

# **“*Tertium Non Data*”?: The Politics of Cross-Dressing in *Sexing the Cherry***

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In truth, neither sex is really mine; . . . I belong to a third sex, a sex apart, which has yet no name.

—Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835)

The third is not given. All she knew was that she had arrived at the frontiers of common sense and crossed over. She was safe now. No safety without risk, and what you risk reveals what you value.

—Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* (1989)

## **Cross-Dressing in Perspective**

The phantom of “the third sex” has long haunted many cross-dressers in literature and culture. In crossing gender boundaries by breaking “dress codes,” they are thrown into a confusion of alternate dressing and undressing, masking and unmasking. They are caught in a dilemma of locating their gender identities—“To which sex should I belong?”; “Should femininity or masculinity pertain to me?”. Unable to find a niche in hetero/phallogentric discourses yoked to binary thinking, they extricate themselves from this either-or quandary, residing in the “third” category.

Such is the case for Théodore de Serranes, the hero(ine) of Théophile Gautier’s 1835 novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

Théodore dresses *herself* in male attire in order to get acquainted with some young man yet in the long run finds it hard to lose this habit. *She* confesses in her diary: "I was imperceptibly losing the idea of my sex, and I hardly remembered, at long intervals that I was a woman; . . . instead of a woman disguised as a man, I shall look like a man disguised as a woman" (Gautier 329-30). In this speculation on *her* cross-dressed self, the body, which normally serves as a gauge to distinguish men from women, loses its footing, demoted to the same status as clothing. What is hidden in a disguise may be another disguise, but we fail to recognize it as one. Under a multiple layering of disguises, which should decide *her* identity, the "female" body covered by clothing or the "male" soul locked in the body? Neither satisfies "her" dual nature and it is arbitrary to represent "her" with feminine pronouns. Here the validity of binary gender identification comes into question. "She" thus concludes that she belongs to "a third sex, a sex apart, which has yet no name" (Gautier 330). "[Her] dream would be to have each sex in turn . . . : man today, woman tomorrow" (Gautier 330). This manifesto of a "third" sex, along with this dream of gender play, articulates the politics of cross-dressing.

From the archetypal Théodore on, the idea of "a third sex" implied in cross-dressing is popularized by various modern texts, as illustrated in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1908), Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1937), in the works of Ursula Le Guin, and in the gender theories of Edward Carpenter.<sup>1</sup> Théodore's unnamed "third" sex was named by Carpenter "the intermediate sex," which emphasizes its transitional, liminal condition, ready to be assimilated to the male or female pole of gender dichotomy. This same "third" sex is recently termed "supernumerary gender," an extra gender which is expelled from the realm of gender normality, straying outside the margin, abjected and doubly othered. It has long been labeled as "androgyne" or "hermaphrodite," a blending together of the feminine and masculine, the gray zone in the black-to-white spectrum. All of the above nomenclature, not so holistic and

comprehensive as the "third," only enunciate part of this unnamed sex's state in culture. The "third," wedged in the hiatus between the first and the second, struggling between their interactive centrifugal/petal forces (both absorb and repel it), like the lurking lava, intermittently erupts to ruffle the surface equilibrium of dualism. It tilts the balance of Ying and Yang, of Hegelian thesis and antithesis. The "third" incurs "gender trouble"<sup>2</sup> and "category crisis," deconstructs identity politics and opens up "*a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture*" (Garber 17, sic).<sup>3</sup> The politics of cross-dressing is that of the "third," that of "hybridization" and "hetero/polyglossia," and more than that.

The third sex provides a synchronic view of gender-crossing, embracing all individuals who deviate from the standardized bipolar model of the sexes, such as homosexuals, transsexuals transvestites, and many others. But cross-dressing casts a diachronic glance at this deviance, pointing to one specific behavior shared by some "deviants" and some "normal" nonconformists who pursue some transient escapades in masquerades, performances or adventures. Thus the politics of cross-dressing involves something more complex than "the third" and gender-crossing. It embodies and expands the theory of "hermeneutics." The appeal of cross-dressing derives from the action of veiling and unveiling, from the process of conjecture in-between, and the wonder and the analysis afterward. As gender researcher John Money has noted, "Since dressing is traditionally gender-coded almost everywhere on earth, cross dressing is one highly specific act of gender crosscoding" (102). A code exists to be decoded, a text to be read, and a box to be opened. Cross-dressing invites examination, exciting a desire to guess a cross-dresser's true identity and motives, to discover the content within the form. The risk concomitant with identity revelation augments the fun of this gender play. But the real risk does not lie in the moment of throwing off the mask. Instead, it lies in the hermeneutic work before and after unmasking. This work is a vortex that draws in

not only the onlookers but also the cross-dressers themselves. The cross-dressers appreciate their disguises in front of a mirror; the "spectators" surmise what is inside the skirt(s) or trousers. Both try to seek the "truth." But like the language used in advertisements, clothing in cross-dressing is an empty signifier without the signified, a form without the content.<sup>4</sup> When decoding an advertisement to dig out the message it conveys, we forget that the message is part of the ad, the signifier.<sup>5</sup> So when disclosing the true nature of a cross-dresser, we overlook the falsehood of this "nature." By analogy, the process of decoding is that of looking into a mirror in the mirror, peeling an onion or unpacking the Chinese boxes. When searching for a true self in the imaged mirror, we, lost in myriad images, fail to see them as reflections. Similarly, preoccupied with the action of peeling and unpacking, we neglect the fact that layers of the onion we pare are both its "peel" and "pulp"; that the mystery in the boxes is another box. Cross-dressing explodes the gender codes, excavates meanings from clothing, and exposes the "constructedness" and "arbitrariness" of those meanings.<sup>6</sup> The hermeneutics it often entails is a red herring across the path to an exploration of cross-dressing. But this red herring, once passed over, prompts us to deduce that not only the clothing and its gendered meanings (or gender itself) are vacant forms but sex or body as well. Gender can be performed; sex can be disguised. So genitalia by itself is not an essential insignia of a lifelong sex/gender; body is not so convincing a marking for sexual/gender difference. It is also reductive to consider transvestites (or transsexuals) to be the people in the skin of the wrong (opposite) sex. In so doing we have defined and encoded sex and gender whose codes and definitions cross-dressing disputes. The inside of a body might be a dual nature like Theodore's, so "it," whether called soul or nature, is part of the empty signifier.

Judging from this overview of the politics of cross-dressing, we may perceive that its operation is particularly pertinent to our postmodern world, especially in the *fin de siècle*

years when Queer theories<sup>7</sup> are in vogue, identity politics is overhauled or overthrown, many discourses are deconstructed, and pluralism and polyphony preferred. Although recently many literary and cultural critics have studied the phenomenon of cross-dressing in literature from the ancient to the postmodern period, they seldom regard cross-dressing from a postmodern perspective. On the contrary, they tend to, as Garber points out, "look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders. To elide and erase—or to *appropriate* the transvestite for particular political and critical aims" (9). Some of them employ cross-dressing as a metaphor for gender-crossing in writing. For example, Elain Showalter discusses the appropriation of feminist criticism by male critics in her article, "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male feminists and the Woman of the Year"; Madeleine Kahn develops her theory of "narrative transvestism" and James Carson espouses a similar idea but calls it "narrative cross-dressing." There are many others that I cannot enumerate here. Mostly those theories of cross-dressing are influenced by psychoanalytic descriptions of transvestism, stiffened by the fundamentalist definition of transvestites—that is, male heterosexuals "who have recurrent, intense urges to cross dress and sexually arousing fantasies that disturb them" (Bullough 220).<sup>8</sup> The transvestites' urges to dress as women are episodic. They remain quite conscious of their true sex and do not want to undergo transsexual operation. This definition excludes most of the cross-dressers, such as people cross-dress for gender relief or convenience, women, homosexuals, female impersonators, transsexuals, masqueraders, players, streetwalkers, and so on. Thus for those critics with psychiatric "facts" in mind, transvestism (or cross-dressing in general) is in essence misogynistic. The subtext of transvestism, as contended by Showalter and others, is that a cross-dressed man can outshine "real" women for a part. For Kahn, the misogyny of transvestism is "of a complicated and ambiguous sort" (28, n23) and it

"attempts to reaffirm once for all the hegemony of the masculine" (7). As for drag and some comic impersonation, they are more misogynistic both in origin and in intent seeing that they parody and thus denigrate women.<sup>9</sup> While those critics evince their discontents, their scope is circumscribed by the problematic term "transvestism," and their arguments are inevitably restricted and biased. Therefore, I choose cross-dressing, a simple term which covers a complex set of phenomena, to expound my theory.

Although Garber sees cross-dressing in its right perspective and her penetrating observation on its "logics" and "effects" unfolds for the readers new vistas to postmodern thoughts, the most postmodern literary text she cites is Angela Carter's 1977 novel *The Passion of New Eve*. Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (1987) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which have made a stir in lesbian circles and elicited profound interest of many critics, have been left out. Cross-dressing in these two novels works in full play and is invested with postmodern Zeitgeist. I believe both of the two novels deserve more attention in the study of cross-dressing in the coming years. But here I will choose *Sexing the Cherry* rather than *The Passion* to apply my concepts about the politics of cross-dressing. Indeed *The Passion* has a hero(ine) cross-dressed continually<sup>10</sup> and more plot details about cross-dressing to be cited, while in *Sexing the Cherry* only in two episodes can some plain depictions of cross-dressing be spotted. But the "controllable gender masquerade" of *The Passion's* hero(ine), Villanelle, writes Carolyn Allen with compelling clarity, "is countered by one strange body feature: she was born with the webbed feet usually anatomically proper only for male babies who are destined to be boatmen on Venice's canals" (55). Therefore, whether male or female apparel, which screens a more essential body secret, will disguise Villanelle. In some sense, like Woolf's Orlando, Villanelle is not a cross-dresser or is a double one. However, in *Sexing the Cherry*, cross-dressing as an underlying theme beads each fragmentary variation

developed from it into a string of postmodern melodies. Those variations are "the third," "hermeneutics," and "narrative transvestism." Because cross-dressing in *Sexing the Cherry* does not wear its heart on its sleeve, it is much more rewarding in critical terms.

### Sexing the Cherry

Under a pineapple sprouts up the hero's name, Jordan. "This is the first thing [we] saw."<sup>11</sup> For some mysterious reasons, our hero decides to start on a journey in quest of a dancer called Fortunata he encounters in a "floorless" house. He combs "the city of words" for her—from the theater and the opera, with increasing dread, to "cafes and casinos and bawdy-houses and at last to a pen of prostitutes kept by a rich man for his friends" (30). Thanks to this quest, he has this precious chance to venture into women's accouterments, into their territory. Not voluntarily but urged by the prostitutes he puts on the female costume. Only in female disguise can he be granted admittance. "As a man, however chaste, [he] would be driven away or made a eunuch" (30). Jordan, albeit not physically becoming a eunuch, is mentally castrated by the prostitutes: "They praised my outfit and made me blush by stroking my cheek and commenting on its smoothness" (30). After his experience in the pen of prostitutes he determines "to continue as a woman for a time and [takes] a job on a fish stall" (31). Working with women, surrounded by them, he realizes that: "In my petticoats I was a traveller in a foreign country. I did not speak the language. I was regarded with suspicion" (31).

The above is the first occurrence of male-to-female cross-dressing. The origin and intent of Jordan's cross-dressing are subversive vis-à-vis traditional views of this behavior. Usually it is women who for better fortune and freer living space venture into men's domain in male disguise. Men grab themselves as women, either sexually provoked by the female attire or for homoerotic pleasure. Or they mean to burlesque women for entertainment. Yet here Winterson offers a curious

case—a man follows women's advice to assume the female disguise and go on his cross-dressing in order to enter their world and understand them. This case is fantastic in nature but not altogether improbable in reality. Jordan should not be deemed exceptional. If there are any sexual undercurrents latent in Jordan's cross-dressing as some professionals should insist, it is in the aspect of those prostitutes whose flirtatious stroke and parlance color Jordan—a sinuous homoeroticism between "women."

This lesbianism evolves further as Jordan in female attire meets a young girl who mistakes "him" for his sister, and "courteously invite[s] [him] to bed with her, where [he] pass[es] the night in some confusion" (33). Rather ambiguous yet suggestive is this confusing night. This young girl turns out to be an apparition who was "caught incestuously with her sister [and] condemned to build her own death tower" (38).

When does Jordan take off this outfit?—We are not told. Till the second description of his cross-dressing more than thirty pages are thumbed through. Seemingly many years have elapsed and we hear from his mother, the Dog-Woman, that Jordan has cross-dressed once before his daring adventures. Jordan and his mentor Tradescant dress "themselves as drabs, with painted faces and scarlet lips and dresses that [look] as though they[']ve been pawed over by every infantryman in the capital" (68). Apparently born to impersonate women, "Jordan [has] a fine mincing walk and a leer that [get] him a good few offers of a bed for the night" (68). This time, instead of exploring a no man's land, he is situated in a patriarchal, homosocial domain, at the hazard of being uncovered or seduced. "Jordan, in his costume as a drab," narrates the Dog-Woman, "had felt Hugh Peter [the preacher]'s oily hand slide under his skirts promising the freedom that only Christ can bring" (68). What does Hugh Peter's groping hand feel? Whether something or nothing is insignificant insofar as it brings "freedom" and two more passes for "his" mother and mentor.



Whenever and wherever Jordan cross-dresses, he is suspected, either in danger of death (in the trial scene) or of castration (among the prostitutes). Moreover, he falls into temptation of gay or lesbian eroticism. For those critics who claim that transvestites reaffirm their masculinity from cross-dressing, Jordan's case might remind them of the risks incidental to cross-dressing, and of that pressure and stimulus from outside environment should frustrate rather than reassure a (male) transvestite. Regardless of attendant danger, Jordan cross-dresses simply for necessity, for gender relief just like a number of people he has met—"who, anxious to be free of the burdens of their gender, have dressed themselves men as women and women as men" (31). Not at all misogynistic is Jordan's cross-dressing and it contests and undermines the legitimacy of gender/sexuality regulation. When Hugh Peter searches Jordan under his skirts and a fatal secret is (going to be) divulged, Jordan weeps and moans and begs "two more passes for other friends of his" (68). Then this fatal secret (whether disclosed or not) still enables them to pass as "[c]ommon women, women in need of a pastor's touch" (68). What does this equivocal "secret" say about the "reality" of sex or gender? Phallic ones can be women; castrated ones can be men. Hugh Peter's homoeroticism can be legitimated since his desired object is still a "woman," so can the prostitutes' lesbianism in that they know at heart Jordan is a man. Does one's sexual orientation depend on one's gender or sex? This inspection of cross-dressing, as I have argued in the theory of hermeneutics, will push a discovery of all the identities' fictitious nature if we are not held in suspense by Hugh Peter's inarticulate finding. Hence clothing is a box, so are gender, sex and many other identities that incarcerate and pinion every human being. Everyone is "a genie in a jar" (91). We will spin and spin and spin (redefine and rearrange all the identities) "until all features are blurred, until the human being most resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar" (72).<sup>12</sup>

If we enlarge the range of male cross-dressers, Preacher Scroggs and Neighbour Firebrace will be counted. Priests' ecclesiastical vestments, difficult to be clearly classified, are often deliberately misread as women's garments in culture. The cross-over of sartorial gender in religious sphere echoes the blurring of dress codes between men and women in ancient Greece and Rome, or more accurately, before the advent of pants and trousers. The Dog-Woman witnesses the interplay of religious and ancient "cross-dressing" while watching the fornication farce featuring Preacher Scroggs and Neighbour Firebrace:

Scroggs came in first, in a purple nightdress affair. Then Firebrace in a toga of some kind. They were to play Caesar and Brutus before the quarrel. Unable to contain myself, I waited long enough to see Firebrace's monstrous member rise beneath his skirts, then I swung into the wall and shot the revolving panel into the room. (87)

The intrusion of this giant transforms the farce into a scene of carnage. But what arrests our attention should not be the ensuing massacre, but the Dog-Woman's delineation of their outfits. Preacher Scroggs' garb is called "a purple nightdress affair," commonly referring to a loose gown worn in bed by women or girls. Firebrace's "toga" is a loose, one-piece outer garment worn in public by citizens in ancient Rome. And what conceals his penis is called "skirts," culturally woman's garments. Whether these two villainous clowns play Caesar and Brutus or two monks, the feminine imports underneath the ancient and religious costume overlap. As Garber has acutely observed, "[P]articular items of clothing have tended to cross over gender lines, not through uniformity *per se* . . . but rather by the migration of styles over time from one gender to another" (212). Skirts were men's apparel and are not; pants are women's and were not. Two men in gowns or frocks undertake coition—they are in nature gay or lesbian? From the ecclesiastical or Greek

sartorial modes, a destabilizing "fact" is evoked: Genders and sexualities are transitory *trome-l'oeils*; unwittingly we all may be cross-dressers and homosexuals. But where are we coming from and to what? To which sex or gender are we "homo"? There are all or no cross-dressers. There are neither homos nor heteros.

Granted that all the superficial portrayals of cross-dressing focus on male-to-female one, we should not achieve such a non sequitur that there are no female transvestites. Some of the prostitutes who encourage Jordan's cross-dressing are themselves cross-dressers. As Jordan relates, "Some of the women had lovers in the convent; others, keeping a change of clothes there, went their way in the outside world" (31). This change of clothes, albeit unnecessarily, does imply cross-dressing. After all, the male disguise, ensuring male privileges, is a safer entering wedge into patriarchy. There is no blinking another allusion to female-to-male cross-dressing. The husband of the seventh dancing princess must be a female transvestite. The princess thus confesses: "the man I had married was a woman" (54). Because the "prince" is known as a man, the princess marries "her." But dissimilar to the butch-femme stereotypes, the "prince" does not attempt to live most of "her" life in male disguise. So when "she" is found, the death bell tolls.

For Winterson, female-to-male cross-dressing is in equal proportion to male-to-female one. She tells us through Jordan of "a number of people who . . . have dressed themselves men as women and women as men" (31). On the surface she only insinuates a possibility of female transvestism inasmuch as she herself is playing "narrative transvestism," slipping in and out of male disguise. Her narrative cross-dressing fits in very nicely with Kahn's theory of narrative transvestism and counterbalances it. Fostering a series of fossilized psychological persuasions—"there is no such thing as a female transvestism," "women may dress as men, but they don't seem to do so as part of a cycle of reaffirming their identity," and "Women are

borrowing the voice of authority; men are seemingly abdicate it"—Kahn thus infers that "[t]he structure of real world transvestism that [she has] used as a model for the structure of narrative transvestism may also be unsuitable for women" (2). Fortunately many "aspects" of [her] concept of narrative transvestism provide a useful model for [my] analysis of [a female-authored text]" (Kahn 2). Ironically her narrative transvestism functions better in Winterson than her examples of Richardson and Defoe. Winterson's transvestism is foregrounded and transmuted. While those male authors cling to their female personae, Winterson is entranced with free entrance to and exit from male and female provinces, assuming and discarding male disguises, temporarily and periodically, cross-dressing to undress, undressing to cross-dress. "Her" male voice is not authoritative and female identities (however problematic) are cyclically reaffirmed. When the male voice fades out, the female voice fades in. All the "I's, male or female, are "her." "She" is both Jordan and the Dog-Woman, both Nicolas Jordan and the unnamed female ecologist, all the thirteen pineapples and thirteen bananas, (whether mutilated or not), and all the twelve dancing princesses. All the identities come and go, flying to and fro—Proteus-like, she sticks to none of them.

That is explicable why Winterson makes Jordan a cross-dresser, so sympathetic, so understanding. As Jordan cross-dresses, he feels he is "a traveller in a foreign country" (31). But his cross-dressing journey "conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle" (91). Like the cross-dressing of Rosalind or Viola which foregrounds the boy-actor's playing, Jordan's cross-dressing (written in ink) mirrors and surfaces Winterson's narrative transvestism ("written in milk" [10]). It is the concealed journey recorded in invisible ink that fascinates the reader.

But Winterson's transvestism, mocking Kahn's and all the medical models, does not aim to reaffirm once for all the

hegemony of the "feminine,"<sup>13</sup> to create another center, but to crush all the ideologies of center/margin, self/other, male/female, all the Hegalian and Manichean myths. For Winterson, the Dog-Woman is no less a disguise than Jordan. Both the male attire (Jordan) and female body (the Dog-Woman) are disguises to be discarded. Hence she assigns pineapples to stand for males, bananas females,<sup>14</sup> and all the pineapples and bananas spring from (and may flow to) the cherry in the title page, a "third" fruit, a "hybrid" of grafting. All the male and females voices (disguises) converge at a "third" voice emerging exactly in the middle of the book,<sup>15</sup> without any fruit (and princess) badges to (mis)inform its sex/gender, speaking in *italic*:

*At a dancing school in a remote place, Fortunata teaches her pupils to become points of light. . . . (72)*

Like a specter, "it" appears from nowhere, and transparent for anyone, sees everything in sharp focus, as a whole, in all its nakedness. Thus, while other voices tell personal tales of the past, "it" records Fortunata's teaching in the present tense as if it is permanently present. "It" is "it," not you, nor I, speaking from a third-person point of view, articulating the "third" voice. Winterson, as a cross-dresser, plays out the female and male voices but fuses her identity with none of them. "She" is "it," inhabiting the "third" space.

In fact, all the voices in the novel dwell in the "third" category that hangs on the edge of language and time: Jordan, as the cross-dresser, who thinks about applying grafting to himself' (78); the Dog-woman, as the phallic mother;<sup>16</sup> all the dancing princesses who "retire" their husbands and especially Fortunata. Fortunata, the youngest, missing sister of the dancing princesses, represents another third voice which Jordan quests for and finally ferrets out. No fruit or princess icons signal her entrance and exit. She tells her own story about a floating city in the sky (95-99) and a story of Artemis (131-34). Her discourses are inserted in Jordan's, mysteriously appear and

disappear. Her body that can sublimate into "points of light" will always serve as Jordan's marker.

### Epilogue

In *Sexing the Cherry*, the politics of cross-dressing is that of the "third"—the third fruit produced through grafting, "hybridization," and the third voice, a "heteroglot," "extralocated" (in Bakhtin's terms), yet ready to infect the purity of monologic discourses.<sup>17</sup> The "third" squats on the limen, at the bifurcation to negotiate the two forks. The "third" is the electron revolving around the nucleus that consists of the neutron and the proton. The "third," whether through its "liminality" or "extralocality," aims at constructing a polyphonic planet in the "future," the third tense of time.

The politics of cross-dressing is that of hermeneutics. We are the spectators of this cross-dressing show that incorporates Jordan's performance with Winterson's and many other invisible ones. Watching this sartorial play is like witnessing the alchemy:

The transformation from one element to another, from waste matter into best gold is a process that cannot be documented. It is fully mysterious. No one really knows what effects the change. And so it is with the mind that moves from its prison to a vast plain without any movement at all. We can only question what happened. (131)

This guessing process is hermeneutics, we readers' job. Just like stripping layers of disguises off a cross-dresser, the longer we elude ourselves the more obsessed we become with the thought of discovery (10). Would we "find something different or the old things in different disguises" (131)? Only one who knows better will sprinkle coal-dust over the document that looks innocent enough. Thus the hidden life written in milk between the lines emerges. "What the letter had been no longer mattered; what mattered was the life flaring up undetected . . ." (10, sic).

"The alchemists have a saying, '*Tertium non data*': the

third is not given" (131). The third is not given owing to many people's attempts to accommodate cross-dressing to dualistic patterns, overlooking the transformation process. The third *is* given if we can discover the hidden "truth?" of cross-dressing and espy all the third voices, inserted between the lines and ventriloquized through a web of voices the way we are "disguised" under folds of identities. The third is *not* given just as the future is a fake. "The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky" (144). While the division between the binary categories (male/female, hetero/homo, self/other, and center/margin) does not exist, what remain "are only hand-shadows on the wall. Empty space and points of light" (144).

*Tertium non data*. No borderlines to be crossed. We are *all* cross-dressers. There are *no* cross-dressers.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (1908), and *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk* (1918).

<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler's endeavors to dismantle gender identities in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) inspire my reading of cross-dressing in *Sexing the Cherry*.

<sup>3</sup> I am greatly indebted to Marjorie Garber's perspicacious exposition of "category crisis" and "the third kind" correlated to cross-dressing in *Vested Interests* (1992). She construes "category crisis" as "a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another" (16). As for the "third," she offers three examples to explicate her

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points: the Third World, the third actor, and the Lacanian Symbolic. In my textual analysis I will introduce Bakhtin's "hybridization" and "heteroglossia" to supplement the politics of the "third."

<sup>4</sup> In fact both language and clothing are empty signifiers. We stuff meanings into them and pretend that they have definite signifieds. Cross-dressing and advertisements subvert those myths and foreground the process of signification.

<sup>5</sup> For a further study of advertisements and hermeneutics, see Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*.

<sup>6</sup> Though the disguises in some drag queens and female/male impersonators are too obvious to be "decoded," they bring on similar exposure and evacuation of meanings. Because their cross-dressing is not implicated in the working of hermeneutics, it is simple, direct and more acceptable. The obviousness blocks a further desire to probe into the behavior of cross-dressing.

<sup>7</sup> I use the plural form in view of the variance of those theories under the umbrella of "Queer."

<sup>8</sup> The official definition of transvestism is promulgated by the clubs as Tri-Ess and *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, revised third edition (DSM-III-R), of the American Psychiatric Association. Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough challenge this definition and advance their own conception in their groundbreaking work, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender*. Though this book does not center on literature but on culture, history and psychiatric rationales, I owe my interpretation of cross-dressing to their findings.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Peter Ackroyd's comment on "drag" in *Dressing Up*. This book affords a good introduction to the study of transvestism through history and across cultures.

<sup>10</sup> Villanelle dresses "as a woman in the afternoon and a young man in the evenings," because "that's what the visitors liked to



see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind the tight breeches and extravagant face-paste" (62, 54).

<sup>11</sup> Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, 9. Subsequent references to this work will be cited in the text.

<sup>12</sup> Winterson interlards her novel with various types of "genie/bottle" metaphors—"a genie from a bottle" (9), "he'll not let no genie out on me" (12), "If I open the box by the tiniest amount I may hear it, repeating itself endlessly as it is destined to do until someone sets it free" (18), "a freed spirit from a darkened jar" (72), "a genie from a jar" (79), "a genie in a jar" (91). Though endowed with disparate contextual senses, those metaphors connote the same thing.

<sup>13</sup> Madeline Kahn states: "the dynamic structure of transvestism reveals transvestism's inability to be fixed in either category despite its attempts to reaffirm once for all the hegemony of the masculine" (7). I basically agree with her but I believe the phrase following "despite" should be reconsidered in literature and culture.

<sup>14</sup> "This alignment might strike some readers as odd," comments Laura Doan with critical acumen, "in light of our cultural immersion in Freudian symbolism—pineapple/male (Jordan) and banana/female (Dog-Woman)—but the reversal is intentional and important for it gestures toward Winterson's continued exploration of the ideology of gender" (150).

<sup>15</sup> With deliberate accuracy, this neutral third voice crops up on the 72<sup>nd</sup> page of 144 pages.

<sup>16</sup> According to Freud, the phallic mother is emblematic of a third sex. Yet the Dog-Woman's "phallic" power rises from her vast vagina no man's member can fill and colossal clitoris no man's mouth can contain. By presenting such a "phallic" woman, Winterson flouts the Freudian thoughts.

<sup>17</sup> "Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel, . . . is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. . . . In such a discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions." See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 324. But I think heteroglossia should include the third voice, which will disrupt the dialogic harmony. For a clearer understanding of Bakhtin's dialogic theory, see Todorov's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*.

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