

L'Isle des Hermaphrodite:

Adaptations of Old World concepts to a New World [revised draft]

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What we call the Age of Exploration was equally an age of uncertainty. The old cosmologies which had settled into coexistence over the centuries since Christianity had emerged from profusion of the mystery cults which flourished in late antiquity; this hybrid of middle-eastern and classic ideas which had dominated western cultural consciousness under the watchful eye of the holy, catholic and apostolic faith, had been dealt a blow from which the world, the whole world, would never recover. New worlds seemed to offer a *tabula rasa* to persecuted religious minorities in which to build new societies. These minorities, ejected by the plethora of new hegemonies which had emerged in the fractured body of an old and tired world, sought out havens across the western ocean. In the third decade of the seventeenth century English Puritans emigrated to a New England created in their own image, while their Catholic compatriots to the south on Chesapeake Bay sought refuge from their schismatic homeland by placing themselves under the patronage of the Queen of Heaven. Earlier, in the 1562 a group of French Huguenots had arrived in greater Florida. These expeditions would all discover that the Americas were not a *tabula rasa*. Their new world was the ancient home of diverse cultures, comprising millions of inhabitants who did not conceive of their bodies, the world, or the heavens, in terms of Galen or Paul, of Augustine or Ptolemy, Thomas or Aristotle. These societies were not variations on common assumptions as were Judaism or Islam, the traditional others with whom Christendom had shared the known world, their's were unrecognizable social and ideological systems, a world apart.

The Huguenot Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, advisor to the regent Catherine d'Medici initiated three French expeditions to the Americas. Their objective was both to establish a Calvinist exile community in the Western Hemisphere, and to check Spanish imperialism through piracy and by establishing rival territorial claims. These goals were shared by both de Coligny and the French crown, which saw eventual mass Huguenot emigration as a potential solution to the constant threat of religious civil war.

The such first expedition, which attempted to establish a beachhead in Brazil in 1555, was thwarted as much by religious controversy within the expedition as by the hostility of the Spanish. This pattern would be repeated in "Florida" although here

dissension was motivated more by hardship and greed than questions of faith.<sup>1</sup> In 1562 the second expedition consisting of one hundred and fifty men had embarked under the leadership of Jean Ribaut. First sighting land near the future site of Saint Augustine, they sailed to the north exploring and settling the area near the mouth of Saint John's River in what is now North Carolina and established the fortified settlement Charlesfort. Initially welcomed by the native inhabitants, they were drawn into the existing conflicts between rival tribal groups. Their shifting allegiance, motivated by trifling amounts of available gold and silver, resulted in their isolation and increasing native hostility. Leaving behind thirty men, Ribaut returned to France for supplies and reinforcements. Despairing his delay the survivors built a ship and attempted their return. Having crossed the Atlantic, they were captured by the English. In 1564 a third expedition led by René De Laudonnière established Fort Caroline to the north of Charlesfort which had been burnt by the Spanish. The controversies and bad judgement which had plagued the previous expedition were repeated, and Ribaut resumed command following his return several months later. The next year the Spanish under Pedro Menéndez de Avilés launched a punitive campaign in which all but a few of the colonists were slaughtered and the fort destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

Among the few survivors was Jacques le Moyne de Mourgues, a Huguenot artist commissioned by Laudonnière to survey and map the coast, and to document the human, animal, and plant life of the region. Eventually settling in London, he had been employed in the service of Sir Walter Raleigh prior to setting up as a Blackfriars printer and publisher. Later he would write a memoir of the ill-fated expedition focusing on its encounter with the native population of the Savanna. This he illustrated with a series of small paintings on vellum, which were to be cut as illustrations to the memoir.<sup>3</sup> Following his death in 1588 this material was acquired by the famous Protestant printer Theodore de Bry.

De Bry, a native of Liège, had been forced by the religious prosecutions launched in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alba to emigrate to Frankfurt. His reputation was established by a wide range of publications comprising editions of the

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<sup>1</sup> The territory which Spain called Florida, and claimed under the authority the bull of Pope Alexander VI dividing the non-European world between Spain and Portugal, comprised all of the south-eastern area of what is now the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> Laurent, 1946; Hulton, 1977; Boucher, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Only one of these survives. This was discovered in the château of Comtesse de Ganay near Paris in 1901, and is reproduced in Lorient 1946, p. 32.

classics, and contemporary texts, both protestant theology and works associated with the High Renaissance hermetic cultural revolution.<sup>4</sup> It was de Bry who published the elaborate album commemorating the death and obsequies of Sir Philip Sidney. De Bry pioneered the use of copper engraving in his most famous work, the *Voyages*. For the first time images of the previously unimaginable new worlds were placed in broad circulation. Significantly, the *Voyages* were also unprecedented in de Bry's simultaneous use of both engraved plates and text printed by movable type on the same page. Between 1590 and 1634 De Bry and his heirs published some thirty volumes which attempted to collate the expanding horizons charted by two hundred years of exploration from the perspective of radical protestant humanism. These comprised two series, the Great Voyages which dealt with the exploration of the Americas and Oceania, and the Little Voyages focusing on the East Indies including India, China, and Japan, as well as Africa. The first volume, a text which he acquired from Hakluyt, was published in 1590. This chronicled the English expedition of 1585 to Virginia. De Morgues' ethnology, found in the second volume, and first published in 1591, provides unique evidence, not only of a society which was irrevocably transformed by its encounter with the Europeans, but equally it documents the Europeans themselves in this moment of conceptual crisis, scrambling to comprehend unimagined varieties of human society. In two passages De Morgue writes of what he termed *hermaphrodites* and the social role and esteem they enjoyed among the natives of the South-eastern savannah, both texts were illustrated by engravings presumably after de Mourges' miniatures.<sup>5</sup> These are described and depicted as having long curly hair, somewhat shorter than that of the women of the tribe, but worn loose unlike that of the men who wore theirs bound up on their heads. The hermaphrodites wore skirts made of Spanish moss as did the women and had long finger and toe nails, but they did not wear ear ornaments as did the women.<sup>6</sup>

Hermaphrodites, partaking of the nature of each sex, are quite common in these parts, and are considered odious by the Indians themselves, who, however, employ them, as they are strong, instead of beasts of burden. When any Indian is dead of wounds or disease, two hermaphrodites take a couple of stout poles, fasten cross-pieces on them, and attach to these a mat of woven reeds. On this they

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<sup>4</sup> Yates, 1969: p. 70-73.

<sup>5</sup> De Bry plates 17; 23. Hulton, 1977: pl. 109, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Hulton 1977 observes a difference in the representation of these persons in the two plates: those in plate xxiii have distinctly fleshier, softer, and less-muscled bodies. This quite possibly reflects the hand of a different engraver who sought to impart a more androgynous quality in his rendering rather than any difference inherent in Le Moyne's original drawing.

place the deceased. One skin is placed under the head, a second about the body, a third around the one thigh, a fourth around one leg. Why this is done I never discovered, but I suppose it is for ornamentation, since they sometimes bind a skin around only one leg. Then the hermaphrodites take thongs of hide, three or four fingers in broad, fasten the ends to the ends of the poles, and put the middle over their heads, (which are remarkably hard); and in this manner they carry the deceased to the place of burial. The hermaphrodites also look after those who have contagious diseases; they take the sick on their shoulders to places appointed for the purpose, on the shoulders of the hermaphrodites, and supply [those ill] with food, and take care of them, until they get quite well again.<sup>7</sup>

Each year at a certain time they gather together a store of wild animals, fish, and even crocodiles. These are put into baskets and carried by the curly-haired hermaphrodites to the store house. These supplies are not used save in dire necessity. If such occasion arises, everyone shares according to his rank; the chief, however, has the first choice and takes whatever he pleases.<sup>8</sup>

Laudonnière had briefly noted an encounter with "an Indian woman of tall stature, which was also an hermaphrodite." Such comments became normative in the early travel literature of the region. The Spanish expedition of Juan Pardo which explored the Carolinas and Tennessee between 1566 and 1568 observed a similar person at a Cherokee-speaking village named Cauchi near what is now Marshall, North Carolina. When Pardo asked the *Cauchi orata*, the village headman, about a man wearing women's clothing and walking in the company of women, he explained that the man was his "brother", but as he did not go to war, or do the things men do, he went about as a woman and did women's work.<sup>9</sup> Neither reports indicate the sexual role of these persons. Because of their early conversion to Christianity and subsequent exile it is difficult to determine the role of homosexuality in pre-contact Cherokee society. However, a stone pipe found in Georgia, within the traditional Cherokee cultural region, provides unusually graphic documentation of homosexual activity in a North American aboriginal society in a depiction of a male figure kneeling to fellate a standing male.<sup>10</sup> Later travellers give further evidence. Juan de

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<sup>7</sup> Lorant: Plate 17; p. 69; Katz, 1972: p. 286.

<sup>8</sup> Lorant: plate 23; p. 81; Hulton 1977: p. 145, 147, 210.

<sup>9</sup> Hudson, 1990: p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> Rawson, 1973: plate 70.

Torquemada, writing in 1609, wrote of the marriages of male indians in Florida to *mariones* who dressed as and did the work of women. He compares these customs to those of the French and Greeks. Francisco Coreal, another Spaniard who travelled in Florida in 1666-1667 assigns a sodomitic role to effeminate boys who performed female social roles.<sup>11</sup> This behaviour seems to conform to other aspects of the wide spread North America berdache phenomena, it seems reasonable to assume that they performed such a sexual role, and formed relationships with warrior men. But clearly they were in no sense physical hermaphrodites. In designating the transvestite a "brother" the *Cauchi orata* contradicts any interpretation arising from the Le Moyne text which would place them among the slaves known to have been kept by these groups. Other Europeans, including the missionary priests Luis Hennepin, and Zenobius Membré, perhaps influenced by de Mourgues's taxonomy, would still be seeing hermaphrodites, although further inland, in the Mississippi Valley and on the Great Plains a century later.<sup>12</sup> For example Jean Bernard Bossu, a captain of the les Troupes de la Marine, recorded the following description of the Choctaws in his memoirs:

The spirit of this Nation is generally quite rough & quite gross. We might talk to them about the mysteries of our Religion, they always answer that what is being said to them is beyond their comprehension. On top of that they are quite perverted in their morals: most of them being abandoned to sodomy. Those corrupt men wear long hair and a small skirt like the women by whom they are otherwise subjects of sovereign contempt.<sup>13</sup>

But by 1724, a French Jesuit, Joseph François Lafitau, would radically re-inscribe these problematic beings:

Among the Illinois, among the Sioux, in Louisiana, in Florida,

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<sup>11</sup> Katz, 1976: p. 610-611, n.6. Ethnographic information on homosexuality in this region during the later post-contact period is scarce. *ibid*: p. 613, n.14.

<sup>12</sup> *op. cit.* p. 611

<sup>13</sup> Lettre XVIII: Description du pays Chactas. **Nouveau Voyages aux Indes Occidentales**. Seconde partie, Paris: Le Jay, MDCCLXVIII. p. 100. *L'esprit de cette Nation est en général fort brute & fort grossier. On a beau leur parler des mystères de notre Religion, ils répondent toujours que ce qu'on leur dit, est au-dessus de leur connaissance. Ils sont au surplus fort pervers dans leurs mœurs: la plupart étant adonnés à la sodomie. Ces hommes corrompus, portent de grands cheveux, & une petite jupe comme les femmes, dont ils sont en revanche souverainement méprisés.*

and in Yucatan, there are young men who adopt the garb of women, and keep it all their lives. They believe they are honoured by debasing themselves to all of women's occupations; they never marry, they participate in all religious ceremonies, and their profession of an extraordinary life causes them to be regarded as people of a higher order, and above the common man... The view of these men dressed as women surprised the Europeans who first encountered them in America; as they did not at first guess the motives for this species of metamorphosis they were convinced that these were people in whom the two sexes were confounded. To be sure our old Relations called them no other than hermaphrodites ... the ignorance of the Europeans as to the causes of their condition caused shameful suspicions to fall upon them, these suspicions so entered into their minds that they imagined the most disadvantageous things that could be imagined.<sup>14</sup>

From where did these unfounded imaginings emerge?<sup>15</sup> What exactly did an average literate seventeenth-century European understand a hermaphrodite to be? And how did this definition, or these definitions, so confound the judgement of

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<sup>14</sup> op cit. p. 288-289.

<sup>15</sup> Another aspect of European reaction to the ambiguous sexuality of the Amerindians is the fear of anal rape, which also finds its way into contemporary engravings such as plate XV of the De Bry/Le Moyne collection "*How Outina's Men Treated the Enemy Dead*". Although the principal action of this image focuses on three men dismembering a victim of war, one of these uses a free hand to insert an arrow into the anus of the cadaver. A similar trope is depicted in the famous engraving of the martyrdom of the Jesuits Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalement. This was published as an inset to the map *Novae Francia Accurata Delineato*, attributed to Francesco Giuseppe Bressani S.J which was published in Rome in 1657. [Bib. Nat. Paris: Department des cartes & plans. Res Ge DD 2987 b (8580).] Here an Iroquois is about to apply a flaming spear to the anal region of Lalement. This gesture is made increasingly blatant in subsequent renderings of this influential canonic tableau, [Harper, 1977: p. 5.] culminating in the painting after this engraving by Joseph Légaré [c.1835; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada] in which anal penetration is clearly posed. Such images should be considered in light of the obsessive anxiety of anal rape which persists throughout European colonial and orientalist discourse, for example in a Gilray engraving in which a terrified portly Englishman is carried with ominous implications towards a sharpened stake by two lascivious janissaries.

early travellers?

The European discovery that other cultures constructed sexuality differently, was unavoidable. The indigenous inhabitants of this continent, like the Japanese, or the real Indians of South Asia, saw no reason, at least at first, to hide behaviour which was institutionalized within their cultures. The written record of early European contact with the aboriginal peoples of the Americas evidences an obsessive curiosity concerning sodomy, cross-dressing, and gender reversal. For the colonizers, this behaviour did not result from a morality which assigned a divergent value to acts they deplored, rather they had no choice but to recognize it as a social status deriving from "deviant" sexual behaviour but affecting all aspects of an individual's subjectivity. They were forced to describe and comprehend behaviour, and a social context for that behaviour, which they fundamentally did not understand. Consider the differences with what was perhaps the closest European equivalent: the Libertine. This was someone who did have a recognizable identity which could include deviant sexuality, but this was more a status as a kind of habitual and unrepentant sinner, than a role which had economic and social consequences. After all, Christian theology condemned *not the sinner but the sin*. The clutter of notions which had surrounded homosexual behaviour in European legal, literary, and theological tradition as it had developed over two millennia was hurriedly searched for anything which might serve to name such an anomaly. How were they to conceptualize such a social category as members of a culture who, as recent historiography asserts, considered sexuality solely in terms of specific acts?

Eventually, the term *berdache* would resolve the problem, principally because it had so little meaning that it could subsume the additional significance demanded of it. The transaction was so seamless that most of its users over the succeeding centuries assumed that it was an aboriginal word. Its etymology has now be traced from its Persian root meaning captive or prisoner through migration and elaboration, first to Arabic, and on to its arrival in successive European languages by the early sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile travellers and their eager editors and publishers did not have the leisure of waiting for such a useful neologism to develop. They had books to sell; further conquest, both political and spiritual, to finance; and above all, an eager and curious public to entertain. For want of the better word, old ones would have to do. The travel literature is thus replete with effeminates, sodomites, filthy dogs, and erudite allusions to Amazons, Spartans and priests of Venus Urania. But the designation of preference, particularly among early French and other continental

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<sup>16</sup> Courouve, 1982.

Protestant writers seemed to be hermaphrodite.

What then did the European writer or reader, let us say between the years 1575 and 1625 understand a hermaphrodite to be? Was this definition significantly different than it was a century earlier or later? Can we speak of a common European understanding of this term as transcending national, religious or linguistic boundaries? To explore these questions we can rely on the assistance of one George Sandys, born at Bishopthorpe, England, in 1578. At first he might seem an unusual candidate for everyman circa 1600. Indeed any candidate might seem categorically ineligible to speak for a continent torn apart by religious sectarian strife. But ironically this English Protestant man of letters is perfectly qualified. His father was Archbishop of York, (here it is only his legitimacy which separates him from the sons, euphemistically styled *nephews*, of numerous continental Catholic bishops. In any case, highly placed clerics were commonplace in "good families" from the North Sea to Sicily.) He was trained at Oxford, where the standard curriculum remained essentially interchangeable with that of Paris, Heidelberg, Upsala, or Bologna. He made the Grand Tour; indeed extended it somewhat, visiting Palestine, Bhagdad, and even seeing the Pyramids. Later, predictably, he devoted himself in a gentlemanly sort of way to literary pursuits. To posterity his only distinction as a poet was to have been plagiarized by Milton, and thereby earned an eternal footnote to critical editions of *The Ode on the Passion*. But to his contemporaries he was greatly esteemed for a translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, to which he appended copious and laboured annotations. These, plus his dubious and successful preference for accurate rendering of Ovid's meter at the expense of narrative clarity, have left his labour somewhat less than a classic. But his usefulness as an exemplar of his times extends to his having seen the new world for himself. As a younger son, Sandys' wealth derived from investments rather than inherited estate, specifically colonial investments in Virginia where he lived for several years. These endeavours were not much more successful than his literary career. But both enterprises, the annotated Ovid, and his colonial misadventure, equip him perfectly for the job at hand. Indeed he tells us that part of his translation was completed shipboard "among the roaring of the seas".

In his glosses to the story of Hermaphroditus in Book Four of the *Metamorphosis* Sandys summarizes contemporary understanding of hermaphroditism with characteristic thoroughness.

The fine Nymph Salmacis delighting only to adorn her person, to couch in shades, and bath in her own fountain, burnes in desire with the son of Hermes and Aphrodite partaking the names and beauties of either: Mercury being called Hermes, as the messenger of the Gods; and Venus Aphrodite...

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Salmacis clings about the surprised youth, till both become one body. The reason why lovers so strictly embrace; is to incorporate with the beloved, which sith they cannot, can never be satisfied...Plato recites a fable, how man at first was created double, and for his arrogancy dissected into male and female: the reason of their afflicted conjunction; as coveting to returne to their original: an obscure notion... of Eva's being taken out of the side of Adam. So Hermaphroditus and Salmacis retaine in one person both sexes: of whom the like are called Hermaphrodites. Aristotle writes that they have the right breast of a man; and the left of a woman, where-with they nourish their children. They were to chose what sex they would use, and punished with death in they changed at any time. One not long since burned for the same at Burges: who elected the female, and secretly exercised the male; under the disguise committing many villainies. Caliphanes reports, how among the Nasamones there were a whole nation of these; who used both with like liberty. There are many at this day in Aegypt, but most frequently in Florida; who so hated by the rest of the Indians, that they use them as beasts to carry their burthens; to suck their wounds and attend to the diseased. But in Rome, they threw them as soone as borne into the river; the Virgins singing in procession, and sacrifice unto Juno.<sup>17</sup> It is here fained that Hermaphroditus by his prayers to his parents procured this quality to that fountain, that what man soever bathed therein should come forth half a woman. Whereof thus Strabo: In Caria is the fountain of Salmacis, I know not how infamous, for making the drinker effeminate: since luxury neither proceeds from the quality of the ayre nor water, but rather from riches and intemperance. The Carians therefore addicted to sloth and filthy delights were called Hermaphrodites; not in that of both sexes, but for defiling themselves with either. Hermaphroditus is fained to be the sonne of Mercury; because whereas the other is called either masculine of feminine, of their more or less vigour, heat, drouth, or humidity; the Planet of Mercury participates of both natures; hot and dry, by reason of his vicinity to the Sunne, removed never above 20 Degrees; the Earth: conforming himselfe also to the auspicious or malevolent aspects of those Planets with whom he joyneth his influence.<sup>18</sup>

Thus we see the Hermaphrodites of Florida are specifically listed among what amounts to an almost comprehensive inventory of imagined hermaphroditic possibility. There is one serious omission, which we will take up in its turn, but first it is useful to briefly summarise each of the themes which Sandys has set forth.

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<sup>17</sup> Livy, xxxi:12; see also Rousselle p. 320-321, re. Philo of Alexandria on Roman and Jewish laws concerning hermaphrodites.

<sup>18</sup> Sandys, 1976: p. 206.

For us hermaphroditism is a rare physiological condition occurring approximately once in every 2500 births, now most often addressed by "corrective" surgery. To comprehend how it came to designate *en bloc* classes of New World natives exhibiting no visible secondary sexual characteristics requires that we separate the jumbled of meanings which surrounded this important trope of the high Renaissance imagination. In pre-modern European tradition all manner of what were termed "monstrous births", including hermaphrodites, were considered to be portents of natural calamities resulting in social disaster. The birth of a being who physically defied the order of nature by mingling in one body opposite genders was feared for two reasons: the birth itself was an advance symptom of a disruption of the natural order soon to be manifest on a vaster scale; and should the monster achieve sexual maturity her/his ambiguous gender status could easily result in sexual acts in violation of nature which would precipitate further chaos. The danger was spelled out in 538 CE in the 77th novella promulgated by the Emperor Justinian which linked for the first time an abhorrence of same-sexual activity to the events of Genesis xix:

since certain men...practise among themselves the most disgraceful lusts, and act contrary to nature: we enjoin them [to take to heart the fear of God and the judgement to come, and] to abstain from suchlike diabolical and unlawful lusts, so that they may not be visited by the just wrath of God ... with the result that cities perish with all their inhabitants... For because of such crimes there are famines, earthquakes, and pestilences...<sup>19</sup>

As portent and potential occasion of social disruption hermaphroditism is fettered to the discourse of sodomy. Canon law was unequivocal, such an individual must choose one sex, and any prevarication was a capital offence with dire political and environmental consequences.

Michael Drayton's poem *The Moone-Calfe* tells of male and female twins born of the coupling of the Devil with the Earth. The resulting births are hermaphrodite twins. Their condition is metaphorically the result of the sinful state of the world, and predictably the male twin keeps both a mistress and a "smooth-chinned, plump thighed catamite".<sup>20</sup> That such sins were expected is apparent from the voluminous wonder literature of the period. The record of the unfortunate mentioned by Sandys seems to have disappeared like the smoke of her/his *auto de fe* at "Burges", but recent scholarship drawn attention to similar cases such as the chambermaid Marie le Marcis and her lover the widow Jeanne le Fevre, both of Rouen, also burnt for sodomy in 1601, after the courts and their appointed medical examiners refused to reclassify Jeanne. There were also more fortunate survivors, such as Montaigne's

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<sup>19</sup> Bailey, 1955: p. 73-74.

<sup>20</sup> Drayton, 1965: iii, p. 166-202; Bray, 1982: p. 21-23.

Marie Garnier, who's male organ fell from her vagina while chasing hogs out of the corn, and who was rechristened Germain by a cardinal and found a place at court.<sup>21</sup> Others remain more enigmatic, like the mysterious Aniseed-Water-Robin mentioned in the pamphlet and theatrical literature of seventeenth century London.<sup>22</sup> Many such lives are hinted at in the histories recorded by the French surgeon Ambrose Paré whose popular *Des monstres et prodiges* of 1573 passed through several contemporary editions, including an English edition of 1634; and in Kaspar Bauhim's *De hermaphroditum monstrosorumque partuum natur*, a work of some six hundred pages, first published in Frankfurt in 1600, and reprinted by Theodore de Bry in 1614. Such texts, and there were others, appealed not only to the curiosity of savants but also to the growing numbers of literate middle-class readers hungry for the kind of sensationalism provided by today's tabloids.<sup>23</sup> Although faith in the efficacy of such creatures to show (latin: *monstrat*), to forecast anything, was soon to be questioned by Montaigne, among others, such *monstres prodigieuses* still seemed to many to be obvious symptoms of those troubled times. There was a parallel tendency during this period to see hermaphrodites and monstrous births as symptoms of the diversity, almost the capriciousness of nature. Yet even the new science was not ready to entirely dismiss tradition.<sup>24</sup> Francis Bacon's *Novum organon* instructed natural philosophers that:

a compilation, or particular natural history, must be made of all monsters and prodigious births of nature; of everything which is new, rare, and unusual in nature. This should be done with a rigorous selection, so as to be worthy of credit.<sup>25</sup>

This was exactly what Paré and Bauhim had undertaken. But apart from documenting such physiological anomalies there was as well considerable contemporary preoccupation with an ideal hermaphroditism, diffused from Ovid's narrative, which seemed to obsessively haunt the imagination of this era of masques and emblems.<sup>26</sup> The *Metamorphosis*, widely read, widely illustrated, was a text

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<sup>21</sup> c. 1580, Montaigne. *Voyages*.

<sup>22</sup> *passim*. William Wycherley. *The Country Wife*. c. 1675, etc.

<sup>23</sup> The subject of Renaissance prodigies and physical hermaphrodites has been explored in such recent works as Daston and Park, 1985 and 1981; Greenblat, 1986; Jones and Stallybrass, 1991; Laqueur, 1986; Shapiro, 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Daston and Park, 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon/Montagu 1813, xiv, p. 138.

<sup>26</sup> Praz, 1975: p. 123.

which had been reworked for centuries as a source of moralizing wisdom, and which served as the perennially popular encyclopedia of classical trivia.<sup>27</sup> The Hermaphroditus narrative was a popular subject often presented in the arts and letters of the time.

The hermaphrodite during the immediately preceding centuries was a figure of derision, and a synonym for male passivity. In *L'Ermafrodito*, the collection of scurrilous Latin verse written by Antonio Beccadelli under the pseudonym *// Panormita* in 1425, the hermaphrodite is a figure of the plurality of sexual possibility. These poems take a cruel look at all manner of excess, focusing scorn on paedophilia and anally passive males. In Aretino's play *// Marescalco*, c.1526, the Pedant states that Mantua is full of hermaphrodites and effeminate ganymedes, the terms seem interchangeable.<sup>28</sup> Aretino also penned a mock epitaph, reviling an enemy, in what was to him perhaps the ultimate term of derision:

*Here lies Paolo Giovanni the hermaphrodite  
Who knew how to act as husband and wife.*<sup>29</sup>

The threat which the hermaphrodite implied to strict division of sexual roles made it the occasion of a kind of uncomfortable mirth to Renaissance writers. But by the last decades of the Cinquecento the breadth of meaning associated with the hermaphrodite would significantly expand and it would move forward in the late Renaissance era as an almost obsessively recurring emblem. Apart from numerous reworkings of the *Metamorphosis*, dramatist Francis Beaumont published in 1602 a lengthy English verse elaboration entitled *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*. Although in English literature of this period the hermaphrodite remained generally a figure of mockery, there are other notable exceptions. In Spencer's *Fairy Queen* the hermaphrodite is a figure of completion and sufficiency, although not without some ambiguity. In the first version of the conclusion of Book III, the embrace of a heterosexual couple is likened to a statue of the hermaphrodite, this is the same sense in which Dante had employed the hermaphrodite in *Purgatorio* Canto 26. In Spencer's Canto 10 of Book IV, a hermaphrodite Venus presides over pairs of both chaste male friends and heterosexual lovers in her heavenly temple, while the hermaphrodite of Book V is more conventionally a monstrous apparition. In John Donne's *To Mister Tilman after he had taken orders*, ministers of religion are figured as hermaphrodites mediating the male perfection of heaven and the female

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<sup>27</sup> i.e. the gender transformations of the seer Tiresias. [iii: p. 82.], see also: Martindale, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Scene xi. Sbroggi/Campbell, 1986: p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> Saslow, 1986: p. 79.

imperfections of earth.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to visual representations which derive from literary treatments of the myth in the extensive emblematic literature of the time, Hermaphroditus and Salmacis were also the frequent subject of cabinet pictures, the fashionable *pictura poesis* hung by the nobility and wealthy merchants in their private studies. In a panel painting of the struggle with Salmacis the Flemish artist Jan Gossaert, *dit* Mabuse, anticipated what would become a popular subject in the opening decades of the next century part, depictions the *Loves of the Gods* and related mythologic subjects.<sup>31</sup> Also a drawing by Gossaert derives from a Roman marble copy of a Greek Hellenistic standing hermaphrodite mutilated some time after 1649 to represent a Venus.<sup>32</sup> Bartholomaüs Spranger painted the same subject for the Emperor Rudolph II circa 1580, whose collection included perhaps the most famous of Ovidian paintings, Correggio's *Io* and *Ganymede*. A cabinet painting depicting the moment of fusion with Salmacis was painted in 1608 by Carlo Saraceni.<sup>33</sup> Both a small and a large version of a similar treatment from 1633 by Francesco Albani at some point entered the Savoyard royal collection.<sup>34</sup> Although rarer this subject also finds a minor place in Baroque monumental decorative ensembles, such as the trompe l'oeil reliefs in the Farnese Galleria frescoed by Annibale Carracci between 1597 and 1599. It is among the Ovidian subjects painted by Cornelis van Poelenburgh on the early seventeenth-century grand cabinet once in the Arundel collection.<sup>35</sup> It was also a subject of interest to print makers of the time. These include a unique impression of an engraving after a design by Hendrick Goltzius from a set of Ovidian subjects c.1615,

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<sup>30</sup> Jones and Stallybras, 1991 p. 98.

<sup>31</sup> Part of a series of classical subjects commissioned by Marguerite d'Autriche in the early years of the sixteenth century.

<sup>32</sup> c.1508: Venizia, Academia; Roma, Villa Doria-Pamphili. This is possibly the same sculpture already present in Rome at the debut of the sixteenth century in the collection of Mariano Astalli. Several sheets of contemporary drawings illustrate its appearance prior to the mutilation. Bober & Rubenstein, pp. 129-130; pl. 97b & 109a.

<sup>33</sup> This too was part of a series of Ovidian subjects which included *The Abduction of Ganymede*, *The Flight of Icarus*, and *Ariadne and Theseus*; Napoli: Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte.

<sup>34</sup> These works are respectively in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum; the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; and Galleria Sabauda, Turin.

<sup>35</sup> Ashmolean, 1985 p. 51-53.

and an etching by M. van Uytenbroeck similar in composition to works such as those of Albani and Saraceni.<sup>36</sup> As well, specific paintings were published as reproductive prints, including a treatment by Bernard Picart of a now lost work of Poussin.

Most of these pictorial representations privilege Ovidian narrative above other possible classical literary sources of hermaphrodite imagery. There are for example no relevant seventeenth-century representations from Apuleius or Petronius. This habitual recourse to the *Metamorphosis* is illustrated by Francois Perrier's 1638 engraving after the Borghese hermaphrodite, the first published image deriving from what would become the best known antique representations of this subject. Verisimilitude, even in what sets out to be a document of actual antiquities then present in Roman collections, becomes subservient to the over-riding imperative of narrative. In 1620 Bernini had restored this antiquity, placing it on a marble *matarozzo* and pillow. In Perrier's engraving, although the pillow remains, the figure has been removed from such comforting domesticity and is restored to a sylvan landscape, its proper Ovidian habitat, in which it rests directly on what appears to be the brink of Salmacis' spring. The pictorial tradition most often focuses on either the doubly scopophilic moment of the viewer participating in Salmacis' observation of the unaware youth, or his hysterical recoil from her embrace. The privileging of this situation of heterosexual panic rather than the post-metamorphic bi-gendered body is consistent with obsessive seventeenth-century patronage of pictorial representations of similar misogynist subjects concerned with male identity-loss through female intervention.<sup>37</sup>

But to return to Sandys, he weaves threads of other narratives and exegesis to this traditional Ovidian narrative warp. From the *Symposium* of Plato, he cribs Aristophanes' speech about the primal conjoined spherical nature of humanity; three

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<sup>36</sup> British Museum; and Weigel, (Bartsch suppl.) p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> These include both classical and biblical subjects such as Acteon, Adonis, Endymion, Narcissus, or Holofernes, and were especially favoured by artists who worked in Rome, and presumably their patrons, in the first decades of the seicento. To underscore the conjunctural specificity of the hermaphrodite panic images favoured during the Baroque, it is interesting to observe that these subjects largely disappeared by the Eighteenth-century. They are most commonly replaced by works deriving from Hellenistic prototypes in which a satyr undrapes the over-gendered body of a sleeping hermaphrodite, a subject in which male authority is unquestioned and from which libertine empiricism has removed any threat to the patron's gender identity.

pairs of joined bodies, male/male; female/female; and male/female, torn asunder by the gods, and ever after searching for their lost partners.<sup>38</sup> Further Sandys reminds us, from the same source, of Pausanias' distinction between two species of love; and that Hermaphroditus is the child of the Heavenly Uranian Aphrodite.<sup>39</sup> Sandys was also familiar with Ficino's commentary on the Symposium, his allusion to the sun, the moon and the earth comes directly from this quattrocento Florentine commentary.

They had three sexes; male, born of the sun; female, of the earth; and mixed, of the moon. Some received the splendour of God as Courage, which is male; others as Temperance, which is female; others as Justice which is mixed. These three virtues in us are the daughters of three others which God possesses. But in God those three are called the sun, earth, and moon; but in us male, female, and mixed. The division having been made, half is drawn to half by love.<sup>40</sup>

When Sandys speaks of the hermaphroditism of Eve, what he terms "an obscure notion", he echoes a traditional medieval exegesis inherent in a continuous reading of Genesis. Failing to distinguish between the overlapping creation narratives, the repetitions known in Biblical scholarship as doublets, this argument concludes that if God creates both man and women in *Genesis i* and then separates them by pulling Eve out of Adam in the second half of *Genesis ii*, they must to have been hermaphrodite during the intervening period. Much was made of this prelapsarian state of unitary perfection by certain rather literal Talmudists and their Scholastic fellow-travellers. Some Cabalist and Hermetic commentators would go further, if God created Adam and Eve thus in his own image, he must have a female aspect as well and therefore hermaphrodite.<sup>41</sup>

Taking up from Strabo, as well as the other fantastic compendia accepted as

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<sup>38</sup> Plato 190b; Hamilton, 1951: p. 59. Representations of Aristophanes' fable are almost unknown. A unique woodcut from Tomasini's *Elogia* of the medal of Marcantonio Passeri is reproduced in Edgar Wind. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. Oxford, 1980, (fig. 68).

<sup>39</sup> op cit. 180e, p. 45.

<sup>40</sup> Ficino/Jayne, 1985: iv:2, p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Abrabanel, 1935: p. 345 ff., 364; this view was contested by Peter Cantor (d.1192); Boswell, 1980: p. 375-376.

geography in the middle ages, Sandys is able to place the spring of Salmacis in real landscape, and assign to it physical properties, fixing legend in time, geography, and history. Strabo bequeathed Hermaphroditus to the medieval inheritance of monstrous races to be found to the legendary east and represented on the portals of Romanesque churches and in the border fantasies ornamenting *Books of Hours*. The land of the Hermaphrodites is illustrated in a fifteenth century French manuscript of *Le Livre des merveilles*. Here four naked hermaphrodites are presented in a wooded landscape, having both male and female genitals but either male or female heads.<sup>42</sup> Much research remains to be done on this relatively unexplored literature. For example a sixth-century text, the *Liber monstrorem de diversi generibus*, tells of a "man of both sexes: although his face and torso looked more like a male than a female and was thought a male by the unknowing, he preferred the female role and seduced unwary men like a harlot. This is said to happen frequently among humans". The author does not however categorize him as a sodomite but rather as a sort of third-sexed being.<sup>43</sup> The Carian hermaphrodites joined such exotic races as the dog-headed people, giants with long tales, or pygmies that fight with cranes, who quite literally personified the unknown world. As later travellers would discover that the people with ears big enough to sleep in, or with only one giant foot which served as a shade from the tropical sun, did not actually live in the Caucasus or India, such imaginary phantoms from the infancy of the culture were simply moved further away, to Ethiopia or Madagascar. Once one accepts that there could be a place where the water makes men effeminate and willing to have sexual relations with both men and women, and it turns out not to be Asia Minor, then it must be somewhere else, perhaps in Australia, or Florida, where Ponce de Leon had transposed the legendary fountain of eternal youth.<sup>44</sup>

Here it is necessary to pause and insert the trope missing in Sandys' inventory. He does allude to it obliquely in his concluding comments concerning alchemy; to *heat and drought and humidity, the precise heat of mercury* etc. One of the central objectives of alchemy is the bodily fusion of principles referred to as the red king and the white queen, who at the moment of their union, the ultimate stage of the alchemical process, fuse to become the *rebis*, a hermaphrodite. The popularity of alchemical metaphor led monarchs to think of themselves in these terms. Just as the alchemical great work sought to distil precious metals from their contaminants and return them to their original perfect form, human perfection was equated with

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<sup>42</sup> Paris: Biblioteque Nationale.

<sup>43</sup> The author has two further discussions of physiological hermaphroditism: "androgynae" and "muliers barbatae". Boswell, 1980: p. 184-185; Dall'Orto 1989, p. 62, n.1.

<sup>44</sup> Wittkower, 1942; Whitbread, 1974.



pre-lapsarian unity. To high Renaissance political theorists the fullness of kingship implied that the monarch would have female characteristics as well as masculine. Not only was Elizabeth unquestionably King as well as Queen, but in imperiously contempt of the epigram which mocked his assumption of the English throne, *Rex Elizabeth fuit, nunc Jacobus regina est*, James Stuart would proudly claim to be his United Kingdom's "loving nourish-father giving his subjects *their very nourish-milke*."<sup>45</sup> François I, whose personal impress was the alchemical salamander wreathed in flames, had himself portrayed in a widely circulated engraving dressed as a bearded Athena. This emblem, the *Hermathena*, in which the goddess of wisdom replaced that of love, was especially favoured by an even more serious royal alchemist, Emperor Rudolph II.<sup>46</sup>

Wags and royal enemies would turn this trope to different advantage in attacking the persons of Henri III and Louis XIII, as well as James VI, as effeminate and obsessed with their minions, hence unnatural and unworthy of kingship. Marlowe, Drayton, or the parliamentarian Sir Henry Yelverton,<sup>47</sup> at different times and for their own reasons, would invoke the historical precedent of Edward II in their warnings of the danger sodomitic royal infatuations posed to the realm. Edward's murder can be read as a historicization *à l'anglaise* of the recent murder of Henri III in 1589. Both kings were seen as the victims of their political irresolution which was linked to their sexual prevarication. When the Scottish poet William Drummond asks that God save the King from Ganymede

*whose whorish breath hath power to lead  
His Majesty such way he list*<sup>48</sup>

he is responding to more than idle gossip about his sovereign's already well known proclivities. He saw them as part of very contemporary danger to civil peace.

French propagandists, of both the Holy League and the Huguenot camps,

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<sup>45</sup> James Stuart, *Basilikon Doron*: p. 23; Goldberg, 1983: p. 142.

<sup>46</sup> Evans, 1973.

<sup>47</sup> (1566-1629) During the parliamentary sessions of 1606-1607 Yelverton had incurred royal wrath which he likened to "the roaring of a lion" or a thunderbolt for his criticism of James' favour towards the Earl of Dunbar. [DNB: lxiii (1900) p. 316]; Bray, 1982: p. 24-26.

<sup>48</sup> Bray, 1982: p. 16, 60-61; Drummond 1913: vol. ii, p. 298.

repeatedly invoke the figure of the hermaphrodite in attacking the person of Henri III and his favourites. Pierre de L'Estoile (1546-1611) whose biting diary collects numerous examples of anti-minion satirical verse including this poem which disputes the virility of the younger generation of courtiers, describing a hermaphrodite with womanly voice, who duels only with cowards who present their backsides, while invoking association with the perennial insinuation of Tuscan sodomitic propensity:

*Je vis l'Hermaphrodite avec voix de femme,  
Qui faisant du Roger entre les Rhodomonts;  
Mais il ne trempoit la florentine lame  
Qu'en ces lâches de coeur qui tournent les talons.*<sup>49</sup>

Other writers revived the trope of a land of hermaphrodites to which they transported disguised yet recognizable descriptions of the scandalously sodomitic Valois court, only too familiar to their readers, but out of the reach of censors. The first of these dystopian romances, *Description de l'Isle des Hermaphrodites, nouvelle découverte* by the pseudonymous Artus Thomas, was published in Paris circa 1605. The narrator describes an island governed by a *roi-femme* and a *reine-homme*. Entering its palace he encounters courtiers prettifying themselves to enter the royal chamber for sensual mysteries which he is not permitted to witness. He tells of chambers decorated with tapestries depicting Hadrian and Antinous; scenes from the life of Heliogabalus; and a bed canopy ornamented with the marriage of Nero to his virile lover Pythagoras. Less scurrilous and rather more subtle is a work by Gabriel de Foigny, published in 1678, but probably written during the reign of Louis XIII. Its 1693 London translation gives its title as *A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis, or the Southern World*. This takes the rather conventional utopian device of an interrogation of European values through an imaginary dialogue with a member of radically different culture, anticipating for example Baron de Lahonton. The hermaphrodites of this imaginary Australia are in some ways paragons of human fulfilment rather than objects of derision, yet their inversion of European norms is intended to suggest the illogic and capriciousness of accepted normative customs. It purports to have been written shipwrecked mariner who "lived 35 years in that country, and gives a particular description of the manners, customs, religion, laws, studies, and wars, of those southern people; and some animals peculiar to the place: with several other rarities. These memoirs were thought so curious, that they were kept secret in the closet of the great minister of State, and never published till now since his death." de Foigny's description is an especially interesting compendium of pure imagination and notions distilled from traditional and contemporary sources.

All the Australians are of both sexes, or hermaphrodites, and if it

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<sup>49</sup> Henri III, 1960: vol. iii, p. 517.

happens a child is born of but one, they strangle him as a monster. They are nimble, and very active; their flesh is more upon the red than vermillion; they are commonly eight foot high, their face petty long, forehead large, their eyes in the upper part of their heads, and mouth small, their lips of a deep coral, nose more inclined to be long than round, and beard and hair always black, which they never cut, because they grow but little; their chin is long, their neck slender, their shoulder large and high, and they have very little breasts, placed very low, a little redder than vermillion; their arms are nervous and their hands pretty broad and long; they have a high chest, but flat belly, who appears but little when they are big with child; their hips high, their thighs large and long. They are so accustomed to going naked, that they speak of covering themselves without being declared enemies of nature, and deprived of reason.<sup>50</sup>

Agrippa d'Aubigné, a Protestant writing in the early years of the reign of Louis XIII, reflected on the feebleness of the sons of Catherine d'Medici which he believed she fostered to entrench her power following their majority. Without specific use of the word hermaphrodite, the concept saturates his discussion of Henri III. Comparing his court to the Rome of Seutonius, he pities the subjects of *une femme homasse et sous un homme femme*. He also invokes the same term as Artus Thomas: *un roi femme*. Like in the Sodom of Talmudic exegesis, this society inverts the natural order of law in its civic institutions.<sup>51</sup>

There is also a English equivalent of these works: originally written in Latin, John Hall's *Mundus alter et idem*, was translated into English by John Healey in 1609 as *The Discovery of the New World*. This *double-sex Ile, otherwise called Skrat or Hermaphrodite Lland* lies off shore of *Sheeland*, and is inhabited by natural beings endowed with *man's wit and woman's craft*.<sup>52</sup>

Henri and Louis ruled a country where the monarchy was caught between Huguenot and Catholic factions, both equally willing to use popular hostility to the kings' minions to discredit the status quo. In England by Sandy's time, the reign of Charles I, the hermaphrodism of the king's corporate body was a notion too tainted to be of any use to the theorists of absolutism. British royal watchers wanted to

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<sup>50</sup> Chapter V. London: John Dunton, 1693. p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> (1550-1630); Larivière, 1984: p. 98.

<sup>52</sup> Hael, 1937; Jones/Stallybrass, 1991: p. 92-93.

forget the excesses of the previous reign, including the youthful indiscretions of Charles while Prince of Wales.<sup>53</sup> All this had become a taboo subject, and not just for Sandys. The puritan Lucy Hutchinson noted:

*The face of the court was much changed in the change of king; for King Charles was temperate, chaste and serious; so that the fools and bawds, mimics and catamites of the former court grew out of fashion; and the nobility and courtiers, who did not quite abandon their debaucheries, yet so revered the king as to retire into the corners to practise them.*<sup>54</sup>

These had been officially exorcized by the grand court masque, *Coelum britannicum*, staged in 1634 by Inigo Jones in the new Banqueting Hall to a text of Thomas Carew. In this allegory of Carolingian reforms Momus, god of wit and ridicule, decreed:

*Ganymede is forbidden the bedchamber, and must only minister in public. The gods must keepe no Pages, nor Groomes of their chamber under twenty-five, and those provided of a competent stocke of beard.*<sup>55</sup>

Sandys' omission of all this from his inventory of hermaphroditic possibility in no oversight, rather he is skirting the proverbial sleeping dog. However this discourse of unnatural kings would have coloured contemporary readings of the Le Mourge ethnography. The *Floridians* were not an egalitarian tribal society. Their society was governed by rulers, the hierarchy of *orata*, *mico* and *cacique* described by the Europeans were recognisable equivalents of familiar magistrates, lords and kings. They are portrayed in the de Bry engravings surrounded by their courts and borne by their subjects on palanquins. Despite such recognizable attributes of royal authority their rule was outside of the divinely ordained Christian dispensation. It would have been no surprise that hermaphrodites as equivalents of *les minions* would have an official role in the society ruled by the *King Saturiba* which Le Moyne chronicles. Similarly in Panama, Balboa was disposed to see the albino courtiers of

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<sup>53</sup> Later Milton would term Charles "a monster who had also been nasty with his father's own catamite, the Duke of Buckingham, the very instrument by which he had poisoned his own father"; Karlen, 1971: p. 114-115.

<sup>54</sup> Orgel, 1981: p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> This was the year after Charles I had travelled to Edinburgh to assume the Scottish crown. Carew, 1969: p. 217-219.

the Cuna chief as sodomites. Another de Bry engraving illustrates the Portuguese setting their dogs to kill them.<sup>56</sup> For the Protestant elite who comprised De Bry's readers the message would have been unequivocal.<sup>57</sup>

While the British invoked the hermaphrodite within the confines of traditional exegesis, to their French contemporaries it was a vehicle of lively innovation, encompassing not just the monsters, exhibited at fairs, and poked at by lawyers and doctors, for these could be found in England too. They could be burnt, or ordered to assume the outward habits of one or other gender. It was the other hermaphrodites, the ones who *belonged* in their inverted worlds, who like the king and his boyfriends that enjoyed authority who posed the greatest social danger. These lurked in the liminal regions of geography, as well as the unconscious. No wonder the Huguenots found them in Florida. As Thomas Browne ominously warns, the microcosm is more than "a pleasant trope of rhetoric" :

*There is an Africa and her prodigies in us... There is no man alone, because every man is a microcosm and carries the whole world about in him.*<sup>58</sup>

The Hermaphrodite, then, embodied a plethora of antiquarian, hermetic, and physiological meanings. Phantoms swept across the ocean, it was in the Americas that this emblem would confront other orders of sexual and gender practice. These hermaphrodites existed only in the minds of those who needed them. They could only exist in liminal space. Once it was explored, they would vanish to another to a more distant margin. Exploration of the continent and increasing familiarity with its inhabitants, together with shifts in European political reality and ideology, signed their doom. The emblematic figure of the Hermaphrodite would implode, but not without lasting implications for the development of modern sexual identity.<sup>59</sup> The end of the sixteenth and the first quarter of the seventeenth centuries was a period of profound

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<sup>56</sup> de Bry, iv: plate 22.

<sup>57</sup> For Bucher, the editing of material in the *Voyages* consistently privileges the Protestant explorers who she argues are presented as more humane and enlightened than their Catholic equivalents; p. 6 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Bray, 1982: p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> q.v. Hervey, Herculine Barbin, Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, Elizar von Kuppfer. Contemporary manifestation can be seen in the prevalence of androgyny in contemporary youth culture and even as an emerging genre of pornography.

cultural transition. It was a time when theories of correspondence, long an obsession in western thought, reached their most sophisticated development: seeing one thing reflected in other, emblems, allegories, microcosm/macrocosm, and of course magic, the science of *dynamic correspondences*, were still fundamental tenants of European thought. But a new order was preparing to sweep all this away. The academies and their list makers would replace it with what they called a new science and enlightened reason.

In Rome during the early years of the seventeenth century, French reformed Cistercian monks began to plant an espalier orchard near San Bernardino alle Terme, their new monastic church. This remarkable building, following the precedent of the Pantheon, had similarly been re-cycled from an ancient fabric, one of the surviving circular chambers of the ancient Baths of Diocletian. The excavations for this garden lay in one of the most fertile fields of ancient Roman archaeology. Like the Forum and the Villa of Hadrian, Diocletian's Thermae had been ornamented with sculpture gathered from the Hellenic provinces of the empire. Sometimes these were original works by master sculptors of the classical and Hellenistic eras, but more often they were marble copies of works which survive today only in these Roman reproductions. The Cistercians uncovered what is today the most famous exemplar of recumbent Hellenistic sculptures of Hermaphroditus.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> This was not the first ancient Hermaphrodite to be recovered. Lorenzo Ghiberti in his third commentary recollects:

I saw in Rome in olympio 440 [1447] the statue of a hermaphrodite, the size of a thirteen-year-old girl, which was made with admirable skill. It was found at that time in a drain about eight braccia underground. The top of the drain was level with the statue. The statue was covered with earth to the level of the street. The drain, which was being cleaned, was near S.Celso, and a sculptor who lived there had the statue brought out and taken to S.Cecilia in Trestevere, where he was working on the tomb of a cardinal. There he had removed some of the marble from it in order to send the statue more easily to our country [Florence]. It is impossible for the tongue to tell the perfection and the knowledge, art and skill of that statue. The figure was on spaded earth over which a linen cloth was thrown. The arms rested on the ground and the hands were crossed one over the other. One of the legs was stretch out and the large toe had caught the clot, and the pulling of the cloth was shown with wonderful skill. The statue was without a head but nothing else was missing. In this statue were the greatest refinements. The eye perceived nothing if the

The monks had no use for such an impious work, but were well aware of the value of their discovery. Such a find was worthy of the collection of a great prince, and since this was Rome, the obvious choice of client was one of the most powerful princes of the Church, Cardinal Scipio Borghese, nephew of the newly elected Pope Paul V. Calculated prudence prompted the Cistercians to donate the sculpture to Scipio's impressive collection of antiquities which were displayed in the family palace across the Tiber from the Vatican and in the gardens and Villa which was built on the Pincio to the north of the city. The Cardinal agreed to compensate the monks by underwriting the costs of a new facade for their adjacent Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, founded in 1607 as a training college for missionaries.<sup>61</sup> Strange that French missionaries in Rome should worship in a church payed for by an ancient hermaphrodite at the same time as their missionary colleagues were imagining other hermaphrodites in the centre of America.

The victory to which this church had been dedicated was that of the decisive Battle of White Mountain, fought in Bohemia in 1621, by which the victorious Catholic armies consolidated the Counter-Reformation in central Europe. Irony links the image of a hermaphrodite, such an important trope in humanist hermetic discourse, to the completion of a church which invokes the defeat of the Imperial aspirations of the last hope of the hermetic renaissance, the Elector Palatine Frederick, King of Bohemia and son-in-law of James I. White Mountain was a phrygian triumph, as the ensuing Thirty Years War demonstrated, but history had changed its course. Just as the Battle of White Mountain closed an era of both intellectual and political history, the statue's recovery in Baroque Rome, like a monstrous birth, presaged the end of an era.

The canonic status of this marble and its notoriety as a curiosity during this era of antiquarian passions and the Grand Tour is attested by travellers such as the English diarist and courtier Sir John Evelyn who visited the Villa Borghese in 1644, and purchased a small ivory reproduction of the *Hermaphrodite upon a quilt of*

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hand had not found it by touch. [Holt p.163-164.]

It has been suggested that an angel in Michelangelo's fresco of the *Conversion of Saint Paul* (upper left: Cappella Paolina, Vatican, 1542-1550) draws on this Hermaphrodite prototype, which implies the possibility that the untraced marble reported by Ghiberti could have been known to his Florentine compatriot exactly a century later. Murray 1984 p. 184-185.]

<sup>61</sup> Blunt, 1982: p. 122-123.

*stone...admirably copied by that signal artist François Duquesnoy. Small copies in bronze by Giovanni Francesco Susini date from the same era.<sup>62</sup> Later the enterprising Zoffoli brothers would supply small souvenir bronzes to eighteenth-century tourists. Large scale casts had been acquired for the Spanish and French royal collections by 1650 and 1680 respectively.<sup>63</sup> It was into this almost industrialized circuit of reproduction that the post-Borghese representation of the hermaphrodite passed. What had been an open sign, to be refigured for any purpose to which it was suited, became a specific historical object, an antiquity, a souvenir. The Borghese Hermaphrodite lay powerless, set apart in a room frescoed in its honour, as a trophy captured from the European *imaginaire*. Antiquity was no longer a heritage reborn, it was now the domain of philologists and antiquarians.*

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<sup>62</sup> New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

<sup>63</sup> Honour, 1961: p. 200-201; 1963: p. 197; Haskell/Penny, 1981: p. 234-236.



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