

**Exploring ‘Zelmaneship’:  
Developing Queer Inwardness from Sidney to Stage**

By  
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## Abstract

Zelma the Amazon, a central character in Philip Sidney's epic romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590), has often been studied for her transgressive gender and sexuality. Zelma's first words in the *New Arcadia* direct readers to look within, "Transform'd in show, but more transform'd in mind" (Sidney 131). I argue that this substantial transformation is what Katherine Eisaman Maus calls "inwardness," a word drawn from Sidney's "In Defense of Poesy" in *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (1995). In "In Defense of Posey," he writes how characters can exhibit both an "inward self, and ... [an] outward government" (50). Zelma, conceptualized only as a disguise, would be the outward show of Pyrocles; Sidney, however, writes the Amazon with an inward self and individuates her from the Prince. Sidney writes Zelma with independent pronouns, differentiated thoughts, and the ability to resist transforming back into Pyrocles. Because Zelma's demonstrated inwardness both separates her from Pyrocles and represents a shift across genders, Zelma's inwardness is queer. Dramatic interpretations of Sidney's *Arcadia*, however, do not exhibit this same inwardness. John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) and James Shirley's *A Pastoral Called the Arcadia* (1640) reduce Zelma's inwardness and portray her only as a cross-dressed disguise. Sidney's Zelma, as a distinct central character to a widely popular early modern text, reveals a possibility for queer inwardness unexamined by recent scholarship.

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Zelmana the Amazon, a central character in Philip Sidney's epic romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590), has often been studied for her transgressive gender and sexuality. In Sidney's final, incomplete, and widely popular version of his epic pastoral romance, the *New Arcadia*, Zelmana is the cross-dressing, Amazonian persona of Prince Pyrocles of Macedon.<sup>1</sup> Sidney's plot begins when King Basilius of Arcadia receives a prophecy from the Oracle of Delphi which predicts he will commit adultery with his own wife, and importantly, that his youngest daughter Philoclea will "embrace/ An uncouth loue, which Nature hateth most."<sup>2</sup> Disturbed by this prophecy, Basilius flees to the countryside with his wife Gynecia and his two marriageable daughters, Pamela and Philoclea. Prince Pyrocles and his cousin Prince Mucidorus discover the unmarried princesses and fall in love with Philoclea and Pamela, respectively. To woo the princesses-in-hiding, Mucidorus and Pyrocles take on new identities, Dorus the shepherd and Zelmana the Amazon. Sidney's Zelmana is one of the *New Arcadia's* central heroes, proving herself a virtuous warrior throughout the text. Zelmana's influence fulfills much of the Oracle's prophecy: Basilius, Gynecia, and Philoclea all pursue the Amazon romantically.

With so much of the *New Arcadia's* narrative tied up in gender and desire, scholars have examined Zelmana's transgressive sexuality. Marie H. Loughlin anthologizes the love between Philoclea and Zelmana in *Same-Sex Desire in Early Modern England*.<sup>3</sup> Loughlin, Valerie Traub, Richard Levin, Julie Crawford and others have explored potential lesbian love in the *New*

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Circulation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*, H. R. Woudhuysen speculates that Sidney likely wrote a substantially revised version of the *Old Arcadia*, now known as the *New Arcadia*, in 1584, two years before his death, 313. The *New Arcadia* was the only version available to early modern readers.

<sup>2</sup> Phillip Sidney. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Ed. Maurice Evans. (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 285.

<sup>3</sup> Marie H Loughlin, *Same-Sex Desire in Early Modern England, 1550-1735: An Anthology of Literary Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). I find it interesting that this anthology specifically outlines same sex relations, when Zelmana was born Pyrocles the man, and made no change to her assigned sex.

*Arcadia*. Kathryn Schwarz discusses how early modern writers depict Amazons, including Zelmane, as contradictory sites of desire and gender, containing both masculinity and femininity, the chaste and the erotic.<sup>4</sup> Simone Chess investigates Pyrocles as a crossdresser who “models a genderqueerness that is both male and female, masculine and feminine, and shows us the possible benefits...of living and performing that gender.”<sup>5</sup> These scholars have already explored Zelmane’s far-reaching impact on queer desire in Sidney’s *Arcadia* typically focusing on outward expressions of queerness such as, articulated desire, ambiguously-gendered dress, or crossing the social bounds of gender roles. While this work is critical in both Early Modern and Queer Studies, I propose that we expand our approach to this depiction of queerness and consider the possibility that, in Zelmane, Sidney represents a fully-formed queer inward self.<sup>6</sup>

In my investigation of Zelmane’s transgressive gender, I seek to avoid what Marjorie Garber identifies as the “the tendency...to look *through*, rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and then to want to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders.”<sup>7</sup> Zelmane’s first words in the *New Arcadia* direct readers to look within, “Transform’d in show, but more transform’d in mind.”<sup>8</sup> While Prince Pyrocles physically transforms into Zelmane the Amazon, Sidney indicates that the more substantial transformation is in the mind; Pyrocles calls it “Zelmaneship,” likening the transformation to a

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<sup>4</sup> Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 39. For more on Amazons see: Jeanne Addison Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Geraldo U. de Sousa, *Shakespeare’s Cross-Cultural Encounters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Simone Chess. *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 22.

<sup>6</sup> For pronoun usage, I follow Sidney’s writing and use she/her/hers for Zelmane and he/him/his for Pyrocles. When I refer to both personas in the same body, I will write Zelmane/Pyrocles and utilize the singular they.

<sup>7</sup> Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 131.

distinct state of being.<sup>9</sup> I argue that this transformation of the mind manifests in Sidney's writing of Zelmane with an inward self, individuating her from Prince Pyrocles. I do not mean to say that Zelmane is simply a complex character, but that Sidney makes specific moves to portray her with an inward self akin to a 'natural' character in the *New Arcadia*, rather than a disguise. Sidney writes Zelmane with independent pronouns, differentiated thoughts, and the ability to resist transforming back into Pyrocles. Because Zelmane's demonstrated inwardness both separates her from Pyrocles and represents a shift across genders, Zelmane's inwardness is queer.

Katherine Eisaman Maus argues that early modern writers were interested in the inward self, and that Sidney exemplifies this trend, "[The] distinction between interior and exterior is a very familiar rhetorical tactic in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Philip Sidney invokes it in *The Defense of Poetry*, for instance, when he discusses the way Virgil presents Aeneas: 'how in his inward self, and how in his outward government.'"<sup>10</sup> For Sidney, literary characters were capable of exhibiting an inwardness understood as separate, though not always contradictory, from outward presentation. Zelmane, then, is the outward presentation that develops an inward self. In Sidney's substantial revisions of the *Old Arcadia* to the *New*, he shifts away from cross-dressing plots that rely on the tension between inward self and outward show. In the framework of a standard disguise-plot familiar in narratives featuring Amazons, Zelmane should be the exterior presentation, and Pyrocles the interior self. Sidney's Zelmane, however, operates independently of outward performance, and can transform between Pyrocles and Zelmane without the alteration of physical appearance. Combined with internal thoughts delivered through narration, Zelmane is not only distinct from crossdressing plots of the period,

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<sup>9</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 142.

<sup>10</sup> Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

but from other crossdressers in the *New Arcadia*. This difference, I argue, lies in Sidney's portrayal of Zelmane, which transcends disguise.

While early modern scholarship, particularly on gender and queerness, has increasingly turned towards examinations of the body, this depiction of Zelmane illustrates a queerness that is not dependent upon outward show and action. Sidney's Zelmane comprises a queer subjectivity in the early modern literary imagination. Zelmane, as the central character to a widely popular early modern text, reveals a possibility for queer inwardness unexamined by recent scholarship. Steven Mentz writes that the *New Arcadia* "reigned from the sixteenth- to nineteenth-centuries as one of the most reprinted and best loved prose works in English."<sup>11</sup> If we are to understand the *New Arcadia* as a widely influential text—what Peter Lindenbaum calls, a "cultural monument"—we cannot ignore the queerness *and* inwardness of its central character.<sup>12</sup>

The *New Arcadia*'s popularity prompted other early modern writers to adapt Sidney's colossal epic for the stage. The second section of this essay examines how playwrights interpret Zelmane onstage, particularly how the confines of writing for the stage diminishes the inwardness that Sidney cultivates. John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606), and James Shirley's *A Pastoral Called the Arcadia* (1640) both write Zelmane as a standard cross-dressing trope. While these dramas maintain the queer desire of the *New Arcadia*, the queer inwardness of Zelmane is lost without techniques like changeable pronouns and internal narration. Day's and Shirley's versions firmly resolve Zelmane as a disguise, completing the narrative end of the *New Arcadia* that Sidney did not finish. Though the text of these dramas reduces Zelmane's inward self, early

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<sup>11</sup> Steven Mentz, "Selling Sidney: William Ponsonby, Thomas Nashe, and the Boundaries of Elizabethan Print and Manuscript Cultures." *Text* 13 (2000): 151-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30227764>.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Lindenbaum. "Sidney's Arcadia as Cultural Monument and Proto-Novel." In *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 80.

casting records for these productions illustrate an ambiguous interpretation of Zelmane's morphology, or the "shape of the body that we typically associate with being male or female."<sup>13</sup> Zelmane was played both by adult men and boy acting companies. While Day's and Shirley's texts, as Garber writes, "subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders," casting records indicate a variety of bodies, both of boys and men, performed Zelmane. For drama, the construction of Zelmane onstage was likely ornamental and performative; the dress, gesture, and voice of actors created the performance of Zelmane. While we cannot know precisely how Zelmane was performed, the scripts and theater records indicate that Zelmane onstage was not the individuated character that Sidney originally wrote. These adaptations of Zelmane mirror how scholarship has approached Sidney's character in the *New Arcadia*, using performative understandings of gender, and often comparing the *New Arcadia* to other dramas. I hope to illuminate how Sidney's romance creates an inwardness in Zelmane that early modern playwrights did not reproduce.

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<sup>13</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2009), 9.

## Sidney's Zelmane and the Queer Inward Self

Zelmane's distinctiveness coincides with a characterization and narrative that evolve beyond disguise and cross-dressing tropes. "Pyrocles," Schwarz argues, "finds that the Amazonian disguise incorporates more than he bargained for." The prince "cannot resolve [his constellation of desires] into a single body of unambiguous gender and uncontested sex; the invention of an Amazon overwhelms and almost eclipses the fact of a prince."<sup>14</sup> In the text of the *New Arcadia*, however, Zelmane actually does overtake Pyrocles' presence in the narrative. The frequency of character names in Sidney's prose demonstrates Zelmane's dominance in the overall text. In the *Renascence Editions*' digital transcription of the *New Arcadia*, "Zelmane" appears 340 times, compared to "Pyrocles" (196), "Musidorus" (178), and "Dorus" (104).<sup>15</sup> The *Renascence Edition* ends where Sidney's revisions stop; no text of the *Old Arcadia* was included in these totals. Throughout Sidney's elaborate prose, Zelmane is unavoidably present. As Sidney details the tangled love-plot, her achievements in battle, or her extensive backstory (which I will examine later in this essay), Zelmane dominates the *New Arcadia*, a text of featuring over one-hundred named characters.

Zelmane's narrative thread influences the structure of the *New Arcadia*. Sidney's heavily nested structure follows a queer composition strategy detailed by Jack Halberstam in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. Jack Halberstam notes that queer narratives create an "'out-of-body' and out-of-time experience" that resists heteronormative life cycles that revolve around marriage and procreation.<sup>16</sup> In the *New Arcadia*, Zelmane begins her

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<sup>14</sup> Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough Love*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Transcr. Risa Bear. (OR: Renascence Editions, University of Oregon, 2003), 200.

<sup>16</sup> Jack (formerly Judith) Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 48.

romance with Philoclea precisely *because* heteronormative expectations have been interrupted; Basilius refuses to allow his daughters to marry and engage in the next step of heterosexual early-modern womanhood. The impetus for the creation of Zelmane springs from an interruption of heterosexual life cycles. The Oracle of Delphi foretells that Zelmane is an aberrant disruption and an “uncouth loue.”<sup>17</sup> The rest of Zelmane’s story is told out-of-order and within layers of recounted stories. Sidney’s nonlinear, even disruptive, writing of Zelmane prioritizes a queer telling of Zelmane, instead of a straightforward (and straight) narrative focusing on Pyrocles.

Sidney’s prose also requires readers’ participation in Pyrocles/Zelmane’s gender transformations. This is most obvious in the changeably-gendered pronouns throughout the *New Arcadia*. Whenever Zelmane acts, Sidney converts all pronouns to she/her/hers, instead of using Pyrocles’ he/him/his pronouns. Readers uphold Zelmane’s feminine pronouns and begin to differentiate the character from Pyrocles. Importantly, Sidney includes Zelmane’s feminine pronouns in both narration and dialogue. Not only do characters in the *New Arcadia* receive Zelmane as a woman, but the readerly experience of narration acknowledges Zelmane as something more than Pyrocles in disguise. Simone Chess describes Sidney’s pronoun usage and compares it to performance, “the pronouns queer or crossdress the text.”<sup>18</sup> This immersive gender transition would not be possible without both the extensive presence of Zelmane in the text and consistent usage of feminine pronouns.

When readers first encounter Zelmane, Musidorus voyeuristically spies upon a beautiful woman in the woods. Musidorus describes this woman from head to toe, praising her beauty and Amazonian exoticism in a blazon:

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<sup>17</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 285.

<sup>18</sup> Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing*, 114.

Well might he perceive the hanging of her hair in the fairest quantity in locks, some curled and some as it were forgotten, with such a careless care and an art so hiding art that she seemed she would lay them for a pattern whether nature simple or nature helped by cunning be the more excellent: the rest whereof was drawn into a coronet of gold richly set with pearl, and so joined all over with gold wires and covered with feathers of divers colours that it was not unlike to a helmet.<sup>19</sup>

Zelmane's hair is described with overlapping feminine and masculine gender markers, fitting scholarly assessments of depictions of Amazons. Jeanne Addison Roberts calls this a "hybrid form" between the male and female.<sup>20</sup> In this initial description, Zelmane's hair is constructed by both nature and cunning. Her hair naturally grows from her head, but also can be fashioned into a coronet or a helmet. Will Fisher notes that hair and other ornamental gender markers code characters like Zelmane, though not absolutely: "[i]n sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, biological sexual features were certainly considered to be 'natural' or essential, but they were not therefore imagined to be fixed or immutable."<sup>21</sup> The initial visual description of Zelmane encodes her with ambiguous gender markers and the potential for further gender transformations.

Though Musidorus is a longtime friend of Pyrocles, he never suspects that Pyrocles is Zelmane based upon appearance. Musidorus, and thus readers, instead relish in the details of the beautiful Amazon. It is Zelmane's voice, not her appearance, which reveals her identity: "this ditty gave him some suspicion, but the voice gave him almost assurance who the singer was...he

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<sup>19</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 130.

<sup>20</sup> Jeanne Addison Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 6.

perceived indeed it was Pyrocles thus disguised.”<sup>22</sup> Readers, of course, do not experience the voice Musidorus describes, and the text does not mention specific qualities of the voice. Both Zelmane’s appearance and voice are ambiguous in gender, the first due to detailed description, and the second due to the lack thereof. After Musidorus recognizes Pyrocles, Sidney calls the figure Pyrocles and uses he/him/his pronouns.

Musidorus and Pyrocles then engage in a spirited debate on the morality of the gender transformation. Musidorus pleads with his friend to take off this disguise, “you can endanger your mind: for to take this womanish habit.”<sup>23</sup> Here, Musidorus’ opposition to Zelmane intends to correct a transgressed social boundary. Echoing the Oracle of Delphi’s claim of an “uncouth loue”, Musidorus argues that it is unnatural and dangerous for Pyrocles, a man, to dress as a woman. Musidorus’ objection suggests that transformation into Zelmane impacts Pyrocles’ mind, not only his outward show. Musidorus’ language acknowledges the duality of Pyrocles/Zelmane, “O sweet Pyrocles, separate yourself a little, if it be possible, from yourself.”<sup>24</sup> Musidorus’ binary gender logic begins to falter as he attempts to engage with his friend, and ultimately, he stops attempting to regulate Pyrocles’ gender all together.

Pyrocles defends his gender transformation by outlining complex motives of passion, nature, and will, “I can no more lay from me than the crow can be persuaded by the swan to cast off all his black feathers.”<sup>25</sup> The outward markers are inherent to the figure, rather than a mere costume. Pyrocles’ defense of Zelmane echoes the exploration of inward self that Tai-Won Kim identifies in Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*,

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<sup>22</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

The poetic persona imagines creating in his heart the interior space independent of anything from outside so that he can produce the truth of himself. Asking for himself to look inside the mind enables the desiring subject to turn itself into a speaking subject of presenting the inside or the insideness of the heart to readers, “I cannot choose but write my mind/ And cannot choose but put out what I write (AS 50). Resorting to the physicality of the body, the persona absolutizes and thereby immobilizes the demarcation of the boundary between inside and outside.<sup>26</sup>

Pyrocles’ inward necessity, his love for Philoclea, makes the outward Zelmane. The outward show of Zelmane, as Pyrocles indicates, cannot be simply cast off, since the transformation is in mind and body. Since Zelmane comes from this inward need of Pyrocles, and later shows her own inwardness in pronouns and inward thought, Sidney begins troubling the very boundary of inward and outward which creates the definition of disguise.

Pyrocles not only utilizes animal imagery, but calls his “Zelmaneship” a “disease”, framing Zelmane as an infection, not a choice.<sup>27</sup> Pyrocles then contradicts this framing by using active verbs in his process, “naming myself Zelmane...I caused this apparel to be made...by night thus dressed myself.”<sup>28</sup> While Pyrocles’ motivations may be ambiguous and even incoherent, the result of the dialogue between the Princes is the same: Zelmane is here to stay. The two friends decide to stop the discussion and preserve their friendship, evading any didactic stance on Pyrocles’ gender transformation. While the *New Arcadia* acknowledges the transgressive nature of Pyrocles/Zelmane, the text also allows the queerness to proliferate after

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<sup>26</sup> Tai-Won Kim, “Imagining Self and Inwardness - Towards the Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare,” *Medieval Renaissance and English Literature* 14, no. 4 (2006), 363.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 142-3

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

this confrontation, rather than diminish. Sidney transforms Pyrocles back into Zelmane at the end of the conversation:

‘Now farewell, dear cousin,’ said he, ‘from me, no more Pyrocles nor Diaphantus now, but Zelmane. Zelmane is my name; Zelmane is my title; Zelmane is the only hope of my advancement.’ And with that word going out and seeing that the coast was clear, Zelmane dismissed Musidorus.<sup>29</sup>

Pyrocles begins the dialogue, but Zelmane finishes in action. Mid-conversation, Pyrocles can change into Zelmane; the text prompts readers to follow this transformation via the pronouns.

There is no actual change in Zelmane/Pyrocles’ clothing or appearance in this passage. Dressed as an Amazon, Zelmane/Pyrocles moves between identities based upon Musidorus’ perception and their own declaration. This indicates that Zelmane is more than just a disguise to be put on and taken off, given that the transformation can happen without any alteration to the body.

Zelmane/Pyrocles’ gender then becomes markedly internal, rather than an external expression of gender. Though Orgel famously claimed, “The clothes make the man,” in this case,

Zelmane/Pyrocles requires no change of clothes in their transformation.<sup>30</sup> This follows

Halberstam’s thoughts on queerness: “the notions of a body-centered identity gives way to a model that locates sexual subjectivities within and between embodiment, place, and practice.”<sup>31</sup>

In the case of Sidney’s Zelmane, we cannot analyze her gender with only a body-centered approach. Sidney’s prose is often disembodied and asks reader to imagine the undescribed. In this section, Musidorus’ perception, Zelmane’s declaration, and Sidney’s fluctuating pronouns

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<sup>29</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 151.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place*, 48.

fashion Zelmane's gender. While discrete physical practices have remained useful tools in examining early modern queerness in many cases, as Halberstam notes, a body-centered approach is insufficient to fully encapsulate expressions of gender.

In repeated interior moments of Zelmane's private thoughts, Sidney begins to create an individuated character. In his revision from the *Old Arcadia* to the *New*, one of Sidney's notable changes is the creation of Zelmane. In the *Old Arcadia*, Pyrocles transforms into the Amazon Cleophilia, an inversion of his love-object's name Philoclea. Instead of Pyrocles transforming into a mirrored image of his love in the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney revises the Amazon to become Zelmane, a more distinct character with a name Sidney likely coined himself.<sup>32</sup> Zelmane's unique name, separate from Pyrocles' love for Philoclea, denotes the development from the cross-dressing tropes of prose romances into a more complex character.

During a parallel scene to Musidorus discovering Pyrocles/Zelmane, Zelmane discovers Musidorus' new identity: Dorus the shepherd. Again, it is the voice, not the appearance, which gives the transformation away, "The voice made Zelmane hasten her pace to overtake him, which having done, she plainly perceived it was her dear friend Musidorus, she demanded of him whether the goddess of those woods had such a power to transform every body, or whether...he thus meant to match her in this new alteration."<sup>33</sup> While Zelmane acknowledges her own transformation in front of the only person who knows her secret, she does not revert to Pyrocles. Though it is safe for Pyrocles to encounter his friend Musidorus in the privacy of the woods, Zelmane is the present persona and claims that Musidorus is *her* dear friend. In this move, Zelmane is given Pyrocles' history and begins overtaking him in the plot. Sidney repeats this

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<sup>32</sup> There are no records of the name Zelmane appearing before Sidney's text. Since scholarly consensus agrees Sidney created the name Pamela, there is a precedent of Sidney creating names in his work.

<sup>33</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 169.

strategy in later chapters. Zelmane contemplates, “She longed to meet her friend Dorus that upon the shoulders of friendship she might lay.”<sup>34</sup> In moments of private distress, Pyrocles does not consider the predicament of his disguise. Rather, Zelmane seeks out intimacy with her friends. This departs from other crossdressing plots, where these internal moments allow the audience to remember the original identities of cross-dressed characters. In *As You Like It*, for instance, Rosalind and Celia remind each other of their true identities in moments of privacy, “But doth he know that I am in this forest, and in man's apparel?”<sup>35</sup> In moments when Zelmane could be undone as a disguise, Sidney maintains her as an active participant in the plot, and allots her private thoughts.

Perhaps the most compelling moment of Zelmane’s inwardness occurs when Queen Gynecia attempts to unmask Zelmane and reveal Pyrocles. Danielle M. Seid defines this narrative technique as the reveal trope: “the reveal stages a denaturalization of widespread assumptions about gender and sex—namely that one’s gender must match one’s sexed body—but it typically does so in a manner that regulates and corrects gender noncompliance, narratively reinscribing a binary gender system as ‘natural’ and ‘desirable.’”<sup>36</sup> Like Musidorus’ confrontation, Gynecia’s attempt to reveal Zelmane is corrective. Gynecia seeks to conform Zelmane’s gender and sexuality to heterosexual norms, since the Queen views and desires Zelmane as a man. Gynecia confesses her lust of the Amazon, ““Take pity of me, O Zelmane, but not as Zelmane, and disguise not with me in words, as I know thou dost in apparel.”<sup>37</sup> Sidney

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<sup>34</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 220.

<sup>35</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. Edited by Stephen Orgel. The Pelican Shakespeare (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 3.2.1330.

<sup>36</sup> Danielle M. Seid, “Reveal” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1-2 (2014): 176-177, qtd Chess, *Male to Female Crossdressing*, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 217.

then writes Zelmane's response as an inward thought; "Zelmane was much troubled with that word, finding her self brought to this strait."<sup>38</sup> Even when her masculine identity is questioned, Zelmane remains the narrator of her inner thoughts. Though Zelmane is recognized as a non-cis-woman, she does not transform into Pyrocles, as when Musidorus initially discovered her. Zelmane replies to Gynecia, "'Madam,' said she, 'I am not acquainted with those words of disguising.'"<sup>39</sup> When asked to reveal herself, Zelmane refuses. By maintaining feminine pronouns in this passage, Sidney affirms that Zelmane controls her transformation, even when other characters question her gender. Here, the shift between Zelmane and Pyrocles is determined by their will, not others' perceptions. Zelmane is written with remarkable resilience against the reveal trope, in dialogue, pronouns, and inward thought. Zelmane's gender cannot be sufficiently framed as an external performance in this excerpt, since it is defended in the internal space of Zelmane's thoughts.

These interior moments in Sidney's prose expand Zelmane beyond other disguises in Renaissance literature and even other disguises in the *New Arcadia*. Sidney further distinguishes Zelmane from other characters by writing a competing, and I argue less-developed, alternate Zelmane. After Pyrocles reveals himself to Philoclea, he recounts his entire story and the origins of his persona Zelmane. Readers learn that Pyrocles took on the persona of Zelmane in honor of a different Zelmane, a deceased princess and daughter of Pyrocles' enemy Plexirtus. Given that this 'original' Zelmane is identified as a woman, I will refer to her as cis-Zelmane in contrast to Zelmane/Pyrocles. Cis-Zelmane fell in love with Pyrocles while he was imprisoned by her father. Cis-Zelmane then helped Pyrocles escape, and left her kingdom to serve Prince Pyrocles

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<sup>38</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 217.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

under the male persona Diaphantus. Pyrocles was convinced that Diaphantus was a man, stating that he “lik[ed] very much the young gentleman – such I took her to be.”<sup>40</sup> Pyrocles remained unaware of Diaphantus’ alternate identity until Diaphantus/cis-Zelmane died heart-stricken over Pyrocles. Haunted by cis-Zelmane’s death, Pyrocles invoked her alias Diaphantus for a brief period, and then constructed his new Amazonian identity after her.

Though Zelmane takes her name from cis-Zelmane, Zelmane’s appearance is distinct from cis-Zelmane and other women in the *New Arcadia*. During his retelling, Pyrocles pronounces that Philoclea is “resembling (though I must say surpassing) the lady Zelmane whom so well I loved.”<sup>41</sup> Instead of the Amazon Cleophila mirroring Philoclea in the *Old Arcadia*, Philoclea resembles Cis-Zelmane. The two love-objects become echoes of each other. With this addition, both Pyrocles’ attraction to Philoclea and his creation of Zelmane seem inspired by cis-Zelmane, a character who never appears in the present of the *New Arcadia*, only in flashbacks. Sidney doubles back over the course of his lengthy narrative, asking readers to reconsider who the *real* Zelmane is. This complication is added halfway through the lengthy *New Arcadia*. Given the breadth of the text, readers have been acquainted with Zelmane/Pyrocles significantly longer than cis-Zelmane, creating a closer readerly connection to Zelmane/Pyrocles. Readers are never exposed to the inner thoughts of cis-Zelmane and only receive her story through Pyrocles’ narration. Even within this new question of separate identities, Zelmane remains the controlling character of the plot. Cis-Zelmane’s story is completely left to Zelmane/Pyrocles’ interpretation. The extensive flashback suits Halberstam’s definition of a queer narrative structure as an “out-of-time experience,” preventing readers from understanding Zelmane in a linear, normative

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<sup>40</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 360.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

fashion.<sup>42</sup> The same structure that centers Zelmane in the *New Arcadia* pushes cis-Zelmane to the margins.

Pyrocles's story differentiates Zelmane from cis-Zelmane in pronoun usage. In the nested-story structure, Pyrocles continues to use the pronouns she/her/hers while referring to Diaphantus/Cis-Zelmane.<sup>43</sup> Even when Pyrocles uses the name Diaphantus, the pronouns remain feminine, "Poor Diaphantus fell extreme sick, yet would needs conquer the delicacy of *her* constitution."<sup>44</sup> Unlike the willingness to migrate pronouns between Zelmane and Pyrocles, flexible pronouns do not extend to cis-Zelmane/Diaphantus. The narrative treatment of Zelmane's pronouns become unique in Sidney's text, even when there is a parallel cross-dressing plot. Zelmane/Pyrocles exhibits a more freely shifting gender than any other character in the *New Arcadia*. Sidney writes disguises that fit the typical crossdressing-reveal plot and distinctly resists this treatment when writing Zelmane.

Sidney's end, or rather lack of an ending, to the *New Arcadia* speaks to Zelmane's importance in the text. Right before the revisions to the *Arcadia* cease, Anaxius challenges Zelmane to single-combat, "Anaxius stood leaning upon his sword with his grim eye so settled upon Zelmane... Which Zelmane marking and, according to Pyroclean nature, fuller of gay bravery in the midst than in the beginning of danger."<sup>45</sup> Pyrocles becomes a nature being layered on top of Zelmane, instead of the source of a persona. Zelmane draws upon Pyrocles' bravery, much like she drew upon his friendship with Musidorus. As Zelmane is about to engage in a climactic battle, Sidney reminds us of the Zelmane/Pyrocles duality, but asserts that Zelmane is

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<sup>42</sup> Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 360.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 364. My emphasis.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

the physically present character, and Pyrocles is an enhancement to her abilities. In this moment, Zelmane eclipses Pyrocles as the active character opposing Anaxius. While Anaxius and Zelmane are locked in battle, Sidney ceased writing mid-sentence, ending the *New Arcadia*.

Scholars have puzzled over why Sidney stopped writing a text he devoted so much effort to revise. Margaret Sullivan speculates that Sidney's complicated marriage plot halted his writing: "Sidney seems to have revised himself into a corner."<sup>46</sup> If Sidney did write himself into a corner, Zelmane is the point where the edges intersect: the ongoing war with Basilius' enemies, the fate of Basilius' kingship, and the question of his marriageable daughters. At the climax where Sidney might unmask Zelmane, he stopped writing. While we cannot be sure why Sidney stopped writing, we can acknowledge that he stopped with an unresolved, and as Traub has indicated, an *unresolvable* Zelmane.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the incomplete or disjointed endings of the *New Arcadia*, the text was widely popular long after its publication. The *New Arcadia* continued in other authors' work, inspiring elements of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606), Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (1611), Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621), and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740).<sup>48</sup> Zelmane's centrality to the *New Arcadia*'s narrative forced stage productions to contend with her transgressive gender, sexuality, and formation of an independent persona.

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<sup>46</sup> Margaret M. Sullivan, "Amazons and Aristocrats: The Function of Pyrocles' Amazon Roles in Sidney's Revised Arcadia." In *Playing with Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, ed. J. R. Brink, Maryanne Cline Horowitz, and Allison Coudert, 62–81. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 73.

<sup>47</sup> Valerie Traub, "Sex, Gender, Desire, What Difference Does It Make?" In *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 96–144.

<sup>48</sup> Steven Mentz, "Selling Sidney" 152.

## Adapting Zelmane for the Stage



Fig. 1. Anon. *Fronstispiece* (detail) *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, 1593, woodcut. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Rendering Zelmane onstage proved challenging for playwrights who reinterpreted Sidney's popular character. Maus notes that literary interiority, or what she calls inwardness, differs between genres, "Unlike the writer of romance or epic or lyric poem, a writer for the theatre must take into account the limits upon what can be presented onstage."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, playwrights could not easily use Sidney's tools of nonlinear narration, changeable pronouns, selective description, nor write a several-hundred-page script. Unlike the gender transformations

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<sup>49</sup> Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, 31.

in the *New Arcadia*, which largely rely on readers' imagination, the visual representations of Zelmane in art and drama must confront the ambiguity of Zelmane's sex and gender.

Zelmane is first seen, rather than read, in the printed frontispiece of the 1593 *New Arcadia*, the only known image of Zelmane from the early modern period. Margery Corbett and R.W. Lightbown point out that the Amazon on the frontispiece closely resembles Sidney's description of Zelmane in the *New Arcadia* including details like a feathered coronet, ankle-length skirt, open-toed buskins, and a sword at her hip.<sup>50</sup> Zelmane's garb is loose, concealing any bodily shape, save for the Greco-Romanesque breast plate common in theater costumes, not armor of the early modern period.<sup>51</sup> The woodcut departs from Herodotus' depiction of Amazons since it neither exposes the chest nor indicates a removed breast. The breast contour of the plate is ambiguous, indicating neither a distinctly male nor female morphology. The woodcut of Zelmane resembles Inigo Jones' costume sketches for the role of Amazonian Queen Penthesilea in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queens* (1609). This role was written and costumed for a woman, specifically Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford.<sup>52</sup> Jones' sketch emphasizes the feminine hip and bust, unlike the woodcut of Zelmane. However, both images feature a plumed headpiece, flowing cape, structured breastplate, and tiered skirt. These images offer a possibility of how

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<sup>50</sup> Corbett and Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> For an example of early modern armor contemporary to Sidney, William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke's armor resides in the Royal Ontario Museum in the Samuel European Galleries. William Herbert's 3<sup>rd</sup> wife was Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, to whom Sidney dedicated

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Orgel, and Roy C. Strong, *The Theatre of the Stuart Court: Including the Complete Designs for Productions at Court, for the Most Part in the Collection of the Duke of Devonshire, Together with Their Texts and Historical Documentation* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973).

Zelmane might have appeared onstage, though the scripts written about Zelmane and the casting records for those who performed her provide us with a closer look at the Amazon.



Fig 2: Jones, Inigo. *Design for Penthesilea* in *Masque of Queens* 1608. Ink on parchment.

John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) and James Shirley's *A Pastoral Called the Arcadia* (1640) both reinterpret Sidney's *New Arcadia* for the stage and include a cross-dressing Amazonian central character. In Day's *Isle of Gulls*, the prince Lisander transforms into the Amazon Zelmane to win the love of Princess Hippolyta. Hippolyta, replacing Sidney's Philoclea, serves only as a reference to Amazons; she does not dress as an Amazon nor engage in combat. Shirley's *Pastoral* uses Sidney's original names; Pyrocles transforms into Zelmane. Both texts begin with their prince already in an Amazonian disguise, though the paratext does not name the Amazon. The *dramatis personae* of *Pastoral* reads, "Pyrocles a Prince disguisd as an Amazon,

lover of Philoclea.”<sup>53</sup> *Isle of Gulls* leaves Lisander’s Amazonian identity unnamed until Act Two.<sup>54</sup> Day’s and Shirley’s writing both depend on audience’s prior knowledge of the *New Arcadia*; Day’s prologue calls Sidney’s work ‘well knowne.’<sup>55</sup> In early modern drama, it was not uncommon for playwrights to begin their narratives with the protagonists already disguised. Peter Hyland notes several early modern plays begin with characters already in disguise such as: Jonson’s *Epicoene* (1609), Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Love’s Pilgrimage* (1616), Brome’s *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (1639) and importantly, Shirley’s *The Grateful Servant* (1629).<sup>56</sup> This dramatic form poses an interesting inverse to Sidney’s *New Arcadia*. While Sidney provides extensive backstory, but ultimately does not resolve the Amazon, Day and Shirley provide no introduction, and resolve the Amazon by play’s end.

The speech prefixes in *Isle of Gulls* and *A Pastoral* indicate, at least for the playwrights and actors, that Prince Pyrocles/Lisander is the dominant identity and Zelmane is a disguise.<sup>57</sup> While other characters might recognize the figure as the Amazon in dialogue, the speech prefixes remain “Py.” for Pyrocles or “Lis.” for Lisander. Likewise, the stage directions always refer to the Prince, not the Amazon. If the speech prefixes and stage directions indicate individuation comparable to Sidney’s pronouns, then Day’s and Shirley’s interpretation of Zelmane does not separate her from the Prince. However, the speech prefixes in Day’s *Isle of Gulls* show individuation between Demetrius and his shepherd disguise Dorus.<sup>58</sup> The speech prefix “Dem.”

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<sup>53</sup> James Shirley, *A Pastoral Called the Arcadia*, Sig. A1v.

<sup>54</sup> When Lisander/Zelmane meets Dametas, they do not provide a name, and instead note they are a daughter of an Amazon queen.

<sup>55</sup> John Day, *Isle of Gulls*, Sig A2v.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*. 24,64-5.

<sup>57</sup> I use the term “speech prefix” from Drakakis, John. “‘Jew. Shylock Is My Name’: Speech Prefixes in the Merchant of Venice as Symptoms of the Early Modern.” In *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium.*, edited by Hugh Grady, 105–21. London; New York: Routledge, 2000.

for Demetrius in Figure 3 shifts on the following page to “Dor.” for Dorus in Figure 4. The speech prefix “Dor.” does not appear elsewhere in the play, but is sustained over this three-page scene.

*Dem.* So, so; how violently he deuowers his bane, and steales himselfe into the order of Gullerie; mee thinkes I see how betwixt hope and feare he sweates in his practise, and like a foolish dreamer, castes how to lay out his wealth before it comes in, So much for him; Now to my Ladie Beautie his wife; and as the Diuell would ha'rc, heere she comes.

F2. Enter

Fig. 3. (detail) Day, John. *Ile of Gullles*, 1606, Sig. F2r. The Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

*The Ile of Gullles.*

*Enter Niso.*

*Miso.* Dorus, how now Dorus? What time a day is't with you?  
*Dor.* What time a day so'ert be with mee, tis sleeping time with my Lord, I'am sure of that.  
*Mis.* Sleeping time Dorus, what dost thou meane by that?  
*Dor.* Nay nothing; he is troubid with a kind of maladie call'd *Insurrectio carnis.*

Fig. 4. (detail) Day, John. *Ile of Gullles*, 1606, Sig. F2v. The Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

The 1606 edition features other shifting speech prefixes; Duke Basilius’s dialogue is sometimes represented with derivatives of Basilius such as “Bas.,” “Basi.,” or “Basil.” and other times as “Duk.” or “Duke.”<sup>59</sup> Importantly, there are no speech prefixes derivative of Zelmane in *Isle of Gulls*; there is no confusion between Lisander and Zelmane in the text. In comparable scenes where Basilius refers to Zelmane directly, seen in Figure 5, the speech prefixes firmly indicate Lisander rather than Zelmane.<sup>60</sup> Day, whether cognizant or not, blurs the distinction between

<sup>59</sup> Day, *Isle of Gulls*. Sig. C2v, C3r, E1r.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Sig. D1r.

Demetrius and Dorus and does not demonstrate a similar confusion between Lisander and Zelmane. While there are many inconsistencies in speech prefixes in Day's text, none of them individuate Zelmane from Lisander. In Sidney's *New Arcadia*, Zelmane both speaks and thinks as an individuated character. In Day's rewriting of the text, Zelmane possesses no dialogue of her own, per the speech prefixes.

### *The Ile of Gulls.*

**then, my Dutches is sick, hart sicke for thee Zelmane.**

**Lisan.** For mee, why my Lord, I am no *Rosa solis*, nor *Aqua mirabilis* to recouer sicke folkes.

**Basil.** Shall I be thort with thee? My Ladie's in loue with thee.

**Lisan.** With me my Lord.

**Basil.** With thee my Lady: her amorous glances are her accusers, her very lookes write Sonnets in thy comendations, shee carues thee at boord, and cannot sleepe for dreaming on thee in bedde, shee's turnd sunne-riser, haunts priuate walkes, & like a disgrast Courtier, studies the Art of melancholy. **Lisan.** Now alas good Lady.

Fig 5. (detail) Day, John *Ile of Gullles*, 1606, Sig. D1r. The Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

In the *New Arcadia*, the two princes' first meeting in the woods establishes mobility between Zelmane and Pyrocles. In Day's and Shirley's texts, the Amazon is diminished to a disguise trope. In *Isle of Gulls*, Lisander spies upon Demetrius in the woods and confronts his disguise, inverting Sidney's original scene. Both princes and Demetrius' page, recognize each other immediately.<sup>61</sup> Lisander explains to his friend, "Because I feard a chiding, for doubting thine honourable thoughts would not haue consented to my effeminate attempts, I stole this secret course, and manner of disguise."<sup>62</sup> Unlike the indignant Pyrocles of the *New Arcadia*, who sought to "fully prove myself a man in this enterprise," Lisander condemns his own disguise,

<sup>61</sup> Day, *Isle of Gulls*, Sig C1r.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Sig C1r.

later calling it “monstrous.”<sup>63</sup> The two meet in the woods again, and completely undo their disguises. Lisander declares, “Did euer two princes meete such strange changes in their loues?”<sup>64</sup> Where Sidney maintained Zelmane in private moments in the *New Arcadia*, Day undoes the Amazonian disguise whenever it is safe for Lisander to do so.

In Shirley’s *Pastoral*, Gynecia disrupts Pyrocles/Zelmane in the woods, instead of Prince Musidorus. Rather than meeting a dear friend, the confrontation occurs with with the queen who directly opposes Pyrocles/Zelmane’s romantic pursuit of Philoclea. Gynecia bawdily proposes that Pyrocles/Zelmane bed both the king and queen:

Gy. Nay I am so farre from lealositie I should not

Be angry to see you both a bed together

Pyr. How Madam

Gy. Why I can love you too, come thou sha't be my bed-fellow <sup>65</sup>

Realizing the queen will now rival her daughter for Zelmane/Pyrocles’ affections, Pyrocles quickly dissembles the Amazon. Pyrocles confesses, “I must deliver up my thoughts, the truth is Madam, I am a man.”<sup>66</sup> During Gynecia’s confrontation in the *New Arcadia*, Sidney’s writing of Zelmane resisted the accusations in thought, speech, and pronoun. Shirley’s interpretation of Zelmane does not provide internal thoughts in this instance, and quickly undoes the Amazon as a disguise. Just two pages later, Pyrocles reveals himself, unprompted, to Philoclea:

I dare be call'd *Pyroclus* of *Macedon*

Transform'd by loving your faire selfe to this

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<sup>63</sup> Day, *Isle of Gulls*, Sig. C4r.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Sig. C4r.

<sup>65</sup> Shirley, *Pastoral*, Sig. C2r.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Sig. C3r.

Feminine shape, if now I have not sinn'd

Above forgivenes<sup>67</sup>

In the condensed form of Shirley's drama, Zelmane is revealed to multiple characters in only the second act. *A Pastoral* is much less interested in developing Zelmane beyond a disguise compared to Sidney's *New Arcadia*. In offering no resistance to the reveal trope, and quickly undoing the disguise, these texts do not attempt to individuate the Amazon from the Prince. Day and Shirley rely on traditional conventions of cross-dressing narratives, like the reveal trope. Shirley would have been familiar with standard cross-dressing structures; several other of Shirley's plays, such as *The Bird in a Cage* (1633) and *The Sisters* (1642) feature cross-dressing disguises.<sup>68</sup>

*Isle of Gulls* and *A Pastoral* conclude with a resolved ending which Sidney originally left unfinished. Lisander plans with Demetrius, "Well, since the shape of our proceeding growes so monstrous, lets cast our inuentions in a new mold, and hauing so firme a foundation as this disguise to build vpon, lets draw the modell, and raise the whole frame of our attempts anew."<sup>69</sup> While this might indicate a radical change of social norms triggered by the disguises, the resolution only intercepts the authority of Duke Basilius, who has forbidden his daughters to marry. The two princes trick all the other characters to meet at the chapel while they take the maidenheads of the princesses. The "new mold" only shifts power between cis-men, and illustrates that Zelmane is a transmittable disguise. To distract the Duke and Duchess, the stage directions read, "*Enter Manasses like Lisander*".<sup>70</sup> The dialogue indicates that Manasses is

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<sup>67</sup> Shirley, *Pastoral*, Sig. C4r.

<sup>68</sup> Hyland, Peter. *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*. 25,65.

<sup>69</sup> Day, *Isle of Gulls*, Sig. C4r.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Sig. H1r.

dressed as Zelmane; the Duke greets, “How cheares, my good Zelmane?”<sup>71</sup> Manasses responds, “Zelmane, no Gods [illeg.] my liege. I am Manasses, miserable Manasses.”<sup>72</sup> In *Isle of Gull*’s conclusion, Zelmane is a costume with no inward self. The stage directions, speech prefixes, and diablouge shows that Zelmane can be replicated on other bodies and is not an independent persona.

*A Pastoral*’s conclusion draws more clearly from the *New Arcadia*, including both the bed trick and the battle with Philonax. Once the bed trick is set in place, Pyrocles undoes his Amazonian garb and dresses as a man. Though not indicated in stage directions, both Philoclea and Dametas remark that the figure, Pyrocles, is a man.<sup>73</sup> Pyrocles remains in his masculine form from the end of Act Three until the conclusion, meaning that it is Pyrocles, not Zelmane, who battles Philonax in the climax. Philonax decries all of Pyrocles’ disguise as treachery, “Then first this Daiphantas, this Zelmane / This what you will, for he hath yet no name / Nor shape that we can trust to.”<sup>74</sup> Though Philonax declares that Pyrocles has no name, he nevertheless assigns Pyrocles masculine gender pronouns. Pyrocles may have changed his shape and name, but his transformation does not extend to his gender. Unlike Sidney’s changeable pronouns, the pronouns in Shirley’s text prevent Zelmane from separating into an individual character. At the close of Shirley’s *Pastoral*, all disguises are revealed, Basilius is revived, and the princes can marry their beloveds. Musidorus closes the play, “Never was day so full of happy change.”<sup>75</sup> For Pyrocles/Zelmane, these changes are the reversion back to normative gender standards. Each of these resolves Zelmane’s genderqueerness, and as Seid writes, “narratively reinscrib[es] a binary

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<sup>71</sup> Day, *Isle of Gulls*, Sig. H2v.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., Sig. H2v. I suspect the illegible section is a misprinting of “my liege.”

<sup>73</sup> Shirley, *Pastoral*, Sig. F1v, E4r.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Sig. I1r.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., Sig I4v.

gender system as ‘natural’ and ‘desirable.’”<sup>76</sup> Where perhaps Sidney’s epic romance allows for space for Zelmane’s prolonged gender ambiguity, the confines of drama reduce her to a more legible cross-dressing trope.

*Isle of Gulls* and *A Pastoral* both reduce Zelmane to a disguise, reimagining the Amazon as only an outward show. What audiences saw onstage, we cannot know, though Simone Chess considers what *Isle of Gulls* might have looked like while Basilius and Gynecia pursue Zelmane:

Audiences would see a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender man (MTM) and a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender woman (MTF) who are competing for the affections of a cisgender male actor playing a cisgender man dressed as a woman who is sometimes read as cisgender and sometimes seen as a crossdresser (MTMTFTF/M).<sup>77</sup>

While Chess overlooks that *Isle of Gulls* was played by a boys’ troupe, *A Pastoral* was performed by adult men, and thus her illustration suits Shirley’s drama. In considerations of queer desire, Zelmane onstage was certainly a complicated web of gender performance which relied on the visuals of costume, makeup, and gesture encoding the bodies of actors. The casting of Day’s and Shirley’s texts indicate that the morphology of actors or the “shape of the body that we typically associate with being male or female” was unimportant in performing Zelmane.<sup>78</sup> As played by boys and men, Zelmane is a disguise conveyable to any actor’s body, which on the early modern English stage, meant any male body.

*Isle of Gulls* was performed by a boys’ troupe, Children of the Revels, who had recently lost their royal patent, likely due to politically controversial performances.<sup>79</sup> Zelmane and the

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<sup>76</sup> Seid, “Reveal” qtd Chess, 29.

<sup>77</sup> Chess, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing*, 114.

<sup>78</sup> Stryker, *Transgender History*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Munroe, *Children of the Queen’s Revels*, 20.

entire cast were young boys with unbroken voices, allowing for fluidity as Lisander transitioned to Zelmane. Whether these young boys played men, women, or cross-dressing men, their morphology was likely similar.<sup>80</sup> Gender, in this case, was constructed by the performances of the actors, their costumes, and the text of the play. Nathalie Rivere De Carles considers the gender work in boy performances of Amazonian roles which “required a boy actor trained in manipulating gender signs (voice, costume, make-up, hair and gestures). The boy actor needed to resort to an illusory grotesque femininity to succeed in creating his character. However, with a breeches part, the performing challenge is more complex as the equation implies a return to some form of masculinity.”<sup>81</sup> If *Isle of Gulls*’ Zelmane looked like the woodcut of the *New Arcadia* or the costume designed for *Masque of Queens*, the costume did not use breeches. *Isle of Gulls* illustrates an example where the shape of the bodies of actors was irrelevant, and the disguise of Zelmane could fit any performer. This supports Day’s text, which allows both Lisander and Manasses to convincingly put on the Amazonian garb.

Shirley’s *Pastoral* was performed by the adult troupe Queen Henrietta’s Men, which included at least four men that had ties to the Children of the Revels: Christopher Beeston, William Robbins, Richard Perkins, and John Blaney.<sup>82</sup> Considering the thirty-four-year gap between *Isle of Gulls* and *A Pastoral*, none of these actors would be young enough to be a boy actor when *A Pastoral* premiered. In the records available, only a few actors in Queen Henrietta’s Men performed feminine roles. Of the men acting at the time of *A Pastoral*, two were known for playing female roles: Ezekiel Fenn and Hugh Clark, the latter who played the cross-

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<sup>80</sup> Stryker, *Transgender History*, 9.

<sup>81</sup> Nathalie Rivere De Carles, “Acceptable Amazons? Female Warriors on the English and French Early Modern Stage,” *Caliban*, 27. 2010, 203-217.

<sup>82</sup> Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) Vol. I, 1019-1168.

dressing pirate Bess Bridges in Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West* (1631). One actor, Richard Bowers, did not have sufficient records to indicate performances in either feminine or masculine roles. The other twelve actors likely played masculine roles, as indicated either by previous recorded roles or by their age. If an actor had records of performing at least 20 years before *Pastoral's* premier, they would be too old to be a boy actor.

This indicates that at the time *Pastoral* was performed, Queen Henrietta's Men was a largely masculine troupe. The play includes six cis-female roles not including Zelmane: Gynecia, Philoclea, Pamela, Miso, Mopsa, and Manasses' Wife. All these characters are gathered onstage for the resolution, suggesting that doubling the roles would not have been possible. Either Zelmane was played by the experienced Ezekiel Fenn or Hugh Clark, or the role was given to a different actor known for masculine roles. Since there are multiple cis-woman roles, both were less likely to play Zelmane. Fenn likely played Gynecia, Philoclea or Pamela, as unambiguous women. Since Clark had experience nine years prior in a cross-dressing role, he might have been cast as Zelmane. However, at the time *Pastoral* premiered, Clark primarily performed in masculine roles.<sup>83</sup> The morphology of Zelmane likely leaned masculine, fitting Shirley's text, since Pyrocles appears in masculine attire for the final two acts of the play.

The theater troupe records for Day's and Shirley's dramas support that the shape of actors' bodies are secondary to the costume and gesture of performance. This fits the findings of Orgel, Fisher, Hyland and others: gendered performance onstage is constructed by the materials applied to the body, not the shape of the actor's body. For Day's and Shirley's dramas, this is a useful framework in examining Zelmane as a gender performance. While this does allow for

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83 Edwin Nunzeger, *A Dictionary of Actors and Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England Before 1642* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929) pp. 90-1.

gender transformation, the scripts do not include Zelmane's inwardness as Sidney wrote it. Unlike Sidney's rendering of Zelmane, which allowed for transformations in pronoun and thought, *Isle of Gulls* and *Pastoral* both rely on a visible gender transformation. Where Sidney's prose allows for ambiguity and exploration, the confines of drama reduce Zelmane the Amazon from an individuated character into a disguise. As a response to Sidney, Day's and Shirley's texts might represent how some readers understood Zelmane as a cross-dressing persona. Sidney's text, however, saw a wider popularity than Day and Shirley's plays ever reached; 13 editions of the *New Arcadia* were printed in the early modern period.<sup>84</sup> Day's *Isle of Gulls* was printed twice, and records only show one printing of Shirley's *Pastoral*.<sup>85</sup> These two playwrights' interpretation of Zelmane illustrate an important fact: Sidney's writing of Zelmane is distinctive, and the inward queerness was not reproduced when rewritten for the early modern stage.

While early modern playwrights diminished the queer inwardness of Zelmane, modern interpretations show current playwrights adapting the Amazonian persona beyond a disguise, forming explicit LGBTQ+ representation. Jeff Whitty reinvents Sidney's *Arcadia* in the musical *Head Over Heels* (2015), later adapted by James MacGruder for Broadway in 2018.<sup>86</sup> This new iteration takes the names of characters from the *Old Arcadia*: a shepherd named Musidorus transforms into the Amazon Cleophila to woo the princess Philoclea. Though Zelmane herself does not appear in *Head Over Heels*, the play shows the prince enjoying the Amazonian persona and seeking to return to it after the final curtain. While Whitty and MacGruder utilize much of

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<sup>84</sup> Peter Lindenbaum, "Sidney's *Arcadia* as Cultural Monument and Proto-Novel." 80.

<sup>85</sup> E.K Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage: Volume III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 283.

<sup>86</sup> "Head Over Heels Broadway | Official Site," accessed Jan, 2019, <https://headoverheelsthemusical.com>.

the simplified plot of the *Old Arcadia*, *Head Over Heels* doesn't resolve its Amazon, taking after Sidney's *New Arcadia*. Chris Willman of *Variety* explains how the play expands on the queer implications:

Lowly shepherd Musidorus (Andrew Durand), banished by the king from pursuing the princess Philoclea (Alexandra Socha), cross-dresses as an Amazonian warrior to get quality time with his unsuspecting sweetheart. It's a setup right out of "Some Like It Hot" or "Tootsie," if not time immemorial, but imagine a "Some Like It Hot" that just gets less and less straight until it ends with a succession of same-sex marriages.<sup>87</sup>

The resolution to *Head Over Heels* does not close in queer possibilities, but expands them. Many of the primary production team and cast worked on notably queer musicals such as *Rent*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Kinky Boots*. *Head Over Heels* made Broadway history by casting performer Peppermint as the non-binary role of Pythio, the Oracle of Delphi, making Peppermint the first out transwoman to originate a role on Broadway. *Head Over Heels* signals that echoes of Zelmane ring queer in current theater culture. Whitty and MacGruder's work takes inspiration from Sidney's rendering of Zelmane, rather than deferring to cross-dressing tropes of the early modern period.

As a widely-popular prose text of the early modern period, Sidney's *New Arcadia*, and Zelmane the Amazon, specifically, have resonated in theatre culture from 1606 to 2018. This rich legacy points to the cultural value placed on this peculiar Amazon, an incentive for further scholarly conversation on the character. In our considerations of what Zelmane tells us of early

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<sup>87</sup> Chris Willman, "Pre-Broadway Review: Go-Go's Musical 'Head Over Heels.'" *Variety*, April 23, 2018. <https://variety.com/2018/legit/reviews/head-over-heels-review-go-gos-musical-san-francisco-1202761261/>.

modern English literature and culture, we must attend to the inwardness that Sidney wrote the character with. Shifting our scholarly approach to Zelmane away from disguise and towards an inward self both more clearly assesses Zelmane as Sidney wrote her and offers a different approach to queerness in early modern literature. While Zelmane is distinct in Sidney's text, future scholarship can explore other characters which might feature a similar inward queerness, expanding our knowledge of queerness in the Renaissance overall.

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