuste' anymore and the 'horreur l'impudique effort de ce Dieu,' is so strong that she 'creut n'avoir rien plus à souhaitter que de se voir exempte à l'advenir d'une violence pareille à celle qu'elle avoit soufferte.'¹⁹¹

The illustrations accompanying the myth of Caenis/Caeneus reinforce the image of Caenis as a weak, vulnerable woman, unable to protect herself from the sexual violence of men. The same scene is used in all illustrations, showing the moment of the rape (Image 4).



Image 4: Engraving by Crispijn de Passe

¹⁸⁵ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 417

¹⁸⁶ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 379.

¹⁸⁷ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 66-90.

¹⁸⁸ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, CXXIIr; Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 295v; De Passe, *XV Metamorphoseon librorū figuræ*, 109.

¹⁸⁹ *La Métamorphose d'Ovide Figurée* (Lyon: Jan de Tournes, 1557), 146. Copy from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. P. Yc 1270. Accessed November 27, 2015. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71516d/>

¹⁹⁰ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 340-341.

¹⁹¹ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 341.

In order to be freed from 'd'une pareille insulte', as Banier calls it, Caenis wishes something extraordinary:¹⁹² she doesn't want to be a woman anymore. In most translations, this more neutral wish is literally copied. In the earlier translations of Wickram, Sprengius, Renouard and De Bénéradé, however, Caenis literally asks to be transformed into a man. The translation of Sprengius is the most elaborate and shows that Caenis was already very unhappy with her current sex:

Caenis darüber sich bedacht,
Und ir begeren bald fürbracht,
Was lange zeyt im herzen lag,
Das gab sie durch die red an tag,
Sprach: Mein wunsch und begeren ist,
Dass ich werde zu diser frist,
Ein starcker Held und küner Man,
Darvor man sich entsetz fortan.¹⁹³

Caenis wants to become a noble and strong hero, of which everybody is afraid in the future. In this wish the limits of her own sex are visible: as a woman, Caenis is unable to protect herself. As a man, however, she is.

3.2. The positive and negative aspects of marriage

Marriage is perceived in different ways by Iphis and Caenis. Iphis, as a 'man,' is happy to get married with lanthe and to legally and sexually join with her. Caenis on the contrary despises marriage, making a woman subject to a man and straining a woman in her freedom.

This distinction is presented in different ways in the different early modern Northern European countries. The Dutch, English and German translations represent marriage as a chaste and honourable union between two people. Especially the German translations focus on the positive aspects of marriage and emphasize the happiness of the young couple on the one hand and the unnatural unwillingness of Caenis on the other hand. In Wickram Caenis literally flees from all the men who propose to her and in Posthius Caenis is presented as being arrogant, as 'Erwecker manches herzens brunst, Niemand doch sont haben ihr gunst.'¹⁹⁴ Marriage was according to Christian doctrine a mystical union ordained by God and a woman's highest calling in life.¹⁹⁵ As the German texts are mostly focused on giving examples for a good Christian life, it is logical that Caenis choice of staying unmarried is questioned.

The French translations, however, offer us an insight in Caenis hesitations, primarily based on the distinction between men and women in marriage. Caenis doesn't want to become subject to her future husband and lose her freedom.¹⁹⁶ This is best described in Renoard's translation, where Caenis 'ne voulut assuittir sa liberté aux importunes loix du mariage.'¹⁹⁷ The same is mentioned in

¹⁹² Antoine Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, en Latin, Traduites en Francois, Avec des Remarques, et des Explications Historiques. Tome Second* (Amsterdam: R. & J. Wetstein & W. Smith, 1732), 400. Copy from the Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht. MAG: MAZ 2196.

¹⁹³ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 295v-296r.

¹⁹⁴ De Passe, *XV Metamorphoseon librorū figureæ*, 109.

¹⁹⁵ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 20, 23.

¹⁹⁶ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 22-23.

¹⁹⁷ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 340.

De Massilian, were 'Coenis ne suivit as les loix de l'Hyménée.'¹⁹⁸ In Banier, Caenis is too proud to exchange her freedom for 'un Epoux.' In Du Ryer and in De Bellegarde, finally, Caenis literally hates marriage and everything that comes with it.¹⁹⁹

This same unequal relationship between men and women is expressed in the French translations of the myth of Iphis. Iphis literally possess lanthe, making her subject to his husbandly authority.²⁰⁰ In Renoard, furthermore, Iphis also takes sexual possession of lanthe, enforcing the dichotomy of penetrator versus penetrated:

pour faire cueillir à Iphis les doux fruicts du pucelage d'lanthe, qui perdit avec beaucoup de contentement ceste nuit-là une fleur, qu'elle n'avoit pas tenuë paravant moins chere que sa vie.²⁰¹

If we compare the translations, it seems that in France the relationship between men and women in marriage is acknowledged as being unequal, subjecting women to men. Although in reality, England, Germany and the Dutch Republic had similar unequal relationships between men and women, this is not as such presented in the early modern translations, where a more equal relationship between the sexes is suggested.

3.3. Becoming an early modern man

The transformation of Iphis and Caenis are both characterized by explicit early modern notions of gender. Although the transformation process for both is very similar in the translations compared to the original text, the small differences in the translations point to an almost extreme obsession with defining the differences between the sexes.

Starting with Iphis, we see that words and phrases are added to ensure that Iphis indeed changed from a woman into a man. Wickram, for example, uses adjectives as 'manlichen' and 'weiblich' to show how the changes in her body should be recognized in regards to the differences between the sexes.²⁰² Something similar happens in the translation by Renouard, who states that Iphis loses her shape as the weaker sex and receives the one of the stronger sex:

Iphis qui la suivoit commença dés l'heure à marcher un plus grand pas qu'elle n'avoit accoustumé, le teint de son visage l'embrunit un peu, & ne parut plus si delicat, ses cheveux s'accourcirent, & ses forces s'accrurent: en fin la foiblesse de fille se changea en la forte vigueur d'un jeune homme; elle perdit la forme d'un sexe debile, pour recevoir celle d'un plus robuste.²⁰³

This change from man to woman of Iphis is visualized explicitly in the illustrations accompanying the translations (Image 5-6). Telethusa and Iphis are visible in the foreground, praying to Isis at her temple. In the background you see two figures walking away, in which one resembles a man. In the illustration of Virgil Solis (Image 5), you see this difference quite clearly: the figures in the front both

¹⁹⁸ Mathey de Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide, en Vers Francois. Tome Troisieme* (Paris : Cuchet, 1784), 97. Copy from the Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht. MAG: X oct 467.

¹⁹⁹ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 521; De Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide. Tome Troisieme*, 97.

²⁰⁰ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 417; Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Second*, 324; De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 601; Mathey de Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide, en Vers Francois. Tome Second* (Paris : Cuchet, 1784), 299. Copy from the Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht. MAG: X oct 466.

²⁰¹ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 272.

²⁰² Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XCVIIIr.

²⁰³ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 271.

have long hair, which is a symbol for femininity. Of the figures who walk back, however, is one with a veil (which signifies the mother of Iphis) and the other without. In Renouard the transformation is the most prominent (Image 6). Teletusa, the veiled woman, and Iphis, the unveiled woman with the long braid are standing before Isis her temple. When they walk away in the background it is clearly visible that the hair is shortened and the braid is gone. Furthermore, Iphis is depicted with a naked upper body, which is not possible if he still was a girl.



Image 5: Engraving by Virgil Solis in Wickram



Image 6: Engraving by Jean Mathieu in Renouard

The most literal transformation, however, is the engraving accompanying the translation of De Bellegarde (Image 7). Iphis is kneeling in front of the goddess Isis and resembles the figure of a girl: she has breasts, is wearing a dress and has long hair. In the background however, we see the male version of Iphis, marrying his beloved Ianthe. He now has become the penetrator instead of the penetrated and is finally able to sexually and legally join with Ianthe.



Image 7: Engraving by F. Ertinger in De Bellegarde

In the myth of Caenis/Caeneus, the manliness of Caeneus is characterized in the early modern translations by his strength and courage, explicit early modern male virtues, and his profession as a warrior. These aspects are not as strongly presented in the original text which shows that these qualities are only considered to be male in early modern eyes. Caeneus as a ‘manlich held’ is able to slay anyone who stands in his path.²⁰⁴ Furthermore ‘il en avoit receu le courage, il s’appliqua entierement aux exercices de la guerre, courut toute la Thessalie, & se rendit bien-tost aussi renommé par ses actions glorieuses.’²⁰⁵

Manliness is presented in the early modern translations as the greatest gift Caenis could ever wish for. According to *Excellente Figueren*, Caenis is ‘uutvercoren’ when she gains her ‘manlick leven,’ for she shall be ‘steerck in d’orlogh’ ende verheven, en heur fame ende name en zal niet vermindren.²⁰⁶ Also in *Ovide Figurée* the compensations which she gets from Neptunus is a ‘merveilleus don, & de grand avantage, D’estre faite homme.’²⁰⁷

It is therefore not strange to see that in the actual transformation, dichotomies between men and women are employed to emphasize this great gift. Sprengius for instance describes the contradictions between a female body, soft and beautiful, and a male body which is strong with a warriors heart:

Nereus die jungkfrauw thet gewären,
Leistet geschwind auch ir begeren,
Caenis am Leib schön glatt und zart,

²⁰⁴ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, CXXVv.

²⁰⁵ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d’ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 522.

²⁰⁶ Guillaume Borluyt, *Excellente figueren ghesneden uuyten uppersten Poëte Ovidius uuyt vyfthien boucken der veranderinghen met heurlier bedietsle* (Lyon: Jan de Tournes, 1557), k4v. Copy from the University of Virginia Library. Accessed November 27, 2015. <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/ExcellenteFigueren1557.pdf>

²⁰⁷ *La Métamorphose d’Ovide Figurée*, 146.

Verkehrt wurd in ein Kriegsmann hart,
 Männliche Glieder uberkam,
 Ein rauche red und stimme annam,
 Wurd auch Ceneus gennenet fort,
 Gantz unverzagt in werck und wort,
 Neptunus auch mit Leibes krafft,
 Und wunderbarer eigenschafft,
 Den Ceneum begabt zustund,
 Dass er nit mochte werden wund,
 In jeder Schlacht er sicher war,
 Und sich entschüttet der gefahr.²⁰⁸

Even stronger is the narrative in *de Passe* in which Caeneus gains ‘ein dapffer Löwen herz’ and ‘unuberwintlicher kraft’.²⁰⁹

Ward also ein Ceneus manhaft,
 Mit unuberwintlicher kraft.
 Bekomt ein dapffer Löwen herz.
 Acht nicht auff Jungfrawlichen scherz.
 Ceneus ein Krieger und kein Magd,
 Niemand liebet, niemand behagt.
 Veracht menschen und Majestat
 Der Götter mit worten und that.²¹⁰

In *De Passe*, Caeneus has become so strong a warrior, that he denies he has ever been a woman. He refuses to serve anybody, as he would have done as a woman, and does not pay attention to any mockery of his previous maidenhood.

This narrative is also visible in the interpretations of the myth who deny that Caeneus, with his amazing manly strength and courage, was a woman in the first place. Almost all commentators regard Caeneus as a man, who was only considered to be a woman because of his fearful and doubtful feminine attitude. Van Mander therefore regards the transformation of Caenis into a man as:

is niet als een laf ghemoedt, dat hem met Vrouwlijcke lusten gheswackt vindende, t'somtjden door Godtlijcke hulp ghewackert, cloeck, en moedich wort, alle loflijcke daden uyt te richten, met een harde gheduldichey in allen teghenspoet, om met volherdinghe, tot loflijcke overwinninge, en eere te gheraken.²¹¹

Because the change of Caeneus is so extreme, it is not gender which is transgressed but behaviour. Caeneus, beautiful, lazy and effeminate, is according to Renouard, like a dishonourable ‘Valere,’ a servant, ‘lequel ayant quelque temps vescu avec si peu d’honneur, qu’estant comme la honte des siens, il estoit hay de ses plus proches.’²¹² The change of sex of Ceneus, therefore, is merely the fact that he replaced love, luxury and softness for weapons. Du Ryer explains it clearly:

²⁰⁸ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 296r.

²⁰⁹ *De Passe*, XV *Metamorphoseon librorū figureæ*, 109.

²¹⁰ *De Passe*, XV *Metamorphoseon librorū figureæ*, 109-110.

²¹¹ Van Mander, ‘Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,’ 101r.

²¹² Renouard, XV *Discours sur les Metamorphoses d’Ovide*, 144.

Qu'après avoir vescu long-temps dans loisiveté & dans la mollesse, enfin il quitta un genre de vie si infame, & si honteux, & qu'il embrassa les armes; & qu'au reste ce changement de vie donna lieu de dire que de femme, il estoit devenu homme. Car on a tousiours donné le nom de femmes aux hommes lasches & effeminez.²¹³

Especially interesting about Du Ryer's interpretation, is that he emphasizes that there is no man who can't conquer his own femininity and weaknesses.²¹⁴ The same is argued by De Bellegarde:

Son changement de sexe peut faire comprendre qu'il n'y a point d'homme si effeminé qui ne puisse surmonter par le courage, & par le travail, tous les défauts naturels & toutes les mauvaises habitudes.²¹⁵

The eighteenth century interpretations of Iphis show a similar narrative of behavioural change, refusing to believe that Iphis actually transgresses gender. Banier claims for example that it is sometimes hard to distinguish the sexes right after birth:

Quoiqu'il en soit, cette Fable peut avoir son sondement dans la nature elle-même, qui a souvent developé après plusieurs années des Sexes qui n'avoient pas paru auparavant.²¹⁶

The earlier interpretations of Iphis, however, do consider it possible for a woman to change into a man and provide examples from history to prove their point. Sandys, for example, refers to Marie/Marin German, one of the most famous hermaphrodites of the early modern period:

Montaigne reports that he saw by Vitry in France a man, whome the Bishop of Soysons had then in Confirmation, called *German* (knowne from the childhood to have bin a woman, until the age of two and twenty, by all the inhabitants there about, and then named *Mary*) well stricken in yeares, and having a long beard who said that on a time by straining to over-leap an other, he sodenly felt those parts to descend. And how at this day the Maidens of the Towne and Country have a merry song, wherein they admonish one an other not to leap too much for feare of the fortune of *Mary German*.²¹⁷

The difference between Iphis and Caeneus illustrate two different early modern discourses. Iphis, firstly, is an example of the medical discourse in which an appearance of internal heat could make the inward penis visible, making a woman, therefore, a man. His status as penetrator is furthermore emphasized by the heterosexual marriage with which the myth ends. The myth of Caeneus, on the other hand, shows that extreme inherent masculine qualities cannot be transferred onto a woman. Women cannot transgress gender in such an extent, while Caeneus on the other hand is so strong and masculine that he can't be overcome by feminine vice.

If a woman tries to transgress her gender, this is represented as ridiculous and distorting for society. In Lorichius' commentary this theme is exploited, where the myth of Caeneus is used to criticize women who are not satisfied with their sex and reach for the sword. They want to be men and act like Amazons, distorting the natural order between the sexes:

²¹³ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 533.

²¹⁴ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 554.

²¹⁵ Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde. *Les Metamorphoses D'Ovide, Avec des Explications à la fin de chaque Fable. Tome Second* (Paris: Michel David, 1701), 171. Copy from the Bibliothèque jésuite des Fontaines. Accessed November 27, 2015. <https://books.google.nl/books?id=K6aDPEsZXVUC>

²¹⁶ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Second*, 324.

²¹⁷ Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 336.

Die natur (wie der Apostel sagt) will das weibs geschlecht mit eynem langen har, der ödtmütigkeyt ermanen, der ursach eynem weib eyn schleyher zütragen gebürt, nün aber verkeren unser Matronen auch die natur, inne dem sie ir har beschneiten, und ein baretlein mit eyner pflaumen auff setzen, und sich selbs also zu mennern wandlen, solch uppig art der Göttin diser welt, soll bei dem Ceneo der Concubinen (das ich nit unzüchtig sei) des Neptuni verstanden werden.²¹⁸

3.4. Honourable deceit?

One of the most prominent early modern vices is the feminine vice of deceit, symbolized by Eve's ruse to tempt Adam to take the forbidden fruit and disobey God.²¹⁹ This vice is also prominent in the myths of Iphis and Caenis/Caeneus, who take 'false' manly shapes in order to protect themselves. In the myth of Iphis, the ruse of Telethusa is the most prominent. In Ovid's text there is not much weight on this deceit, just mentioning that Lyctus does not know his boy is actually a girl.²²⁰ In the early modern translations, however, the ruse of Telethusa gains much weight. The ruse is presented on the one hand as a positive white lie, necessary to save Iphis, and on the other hand in the translations of Wickram and De Massilian as a terrible vice, deluding the poor Lyctus with the promise of a male heir.

The deceit of Iphis herself, her cross-dressing and exercise in manly activities, is not judged in the early modern translations. The extent in which she actually looks like a man, however, is. In Ovid's text, Iphis has a face 'that whether you gave it to a girl, or to a boy, either would be beautiful.'²²¹ This gender ambiguity is also visible in Du Ryer's translation:

Au reste Telethuse habilla tousiours Iphis en garcon; & la nature qui vouloit sauver cét enfant, luy avoit donné un visage qui ne ressembloit pas moins à un garcon qu'à une fille. De quelque sorte que vous l'eussiez consideré, comme garcon, ou comme fille, vous y eussiez remarqué toutes les graces, & toutes les beautez de l'un & de l'autre sexe. Apres tout, Iphis estoit beau garcon, & c'estoit aussi une belle fille.²²²

In some translations, however, Iphis is described not as gender ambiguous but as a woman, dismissing any manliness in her appearance and characteristics. This is the case with Sprengius, the *Ovide Figurée* and De Bensérade. Firstly, in the *Ovide Figurée* is emphasized that Telethusa abuses her husband's faith by saying that Iphis is a boy, which is clearly not the case, because 'on l'eust peu dire En la voyant.'²²³ Sprengius on the other hand, describes Iphis purely in terms of early modern feminine virtue. Sprengius does not mention male clothing or male attributes, only focusing on the chaste, soft and noble nature of Iphis:

Iphis die Jungkfrauw Tugentsam,
Mit irem namen hiess, und was
Schöner gestalt uber die mass,

²¹⁸ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, CXXVlv.

²¹⁹ Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 124; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, xvii; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850*, 16-17; Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 15, 17.

²²⁰ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 280-281.

²²¹ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 280-281.

²²² Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 414.

²²³ *La Métamorphose d'Ovide Figurée*, 113.

Von Leib auch adenlich und zart,
Hett gar ein wol gezogne art,²²⁴

De Bensérade even mocks the future husband, unable to reject 'la belle noce, & le beau mariage.'²²⁵

Le bel Epoux sans nul poil au menton
D'un vray Mari n'estoit pas sur le ton,
C'estoit n'aguère une Nimphe tres-sage,
Pour son salut ayant dés son bas âge
De l'autre sexe & l'habit & le nom.²²⁶

According to De Bensérade, Iphis never really looked like a boy with his hairless chin and can easily be distinguished from a real man.

The manly shape of Caeneus is also questioned in the myth of Caenis/Caeneus, specifically by his enemy Latreus, the centaur. Although in the text Caeneus is praised for his strength and his perfect battle skills, he is still considered to be a woman in the false shape of a man. In the early modern translations, specific early modern feminine characteristics are employed to define Caeneus as a woman. In Wickram for example, Caeneus gains the feminine vice of arrogance, that makes her behave in a way which is not compliant to her 'weibs gestalt.' Latreus urges her to stop fighting and to do what is appropriate, 'gezeme', by cleaning the dishes and by spinning and sewing.²²⁷ In Valentijns text, furthermore, Caeneus is called 'bruske', which also refers to arrogance.²²⁸

The French translations, moreover, discuss the difference of strength between men and women and it is in these translations that Caeneus' behaviour is disapproved most. Girls, the weaker sex, are in the French translations fearful and unworthy to fight their battles, especially battles with men. In Renouard's translation Latreus challenges Caeneus, the 'pauvre fille', to present himself as the woman she is:

as-tu bien le courage de te presenter devant nous? Ta naissance n'a-elle peu t'en oster la hardiesse?
As-tu perdu le souvenir de ce que te couste la forme mensongere d'homme que tu portes? Souvien-
toy à quel prix tu l'as acquise, & la honte que tu as soufferte rabbattra ton orgueil. Represente-toy,
foible fille, à quoy tu es née.²²⁹

With this challenge Latreus emphasizes that women do not have the courage to be who they are. Courage was a male virtue in early modern thought and not attributed to women. In Du Ryer, Banier and De Bellegarde, furthermore, the fear women supposed to have towards strong men is emphasized as well as their inability to fight battles.²³⁰ A clear distinction is made between men and women in these texts: women are considered to be weak and inferior to men, who are strong and worthy to fight their battles. A woman can't be courageous, only arrogant, and should keep herself busy with feminine activities such as spinning and sewing.

²²⁴ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 231v.

²²⁵ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 319.

²²⁶ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 319.

²²⁷ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, CXXVv-CXXVIr.

²²⁸ Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 338.

²²⁹ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 347.

²³⁰ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 529; Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Second*, 407; De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Second*, 167.

3.5. Conclusion

In the myth of Iphis and the myth of Caenis/Caeneus diverse notions of men and women are explored. Different countries show a significant different focus on the texts. German translations are concerned with chastity and Christian faith, while French translations are explicit in their stories of sex and specifically in sexual differences. English and Dutch translations, moreover, employ a more neutral stance, following Ovid's text more closely. Women should be chaste, beautiful, but most of all willing to get married. Marriage is the most honourable destiny for a girl and a reason for a father to not want a daughter. In the German, English and Dutch translations, marriage is presented as an joyful event, in which two people are joined out of love. Iphis becomes the male penetrator in this narrative, becoming a man in order to legally and sexually join with lanthe. In the French translations, however, the focus is on the unequal relationship in marriage. Iphis possesses lanthe and takes her virginity, while Caenis does not want to be possessed and refuses to lose her freedom.

Refusing marriage, however, leads to rape and the loss of honour. It is the shame this rape causes which makes Caenis wish to be a man. A man who is not only strong, but a hero, impenetrable and subjected to nobody. Especially in the French translations, the distinctions between the weaker sex of women and the stronger sex of men are emphasized, making the wish of Caeneus to become a man plausible. Caeneus is presented as being so strong, that it is impossible for the early modern public to regard him as a woman in the first place. As becomes clear in the narrative of Latreus, women are fearful and weak and nothing compared to a real man. If a woman becomes a man, it can be explained by the temporal theory. It is not possible however, for any woman to obtain the strength and courage Caeneus possesses.

Chapter 4: Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, man and woman, neither and both

The most prominent aspect of the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is its role reversal: Hermaphroditus, a man, is passive in his behaviour and not acting out his role as penetrator. Salmacis, on the other hand, is actively pursuing Hermaphroditus while she, as the penetrated, should stay passive and wait for Hermaphroditus to instigate any action. In the early modern translations, this role reversal is made more explicit by the use of virtues and vices. While in Roman society, virtues and vices were distributed equally among the sexes,²³¹ this was not the case in early modern society: women were tender, beautiful, virtuous, chaste, silent and yielding as well as weak, fearful and timorous.²³² Men, however, were strong, bold, hardy, reasonable and had self-control over their passions.²³³ The use of these virtues and vices was necessary to coincide the Ovidian tale with early modern thought on gender but also to warn readers 'against the pleasures and dangers of solipsistic masculinity and predatory femininity.'²³⁴ The cautionary tale was ideal in distributing the danger of becoming effeminate, a fear which many early modern men shared.²³⁵

4.1. The beautiful Hermaphroditus

The gender reversal in Hermaphroditus is expressed in the different characteristics he gains in the early modern translations. The first one is his beauty, a prominent adjective in the early modern translations. While Hermaphroditus is just called a boy in Clarke's literal translation, he is 'le bel adolescent',²³⁶ 'den schönen Jüngling'²³⁷ and 'een jongeling van een ongemeene schoonheid.'²³⁸ He is alone in his beauty, for 'zyn schoonheyt en hadde noch niemant te vueren gheweest.'²³⁹

The origins of his beauty are not expressed in the original text. According to many early modern translations, however, his parents had a great deal to do with it. In the original text, Hermaphroditus is described as being the child of Mercury and Venus, in Greek Hermes and Aphrodite, and his name is derived from the combination of their names. De Passe however wonders how 'ein solcher Götter sohn Nit sein uber all mas schon',²⁴⁰ making explicit that his beauty must be coming from his godly roots. French translations emphasize not only the beauty, but also the good manners that Hermaphroditus has derived from his lineage.²⁴¹ Du Ryer, for instance, describes Hermaphroditus as:

un enfant qui estoit fils de Mercure, & de Venus. Il estoit si beau qu'on connoissoit sur son visage, & les beautez de sa mere, & la bonne grace de son Pere; Et comme il leur ressembloit par ses attraits, il leur ressembloit aussi par le nom qu'on luy donna, composé de leurs deux noms.²⁴²

²³¹ Centlivres Challet, *Like Man, Like Woman*, 60-73.

²³² Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 24.

²³³ Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman*, 18-19, 24-27, 30; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 5-7, 12, 19-21; Ketelaars, *Compagnies dochters*, 21-22; Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 30-33.

²³⁴ Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 59-60.

²³⁵ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 95-96.

²³⁶ *La Métamorphose d'Ovide Figurée*, 49.

²³⁷ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 101v.

²³⁸ Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 106.

²³⁹ Borluyt, *Excellente figueren*, d4r.

²⁴⁰ De Passe, *XV Metamorphoseon librorū figureæ*, 37.

²⁴¹ See Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 109; Banier, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 124; De Bellegarde, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 223.

²⁴² Du Ryer, *Les Métamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 157.

Unique is the translation by Jörg Wickram, *Der wunderbarlichen Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Their und anderer Creature* (1554), where he only describes the mother of Hermaphroditus:

Das kint war also schöner gestalt
So das man mocht abnemen baldt
Das es von eyner Göttin was²⁴³

The beauty of the goddess Venus is famous and it is this beauty which is also visible in her son. Venus, however, is according to Lorichius, 'die grösst Hur, so je gelebt hat,' as the 'Göttin der lieb.'²⁴⁴ As Wickram has written in his preface, the fables show 'des armen und sehr swachen glaubens so die Heyden gehabt' in which 'der Teuffel' can be spotted.²⁴⁵ All the gods, therefore, are sinful in Lorichius' eyes. One wonders why Wickram removed his father Mercurius from the fable, who is described as an 'aussbüdige Ebrecher' and 'Jungfrawen schender' by Lorichius and therefore not better or worse than Hermaphroditus his mother.²⁴⁶ The explicit connection with beauty was more important to Wickram than Mercury's link with commerce, therefore explicitly attributing Hermaphroditus with a feminine virtue.

Remarkable is the refusal of eighteenth century French commentators to acknowledge Hermaphroditus' lineage. According to Banier is Hermaphroditus only 'le Fils de Mercure & de Venus, que parce que son nom est compose de ces deux Divinitez.'²⁴⁷ The same can be seen with De Bellegarde, who claims that 'Ovide a feint qu'Hermaphrodite étoit fils de Mercure & de Venus,' because Hermaphroditus was born during the joining of the two planets, therefore causing him to 'participe aux deux sexes.'²⁴⁸ Especially in the eighteenth century the historical method of interpretation became prominent and the tendency to explain away the explicit religious pagan aspects of the myths is visible in these interpretations.

4.2. Chaste marriage versus sexual love

Although Ovid doesn't call Hermaphroditus literally beautiful, his beauty is definitely implied in the original text, by the use of several series of metaphors. The most important is the one in which Hermaphroditus blushes, embarrassed by the speech of Salmacis:

This colour is in apples hanging upon a tree exposed to the sun, or in painted ivory, or in the moon, but red under white, when the auxiliary brazen vessels ring in vain.²⁴⁹

Almost all early modern translations follow this pattern, with the exception of Wickram's (1554) and Renouard's translation (1619), both following a different path. In Wickram's translation, specifically the chastity and innocence of Hermaphroditus is described, which is not present in the original text.²⁵⁰ Hermaphroditus, for instance, 'der bulschafft nie hatt gepflegen, Was auch inn lieb nie

²⁴³ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXIXv.

²⁴⁴ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XLiv.

²⁴⁵ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, A IVr-A IVv.

²⁴⁶ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, VIIr.

²⁴⁷ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 128.

²⁴⁸ De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 228.

²⁴⁹ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 108.

²⁵⁰ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 108.

gefangen glegen,²⁵¹ and when he jumps in the water, he covers his genitals.²⁵² In order to support this chaste narrative, Wickram replaces the metaphor of the apple, symbol of the temptation and sexual love²⁵³, with 'eyn Ross die uff dem feld stoht.'²⁵⁴ A red rose was a symbol of love and beauty as well as the flower of Venus, his mother.²⁵⁵

In the French translation of Renouard, on the contrary, metaphors of sexual love are added, emphasizing that Hermaphroditus is unknowingly urging Salmacis to continue with her advances. His face is 'ny du flambeau' and 'ny de flesches de Cupidon,' making Hermaphroditus 'plus aimable,' and Salmacis 'l'en conjure & l'en presse, l'assurant qu'elle n'entrera point avec luy en des caresses plus estroittes, que celles qu'une soeur doit à son frere.'²⁵⁶

In the English translation by Sandys Hermaphroditus is also presented as chaste, being 'relentlesse coy,' 'the distrest' and 'th'unwilling', while Sandys condemns 'the sensuall love' in his commentary.²⁵⁷ Chastity is, however, the most important in the German translations. While in Clarke's literal translation Salmacis wants to steal her pleasure and urges him to 'the same bed-chamber' if he has no spouse yet,²⁵⁸ in Wickram she merely asks if he will take her as his lover.²⁵⁹ She furthermore asks politely for a kiss²⁶⁰ instead of just taking it.²⁶¹ The other more elaborate German translation of Johannes Sprengius shows the same narrative of chastity. Salmacis wants to move Hermaphroditus 'mit worten süß,' and wants 'einen Heuraht machen, Und greiffen zu ehrlichen sachen.'²⁶² Hermaphroditus, however, literally flees from Salmacis and the 'Ehlicher pflicht' in Sprengius' translation, showing his more timorous feminine side.²⁶³

It is really interesting that marriage is so emphasized in Sprengius' translation. Marriage was viewed as a mystical union ordained by God and had the purpose of the avoidance of sin.²⁶⁴ It was furthermore especially for women important to be married, as a symbol of honour as well as a symbol of their subjection to men in general. As Hermaphroditus takes the female role in this narrative, he should be glad to be able to marry. He flees however, showing his innocence but also his childishness, for which Sprengius warns the youth. In Sprengius' commentary is emphasized that youth should not leave their homes so hasty if they are not ready for adulthood and marriage: 'Wer in den See der Welt sich senckt, Wirt liederlich darinn ertrenckt.'²⁶⁵

The narrative of marriage is also employed by Van Mander, who argues that the fountain stands for 'den Echten staet, dat welck een clear suyver water is, daar twee een worden.'²⁶⁶ By explaining the fountain in moral terms – the main subjective of Van Mander's commentary is to

²⁵¹ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, Xlr

²⁵² Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, Xlr.

²⁵³ Claire Powell, *The Meaning of Flowers. A Garland of Plant Lore and Symbolism from Popular Custom & Literature* (London: Jupiter Books, 1977), 35.

²⁵⁴ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, Xlr.

²⁵⁵ Powell, *The Meaning of Flowers*, 116; Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 175.

²⁵⁶ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 110.

²⁵⁷ Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 120-121, 159.

²⁵⁸ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 107.

²⁵⁹ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, Xlr.

²⁶⁰ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, Xlr.

²⁶¹ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 108.

²⁶² Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 101v.

²⁶³ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 101v.

²⁶⁴ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 20.

²⁶⁵ Sprengius, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung*, 102v.

²⁶⁶ Van Mander, 'Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,' 31v.

teach people of the moral worth of the ancient fables – Van Mander is able to discuss the myth, which is so unchaste and shameful that it ‘om eerbaerheysts wille verdient verswegen.’²⁶⁷

As chaste as the German translations and the Dutch commentary of Van Mander are, as sexual explicit are the French translations. In the *Ovide Figurée* and in Renouard Salmacis is keen to steal his fruit, a symbol for sexual love.²⁶⁸ Du Ryer writes that Salmacis literally wants to possess Hermaphroditus, feeling ‘une passion extrême’, and urges him to the bed room, taken or untaken by a wife:²⁶⁹

S'il est donc vray que le Ciel t'ayt donné à quelque Nymphé, je te conjure de permettre que je luy dérobe pour quelque temps, ton amour, & ses delices; ou si tu es encore sans femme, consens que je sois la tienne, & commençons dés aujourd'huy, à n'avoir qu'un coeur & qu'un lit.²⁷⁰

This sexual attitude of Salmacis and her active pursuit of Hermaphroditus are quite unnatural in early modern society: normally, it is the man who tries to conquer a woman, not the other way around. Her inability to control herself and her passions, however, is much in line with early modern thought and again mostly expressed in French translations.²⁷¹ Although in the original text Salmacis is already presented as madly in love, it is in De Bellegarde that Salmacis experiences ‘violens desirs’²⁷² and in Renouard that Salmacis would rather die than not embrace him: ‘elle ne peut retarder l'accomplissement de ses desirs; elle meurt qu'elle n'embrasse desia ce qu'elle void, une chaude furie la transporte à laquelle elle ne peut resister.’²⁷³ Furthermore, Salmacis has to ‘moderez vos transports’²⁷⁴ and stop ‘vos importunes caresses.’²⁷⁵

This explicit sexuality, however, was even in France not always acceptable and changed after the seventeenth century. Banier, for instance, states that Salmacis offers her hand in marriage, leaving out the part of the bed-chamber.²⁷⁶ De Bellegarde also only refers to marriage, while De Massilian completely omitted this fable from his translation which he deemed not chaste enough for his young public.²⁷⁷

The illustrations of Banier and De Bellegarde still show a unbridled Salmacis, however, chasing after Hermaphroditus as soon as she sees him. In the image accompanying the De Bellegarde translation (Image 8) Salmacis is running in the water. Her clothes are lying at the grass in a wrinkled pile, suggesting that they were thrown away in haste. In the illustration accompanying Banier’s translation (Image 9), we see Salmacis, embracing an unwilling Hermaphroditus. The Cupid in the grass symbolizes the madness of Salmacis and the sexual love Salmacis is trying to get from Hermaphroditus. The illustrations show the implicit textual gender reversal: a woman with a manly temper chasing a passive rejecting man.

²⁶⁷ Van Mander, ‘Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis,’ 31v.

²⁶⁸ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 13.

²⁶⁹ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 158.

²⁷⁰ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 158.

²⁷¹ In the translation of Valentijn is also explicitly referred to the bedroom, see Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 108.

²⁷² De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 224.

²⁷³ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, 110.

²⁷⁴ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 125.

²⁷⁵ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, 110

²⁷⁶ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 125.

²⁷⁷ De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 225.



Image 8: F. Ertinger in De Bellegarde



Image 9: Bernard Picart in Banier

4.3. The temporal theory reversed: a cold Hermaphroditus

Especially peculiar to the early modern translations is the emphasis on Hermaphroditus' cold and unloving attitude towards Salmacis. While Salmacis is presented as loving in the translations, trying

to flatter Hermaphroditus with sweet words and soft kisses, Hermaphroditus stays unmoved, with, according to Wickram, a 'hertz das ist von steynes art.'²⁷⁸ This is best expressed in the translation by De Passe:

Auf ihn verliebet ward so geil,
Das feiner sie begert in eil.
Sie schmeichelt im und redt liebloss
Doch findet in allzeit liebloss,²⁷⁹

The French translations differ from their German counterpart in the fact that Hermaphroditus not only not loves Salmacis but is cruel towards her.²⁸⁰ In Banier's translations, Salmacis is trying with all her might to convince Hermaphroditus of her love and 'un cruel mépris est toute la recompense de ses emportemens.'²⁸¹ The same desperateness on the side of Salmacis and cruelty on the side of Hermaphroditus can be seen in Renouard translation, where Hermaphroditus experiences the advances of Salmacis as torture:

Elle le retient, mais c'est en vain, car il s'oppose à son contentement, & ne permet point qu'elle esteigne avec luy l'ardeur qui la tourmente. Ses attraits ne le charment point; ses feux ne peuvent l'eschauffer; il s'opiniastre autant comme elle le presse.²⁸²

The most remarkable depiction of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus unequal love, however, is made by Du Ryer. He states that 'l'un à monstrier de la flame, l'autre à monstrier de la glace.'²⁸³ This is a direct reference to the humoral theory of Galen, in which men are considered to be hot and women to be cold. In this case, however, the inherent qualities are reversed, making the woman hot and the man cold. This is explicitly stated by De Bensérade, saying that 'S'il est moins qu'homme au froid dont il abonde,' while Salmacis is 'qu'une femme elle se dévergonde.'²⁸⁴ Hermaphroditus is represented as extremely feminine in the emphasis of this coldness, which is contrary to the early modern nature of the male. The same effect is established with Salmacis, who is like a man in her fiery advances.

The moral lesson which can be drawn from this myth, according to De Bensérade, is derived from this imbalance of temperaments, which should be avoided at all costs:

Pour estre heureux il faut qu'on les refonde,
Et l'un n'est point de l'autre satisfait.
Trop rebuter le monde c'est mal fait,
Et c'est mal fait de s'attacher au monde.²⁸⁵

In order to be happy, one has to compensate with the other and be satisfied with what one has, for otherwise disaster will rule the world.

According to the commentators, this coldness is caused by the planet Mercury, who is hot and cold at the same time and can influence both sexes. People born under the planet Mercury are more likely to become hermaphrodites which is what happened here. In this physical interpretation,

²⁷⁸ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XLV

²⁷⁹ De Passe, *XV Metamorphoseon librorū figureæ*, 37.

²⁸⁰ See also De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 227.

²⁸¹ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 126.

²⁸² Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 111

²⁸³ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 160.

²⁸⁴ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 103.

²⁸⁵ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 103.

the astrological notion is used that the stars influence human nature and human fate. This interpretation is given by Van Mander, Renouard, Sandys, Du Ryer and De Bellegarde, which shows that this idea was prominent throughout the whole of Northern Europe during the early modern period. The German translations do not give this narrative, which does not mean that they did not share this notion as well. The German translations are in general more concerned with the superiority of Christianity in comparison with paganism and astrology is only used sideways.

4.4. Seduction by the idle and lazy Salmacis

Although Hermaphroditus is described as excessively feminine, he stays virtuous. Salmacis on the other hand portrays several female vices, in her idleness, laziness and lack of control of her passions. The description of these vices in the early modern translations, which are only female vices in the early modern period, are similar in the original text. The translation of Clarke, for example, speaks of Salmacis in this way:

She neither takes a dart, nor a painted quiver; nor does she employ her leisure-time in hardy hunting: but one while bathes her beautiful limbs in her spring; often streights her hair with a box-comb; and consults the waters which she looks into, to see what becomes her: and another while, having her body clad with a transparent garment, she lies upon either the soft leaves or the soft grass. She oftentimes gathered flowers;²⁸⁶

The same rhetorics are employed in most translations. French translations, however, are often more elaborate and explicit in their descriptions. In Renouard, for instance, is emphasized that she doesn't have any skills in hunting and exercising: 'sans cognoissance de ses exercices, n'avoit jamais espruvé son haleine à la course, ny la dexterité de son bras à descocher un trait sur une beste fauve.'²⁸⁷ Renouard states that Salmacis combs her hair as Venus does, which implicitly refers to the beauty of her hair.²⁸⁸ Banier, furthermore, states that laziness rules her life, 'une idolente oisiveté faisoit toutes ses delices.'²⁸⁹

In the interpretation of Renouard, the evil of the vice of laziness is further developed. Salmacis is, according to him, possessed by a demon, 'qui possede souverainement tout les mouvemens des volontez de Salmacis.'²⁹⁰ This demon of laziness has to be driven out along side vice and cowardness in general, and the only method to do these things is through exercise and labour, which are typically manly activities in the early modern world:

Nos esprits, comme le fer, s'ils ne font employez, se chargent de rouïllure, qui les ronge & les affoiblit: mais dedans l'exercice, ainsi que ce mesme metal, ils se polissent, & s'esclaircissent à l'usage, pource qu'ils s'acquierent tout les jours quelque perfection nouvelle.²⁹¹

Salmacis is apart from being lazy and idle also represented as a seductress. One example of this is her assumed withdrawal from the fountain. In Ovid Salmacis just leaves the place to him, without saying much more than that.²⁹² In the translations however is emphasized that Hermaphroditus is free to

²⁸⁶ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 107.

²⁸⁷ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 109.

²⁸⁸ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 109.

²⁸⁹ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 124.

²⁹⁰ Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 55.

²⁹¹ Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 55.

²⁹² Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 108.

take this place and that he won't be bothered by anyone in the future. In Wickram, Salmacis urges Hermaphroditus to stay: 'Bleib hie ich will von dannen keren Und dir dein lust keyns wegs zerstören.'²⁹³ The same happens in Banier, in which Salmacis makes Hermaphroditus 'le maître de ces Lieux'²⁹⁴ and in Renouard: 'Las! mes delices, se sera moy qui vous quitteray plustost la place; demeurez icy en toute liberté, personne ne vous faschera.'²⁹⁵

The effect of these assurances is that Hermaphroditus is presented as more vulnerable: he truly believes he is left alone and, not aware of the coming dangers, naively undresses himself to bathe in the water. Commentators have used this myth therefore as an explicit warning for young men, who should not trust the assuring flattering words of the nymph or the outside world in general. Du Ryer presents Salmacis as the symbol of voluptuousness, making curious young men soft with her vice.²⁹⁶ Young men, however, will definitely be tempted by the fountain with its 'le crystal des eaux', 'sa beauté, la molle verdure des tapis' and will find it hard to pass this place.²⁹⁷

4.5. The monstrous effects of the fountain

As Salmacis grabs Hermaphroditus and struggles to steal kisses from him a remarkable transformation takes place. In the Ovidian words of Clarke:

for the bodies of both being jumbled together are united; and one human shape is put on them, just as if any one should draw different boughs under one and the same bark, and see them join in growing, and grow up together. Thus, after their bodies were united in a strict embrace, they are no more two bodies; but yet the form of them is doubtful; so that it could be called neither woman nor boy; it seems neither, and yet both.²⁹⁸

This transformation is described in the same way in almost all the translations. The exceptions, however, show an interesting new narrative regarding this transformation, namely that Hermaphroditus turns into a monster. In the *Ovide Figurée* Hermaphroditus becomes 'a couple unique hideuse.'²⁹⁹ In Renouard is described that the imperfect traits of both sexes are visible, a 'corps plustost qui avoit imparfaitement les deux sexes ensemble.'³⁰⁰

In the commentary of Renouard, furthermore, is Hermaphroditus put together with monsters such as Scython and Tiresias, who employ both sexes whenever they want. The use of both sexes is not, however, a natural and biological change, but rather a change in behaviour. Renouard furthermore adds critically that there are people in his own time who choose to act like the opposite sex which is undesirable.³⁰¹ Sandys discusses the treatment of such monstrous hermaphrodites, who had to choose which sex they would take and were 'punished with death if they changed at any time.'³⁰² Sandys illustrates this with various ancient and contemporary examples, referring to the drowning practices of the Romans versus the legal treatment in early modern Europe.

In the engravings by Virgil Solis (Image 10), Bernard Salomon, Crispijn de Passe, Jean Mathieu

²⁹³ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XLr.

²⁹⁴ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 125.

²⁹⁵ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 110

²⁹⁶ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 162.

²⁹⁷ Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 54.

²⁹⁸ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 109.

²⁹⁹ *La Métamorphose d'Ovide Figurée*, 49.

³⁰⁰ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 111.

³⁰¹ Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 54.

³⁰² Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 160.

(Image 11) and the anonymous engraver in Sandys translation, this so called monstrosity of Hermaphroditus is depicted. In the foreground Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are visible. Salmacis is caressing Hermaphroditus, embracing him, while Hermaphroditus tries to move away from her. The third figure represents the moment when they fuse into one body, showing a two-headed shape, half male and half female.



Image 10: Virgil Solis in Wickram



Image 11: Jean Mathieu in Renouard

If we compare the textual references to monstrosity with the visual references, we can see that this narrative is placed in the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, rather than the second half of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century. Especially in the eighteenth century, the plausibility of the fable is questioned extensively, explaining that the fountain is connected with Caria and its inhabitants, who became effeminate and hermaphrodites because of an excess of luxury and riches.

Smids for instance explains that the Carians can be seen as hermaphrodites ‘wegens hunne wellusten, en overdaad in spijs en drank, en daar op volgende boelaagien.’³⁰³ Furthermore, ‘de ledigheid byzonderlijk is de voedster der minnelusten, en aanleidster tot buitenspoorige en ongeoorlofde boeleeringen.’³⁰⁴ Banier on the other hand employs the historical method in his explanation, arguing that the fountain was used to civilize the barbarians who forced to get their water from it.³⁰⁵ Because of the constant contact between the barbarians and the Greeks, who had driven the barbarians out of Caria, the barbarians not only became ‘très-polis’, but also very accustomed to the voluptuous luxury of the Greeks: ‘c’est ce qui donna à cette Fontaine la reputation de faire changer de sexe.’³⁰⁶

The fountain and its effects are almost always, as is the case in the original text, focused on its enervating and effeminate effects on men. The effects however are sometimes exaggerated and put in a more negative perspective. In the English translation of Sandys, for instance, the waves of the fountain are so strong that they ‘all manly strength undoe.’³⁰⁷ In Du Ryer’s translation, moreover, the water is explicitly evil and it is implicitly argued that becoming effeminate is an undesirable fate: ‘la fontaine de Salmacis est une fontaine infame, & qu'elle effemine les hommes par la malignité de ses eaux.’³⁰⁸

Femininity is described as something dangerous and undesirable and men can, through femininity, even end up in early modern feminine vice. This is visible in the translation of Posthius:

Der Brunn Salmacis macht die Mann
Ein Weibisch Natur nemmen an.
Der Brunn treg und faul tag bedeut,
Die machen blöd und forchtsam leut.³⁰⁹

The fountain is presented by Posthius as the personification of early modern feminine vice, making people lazy and fearful. The myth, summarized into these four sentences, is completely reiterated in early modern thought on gender transgression, emphasizing for men the dangers of becoming effeminate.

Some translations, however, consider the fountain to be effective on both sexes. This is the case with Wickram and Renouard, which are considerable early translations. Wickram, for instance, emphasizes that all humans who bath in the fountain ‘gewint bald weibs und mannes müt.’³¹⁰ The French translation of Renouard is even more explicit, stating that the fountain of Salmacis:

³⁰³ Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 107.

³⁰⁴ Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 107.

³⁰⁵ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 128.

³⁰⁶ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 128.

³⁰⁷ Sandys, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses Englished*, 119.

³⁰⁸ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d’ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 157.

³⁰⁹ Posthius, *Tetrasticha in Ovidii Metamorphoseon libros 15*, 51.

³¹⁰ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXIXv.

chacun scait la molle vertu qu'elle a de rendre les hommes effeminez, & de fortifier les femmes en les rendant demy-hommes; mais il y a peu de personnes qui en scachent la cause.³¹¹

The fountain can not only make men feminine, but can strengthen women until they become half-men. In his commentary, however, Renouard argues that these effects are by no means desirable:

n'ont pas seulement le pouvoir d'amollir les coeurs, & faire des malles femelles en attiedissant la fiere ardeur d'un genereux courage: mais encore de loger un coeur malle dans un sein de femme, & rechauffer d'un valeureuse pointe d'honneur les ames les plus debiles & plus casanieres.³¹²

The water of the fountain firstly makes courageous and noble men weak, while it makes a very weak and lazy housewife a bit more honourable. Both are represented as being ridiculous and we can see that gender transgression of both sexes is criticized here. In later translations, however, this explicit criticism on gender transgression disappears. Although the fountain only affects men and effeminate effects are still explored by commenters such as Banier, De Bellegarde and De Massilian, no longer is gender transgression deemed actually possible. Instead, historical and logical explanations are offered, proving it is moral decadence that makes one effeminate.

4.6. Conclusion

In the early modern translations the characteristics of both Hermaphroditus and Salmacis are exaggerated in such an extent that they coincide with early modern notions of gender. Hermaphroditus, portraying feminine virtues, is presented as beautiful, chaste and fearful, while Salmacis, portraying feminine vice, is idle, lazy and a fiery seductress. The reversal of gender roles is most prominent in the French texts, in which the humoral theory of Galen is employed.

The differences between the Northern European countries are based on their sexual explicitness. While German translations are very chaste, focusing on marriage and omitting symbols of sexual love, France is only focused on the sexual love, representing it in various ways. England and the Dutch Republic show both aspects, although chastity stays the most important focus for both.

The fear of emasculation and of men transgressing gender is most prominent in the translations of this myth. In the earlier translations these gender transgressions made a person a monster, not fitting in either sex and visualized as such. The ability of women transgressing gender is also explored in the earlier translations. Women are ridiculed as heavily as men. In later translations, these gender transgressions are put aside as historical examples, deeming such a transformation impossible.

³¹¹ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 108-109.

³¹² Renouard, *XV Discours sur les Metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 54.

Chapter 5: The impossible transformation: the myth of Tiresias

Of all the myths in which gender transformation occurs the one of Tiresias is the most curious and exceptional. Both in the world of Ovid as in the early modern world, his transformation was deemed to be impossible. In Roman society the passive effeminate man, taking the role of penetrated instead of penetrator, was condemned. He was perceived as a threat to the social order because he disturbed the dichotomy of penetrator/penetrated in the patriarchal heterosexual society.³¹³ In the early modern world similar norms dismissed the transgression of a man into a woman: the humoral theory of Galen, for instance, proposed that women were the imperfect version of men. Men were already perfect, and although women could become perfect, the reverse was not possible.

Tiresias myth is therefore unique: he explicitly breaks the dichotomy of penetrator/penetrated, by his sexual experiences as both man and woman, and becomes temporarily imperfect when he lives for seven years as a woman. The rarity of this myth is reflected in my primary material: five of my fourteen translations – *Ovide Figurée, Excellente Figueren*, Sprengius, Posthius and De Passe, all translations which are considerably early – have ignored the myth in their translations, denying the existence of such an abominable man.

5.1. The sexual pleasures of men and women

The other early modern translations do however reiterate the myth, which contains in total two controversial narratives: the question which sex enjoys sexual love the most and the transgression of Tiresias in a female form. The myth starts with the first question, uttered in a jesting conversation between Jupiter and Juno, both drunk from drinking too much nectar. In the original text, Jupiter remarks to Juno that ‘Your Pleasure is greater than that which falls to the males.’³¹⁴ This emphasis on the sexual pleasure of women is employed by all the early modern translations. In the early modern period, it was believed that women, morally and mentally weak, succumbed easier to vices such as lust.³¹⁵ Husbands were very wary of the hyper sexuality of their wives who would seek their pleasures somewhere else if their husbands efforts were not to their satisfaction.³¹⁶ It is therefore not strange to see that this ‘advantage’ is explicitly attributed to women in these translations. As Jupiter declares in Renouards translation, ‘de son sexe estoient heureuses en ce qu’elles avoient beaucoup plus de plaisir en la compagnie des hommes, que les hommes n’en avoient avec elles.’³¹⁷

Tiresias is called to judge this quarrel and the early modern translations follow the original text again very closely. He has tasted from ‘les plaisirs de l’amour sous les deux Sexes’ and, in the end deciding in favour of Jupiter, is the right person for this joyful dispute.³¹⁸ Only the translation of Wickram seems to be less explicit at first hand, for Tiresias ‘Dem beyder Natur kündig was.’³¹⁹ In the judgement Tiresias gives to this dispute, however, Wickram emphasizes that women do experience more pleasure than man, as Tiresias himself has experienced:

Als er nun solt entscheyden das
Den zanck zwischen dem Jupiter

³¹³ Lacquer, *Making Sex*, 53.

³¹⁴ Clarke, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 78.

³¹⁵ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 24.

³¹⁶ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 107-108.

³¹⁷ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, 82.

³¹⁸ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide. Tome Premier*, 94.

³¹⁹ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXI r.

Und der Juno do saget er
 Wie das weiblich gelüst und begir
 Den Mannen weit thet treffer für
 Dann er das hat empfinden dick
 Gab deshalb Jupiter den siegk³²⁰

Tiresias' sexual experiences as both man and woman are illustrated by the engraving accompanying Du Ryer's translation (Image 12). The judgement of Tiresias is depicted next to Jupiter and Juno who are waiting for the result of their dispute. Tiresias is depicted in female clothing and has female breasts, openly displayed. The masculine attributes Tiresias carries are his beard and his penis, clearly visible under his dress. The breasts and the male genitals are both markers for sexual love. By showing these markers, the sexual pleasure of both men and women are emphasized, both experienced by Tiresias.



Image 12: Engraving by Jaspas Isaac in Du Ryer.

The difference in sexual pleasure is, next to the translations itself and the image above, also explored in the interpretations of Sandys and Du Ryer, who use the physical method in their explanations. Jupiter, symbolizing the element of fire, and Juno, symbolizing the element of air, are both necessary for procreation. Air, however, is more powerful than fire in this matter, although heat is also necessary, 'producing the forme and causing maturity.'³²¹

The only translation who refuses to refer to any of these sexual activities is the translation of De Massilian. In this translation Massilian only mentions that Tiresias judges a quarrel, not going in the specifics of the content of that quarrel.³²² The whole background story of Tiresias, of him being

³²⁰ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXI-XXXIV.

³²¹ Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 103.

³²² De Massilian, *Les Métamorphoses traduites d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 175.

experienced in both sexes and him living as a woman for seven years, is omitted as well in this translation. The readers of De Massilian translations were young and apparently not supposed to read about such controversial topics.

5.2. Superior masculinity

As already mentioned in the introduction, it was in the Roman society a rarity too that a man would become a woman. It was so rare and so disgraceful in a sense, that Ovid himself has spent not much words on this transformation, only mentioning that Tiresias 'spent seven autumns, or years in that pickle.'³²³ Most translations are as brief as Ovid in regards to Tiresias' life as a woman. The translations which are, however, more elaborate, emphasize the denigrating position Tiresias actually was in, especially according to early modern norms. Renouard for example emphasizes that Tiresias spends his time as 'ce foible sexe,' indicating that women are inferior to men because of their weakness.³²⁴ A similar narrative is displayed in Wickram's translation, who almost presents the transformation of Tiresias as being unfair to Tiresias. According to Wickram, Tiresias hit the snakes because of 'eynem sondren hass Den er zu allen schlangen trug.'³²⁵ As Wickram's translation is inspired by Christian doctrine, the snakes refer to the devil here, who inspired Eve to ignore Gods orders and ultimately caused the fall of humankind.³²⁶ Although Tiresias actions could be considered to be noble in this respect, the punishment of his actions are legitimate. Lorichius explains that nobody should ever disturb the natural order of nature: marriage should always be honoured, even in the case of two coupling snakes.³²⁷

In the translation of De Bensérade Tiresias explicit gender notions are used to define his sex change, ridiculing him in the process. Tiresias is already described as being a bit extravagant and feminine in the beginning, carrying 'une vieille souche, Galant commerce, & pourtant peu gentil.'³²⁸ Tiresias 'devient femme en tout jusqu'au babil, il file, il cout, vague au menage, acouche.'³²⁹ These activities – talking, spinning, knitting, cleaning and giving birth – are specifically feminine and also denigrating for a man. Tiresias attitude towards the snakes when he finds them again is therefore very violent compared to the other translations, calling them 'couple rampant & vil.' Tiresias demands his manly sex back, characterized by a beard which grows on his face: 'Le poil renaist à l'entour en sa bouche, Et le voila redevenu viril.'³³⁰

In the original text of Ovid there is no specific positive or negative meaning attached to Tiresias transformation in his original shape.³³¹ In the early modern translations, however, his retrieval of his own sex is presented as a victory. In Smids for example, he 'won weder zijn voorige gedaante en aangeboore postuir,'³³² and in the translations of Du Ryer, Banier and De Bellegarde he retakes his previous shape actively as well.³³³

³²³ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 78.

³²⁴ Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, 82.

³²⁵ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXI r.

³²⁶ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 186.

³²⁷ Wickram and Lorichius, *Ovidij Nasonis des aller sinnreichsten Poeten Metamorphosis*, XXXV v.

³²⁸ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 69.

³²⁹ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 69.

³³⁰ De Bensérade, *Métamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, 69.

³³¹ Clarke, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 78-79.

³³² Smids, *de vyfthien boeken der Herscheppingen*, 81.

³³³ Banier, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 94; De Bellegarde, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide. Tome Premier*, 116; Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 119.

This active retrieval of one's own sex is illustrated in the scene most used to illustrate this myth (Image 13-14). Tiresias is depicted in his feminine form. He holds his stick high, ready to hit the snakes again and become the man he once was. By presenting Tiresias in this way, the disadvantages of being a woman are implicitly emphasized, as Tiresias cannot wait a minute longer to belong to the superior sex again.



Image 13: Engraving by F. Ertinger in De Bellegarde



Image 14: Engraving by Chauveau, le Clerc & Le Brun in De Bensérade

5.3. An impossible transformation

In all the translations, the strangeness and prodigy of this event are mentioned. The myth was strange for it argued the complete opposite of what was deemed biologically possible. According to the temporal theory, nature always strived for perfection, symbolized by the figure of the man. This is explicitly mentioned by Du Ryer, who states that nature started with creating men:

En effet la nature ne fait point de semblables choses, elle va tousiours du moins parfait au plus parfait; & si quelquesfois des femmes sont devenuës hommes, c'est que la nature acheve ce qu'elle avoit commencé d'abord. Car si ce qu'on dit est veritable, elle a tousiours dessein de faire des hommes; & les ennemis des femmes soustiennent que la femme est un deffaut de la nature.³³⁴

To go against nature as Tiresias does was impossible, which made it necessary for commentators to employ interpretations which were not based on history and reality. The myth was explained in a moral and allegorical sense and medieval interpretations from the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius (sixth century) and Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus* (1340) were reused. The figure of the hermaphrodite was furthermore used as an explanatory model for the strangeness of Tiresias' shapes.

According to the moral interpretations the myth of Tiresias was a warning for especially men not to show any form of femininity. Sandys employs this narrative, arguing furthermore that the reverse, women becoming men, surely is possible:

From whence we may derive this morall, that as it is preposterous in Nature, which ever aimes at perfection, when men degenerate into effeminacy; so contrairly commendable, when women aspire to manly wisdom and fortitude.³³⁵

Du Ryer employs a similar narrative, regarding the transformation of Tiresias as a behavioural change instead of a sex change. According to Du Ryer, Tiresias becomes a woman because he focuses 'aux plaisirs & aux voluptes du corps,' regaining his 'premiere forme' after 'qu'en suite ayant fait reflexion sur la vie qu'il menoit alors.'³³⁶

The second narrative is allegorical, employed by Sandys and Du Ryer, in which Tiresias is explained as a symbol for the change of seasons:

the spring called Masculine, because the growth of things are then inclosed in the solid bud; when every creature (expressed by these ingendring Serpents) are prompt unto *Venus*: but separated by his rod, the approaching fervor, he is turned into a Woman; that is, into flourishing Summer, defigured by his name; which season is said to be Feminine, for that then the trees doe display their leaves, and produce their conceptions. The Autumne is a second time of generation, proceeding from the temperate quality of the aire; when he recovers his former sexe by againe deviding the serpents; that is, by the approach of Winter, which deprives the Earth of her beauty, shuts up her wombe, and in that barren in it selfe is said to be Masculine.³³⁷

The fertile seasons of spring and summer are connotated as being feminine, while autumn and winter are masculine. This interpretation can literally be found in the medieval commentaries of

³³⁴ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 119.

³³⁵ Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 336.

³³⁶ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 120.

³³⁷ Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 103.

Fulgentius and Bersuire.³³⁸

In the last strand of interpretation, Tiresias is considered to be a monstrous hermaphrodite, possessing attributes of both sexes and having a manly and feminine face.³³⁹ His case, 'une chose bien monstreuse qu'un homme soit devenu femme,' is so unique that Tiresias with his devastating fate can only be the subject of 'la colere des Dieux.'³⁴⁰

5.4. Conclusion

One thing is clear: all early modern Northern European countries considered the myth of Tiresias as fiction. It was biologically not possible for a man to change into a woman. It was furthermore not desirable: men are warned against femininity, making a man inferior and morally disgraceful. The explanations of this myth therefore vary between allegorical seasons to a monstrous hermaphrodite, never considering the possibility that a man could actually become a woman.

In the translations and illustrations, the unwillingness of Tiresias of being a woman are shown. He is ready to take his own shape back. The only positive aspect of his time as a woman is the sexual love he experiences, far greater in women than in men. The early modern translations emphasize this aspect, employing the early modern notion that women are weaker and inferior to men.

³³⁸ Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth*, 70; William Donald Reynolds, *The Ovidius moralizatus of Petrus Berchorius* (Michigan: Xerox University Microfilms, 1975), 92-93.

³³⁹ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 120; Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*, 103.

³⁴⁰ Du Ryer, *Les Metamorphoses d'ovide divisées en XV. Livres*, 119.

Conclusion

In the fictional world of Ovid, gender transgressions were possible, as signified by the myths of Tiresias, Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Iphis and Caenis/Caeneus. In the real world however, of Roman society as well as in early modern Northern Europe, they were not. They are described as abnormalities, extraordinary occasions viewed with the utmost suspicion.

Transformations of women into men as is shown in the myth of Iphis and Caenis/Caeneus are the least suspicious: as nature strives for perfection, it was possible for an imperfect woman to become a man. Internal heat could make the inward penis appear and make a woman a man. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century this knowledge was distributed in multiple sources, even providing ancient and contemporary examples. In the eighteenth century, however, this explanation disappears from the translations. Biological sex change was replaced by a behavioural sex change.

The transformation of a woman into a man was also bounded in rules. In the myth of Iphis specifically the dichotomy of penetrator/penetrated is used, transforming Iphis in a biologically way to ensure that he fits in heterosexual patriarchal early modern society. A woman, however, could not gain the masculine virtue of strength when she transformed into a man. This is illustrated by the myth of Caenis/Caeneus, where almost all commentators consider Caeneus to be a man from the start. It is his beauty, idleness and laziness, specifically feminine early modern virtues and vices, which makes him a woman and in replacing these vices by masculine virtues such as strength and courage he becomes a real man. Women trying to express these exclusive masculine virtues are therefore ridiculous and extremely distorting to the natural order between the sexes.

The ambiguous form of the hermaphrodite foremostly symbolizes the fear of emasculation. Becoming effeminate was a terrible fate for the early modern man, which reduced his status and made him less apt to fulfil his masculine functions in the political, economical and religious realms of society. In the earlier translations this even makes a man a monster, not fitting in either sex and visualized as such. Later translations consider such biological gender transgressions impossible, explaining the myth in terms of behavioural change.

The myth of Tiresias, finally, shows the biggest discrepancy between fiction and reality. As is the case with the later translations of the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Tiresias' gender transgression is described as being monstrous and can only be explained in terms of behavioural change. Biologically it was impossible for a man to change into a woman.

The narratives which become visible if we look at the early modern translation of these myths, is that gender transgression was firstly not desirable as it distorted social order and, secondly, that being like a woman in any way is considered to be abominable. To enforce these narratives, the early modern differences between men and women are explicitly emphasized in these translations and added to the original text. The myths, therefore, are used to define and reinforce these distinctions, considering any deviation of these norms as abnormal. Women according to these early modern adaptations of these myths are beautiful, chaste, innocent but also timorous, lazy and idle. Men on the other hand are defined by their strength and courage and their ability to penetrate. Any reversal of these gender roles ends up in disaster, as the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis illustrates.

In this respect, there is a clear difference visible between German translations on the one hand and French ones on the other hand, both employing a target-oriented method of translating instead of a word-by-word-rendering, which is visible in the English and Dutch translation. The German translations are focused on providing a chaste Christian narrative, omitting phrases which are too sexually explicit. Marriage, the mystical union ordained by God, is presented as the one true

goal for every woman and man, providing them with mutual help and companionship. In the German translations, therefore, the relationship between men and women seems to be more equal. In the French translations however the unequal relationship between men, the stronger sex, and women, the weaker sex, is stressed. In French translations, the loss of freedom for women and their subjection to men are stressed in regards to marriage, which makes marriage, becoming literally the possession of men, a less desirable future for women. A woman, furthermore, was always sexually subjected to men, as the rape of Caenis indicates: although women possessed a greater sexual pleasure according to early modern thought, they were still much more vulnerable to the dangers of the outside world than men.

To be a man or a woman, therefore, was bound to the rules of society and nature. Transgressing these boundaries was always condemned and even considered to be impossible: the distinctions between men and women were so strong that it was impossible to overcome them, even if they are described in a fictional world.

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