

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture

Through examining some of the everyday items that helped establish a person's masculinity or femininity, this book offers a new analysis of gender identity in early modern English literature and culture. Individual chapters focus on items such as codpieces, handkerchiefs, beards, and hair. Fisher argues that these seemingly peripheral parts were in fact constitutive, and consequently that early modern gender was materialized through a relatively wide range of parts or features, and that it was also often conceptualized as being malleable. The book deliberately brings together sexual characteristics (beard growth and hair length) and gendered accessories (codpieces and handkerchiefs) in order to explore the limitations of using the modern conceptual distinction between sex and gender to understand early modern ideas about masculinity and femininity. *Materializing Gender* engages with a range of historical materials including drama, poetry, portraiture, medical texts, and polemical tracts, and a range of theoretical issues.

WILL FISHER is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Lehman College, The City University of New York. He works primarily on the history of gender and sexuality. His articles have appeared in *Renaissance Quarterly*, *ELH*, *Shakespeare Studies*, and *Textual Practice*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture*

General Editor

Stephen Orgel

Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Humanities, Stanford University

Editorial board

Anne Barton, *University of Cambridge*

Jonathan Dollimore, *University of York*

Marjorie Garber, *Harvard University*

Jonathan Goldberg, *Johns Hopkins University*

Peter Holland, *University of Notre Dame, Indiana*

Kate McLuskie, *The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham*

Nancy Vickers, *Bryn Mawr College*

Since the 1970s there has been a broad and vital reinterpretation of the nature of literary texts, a move away from formalism to a sense of literature as an aspect of social, economic, political, and cultural history. While the earliest New Historicist work was criticized for a narrow and anecdotal view of history, it also served as an important stimulus for post-structuralist, feminist, Marxist, and psychoanalytical work, which in turn has increasingly informed and redirected it. Recent writing on the nature of representation, the historical construction of gender and of the concept of identity itself, on theatre as a political and economic phenomenon and on the ideologies of art generally, reveals the breadth of the field. *Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture* is designed to offer historically oriented studies of Renaissance literature and theatre which make use of the insights afforded by theoretical perspectives. The view of history envisioned is above all a view of our history, a reading of the Renaissance for and from our own time.

Recent titles include

Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580–1670*

Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare*

Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England*

Christopher Warley, *Sonnet Sequences and Social Distinction in Renaissance England*

Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster*

Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation*

*A complete list of books in the series is given at the end of the volume.*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture

---

Will Fisher

*Lehman College, CUNY*



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521144728](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521144728)

© Will Fisher 2006

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2006

First paperback printing 2010

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-85851-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-14472-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in  
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is,  
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture

Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

For Valerie, Phyllis, and Peter

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

---

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
Introduction: prosthetic gender in early modern England	1
1 That Shakespearean rag: handkerchiefs and femininity	36
2 “That codpiece ago”: codpieces and masculinity	59
3 “His majesty the beard”: beards and masculinity	83
4 “The ornament of their sex”: hair and gender	129
5 Conclusion: detachable parts and the individual	159
<i>Notes</i>	171
<i>Bibliography</i>	204
<i>Index</i>	219

## Illustrations

---

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. Jacob Ochtervelt, <i>A Woman Playing a Virginal, Another Singing and a Man Playing a Violin</i> (1675–80). By permission of the National Gallery, London. | page 21 |
| 2. Jacob Jordaens, <i>King Candaules of Lydia showing his Wife to Gyges</i> (1646). By permission of the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.                          | 21      |
| 3. Unknown Artist, <i>Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester with Dog</i> (c. 1564). By permission of a private collector.                                     | 37      |
| 4. Hans Eworth, <i>Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk</i> (1563). By permission of a private collector.  | 39      |
| 5. Quentin Metsys the Younger, <i>Elizabeth I: 'The Sieve Portrait'</i> (c. 1583). By permission of the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena.                         | 43      |
| 6. Albrecht Dürer, <i>The Standard Bearer</i> (1498). By permission of the Warburg Institute.  | 60      |
| 7. Agnolo Bronzino, <i>Portrait of Guidobaldo della Rovere</i> (1532). By permission of the Galleria Palatina, Florence.                                     | 61      |
| 8. Wood engraving from John Bulwer, <i>Anthropometamorphosis</i> (1654). By permission of the Huntington Library.  | 63      |
| 9. Two views of Henry VIII's codpiece from the Tower of London. By permission of the Royal Armouries.  | 71      |
| 10. Unknown Artist, <i>The Somerset House Conference</i> (1604). By permission of the National Portrait Gallery.   | 95      |
| 11. Daniel Mytens, <i>King Charles I</i> (1631). By permission of the National Portrait Gallery.   | 96      |
| 12. Wood engraving of John Knox (1580). By permission of the National Portrait Gallery.  | 97      |
| 13. John Bettes the Elder, <i>An Unknown Man in a Black Cap</i> (1545). By permission of Art Resource.   | 98      |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of illustrations	ix
14. Title page of John Foxe's <i>Book of Martyrs</i> (1563). By permission of the Huntington Library.	101
15. José de Ribera, <i>Magdalena Ventura</i> (1631). By permission of the Museo Nacional del Prado.	114
16. Title page of Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (1651). By permission of the Huntington Library.	163



## Acknowledgements

---

I have been very fortunate on my travels in academia, and it therefore makes me very happy to be able to acknowledge some of the people who have been so generous with me over the years.

There is only one place to begin and that is with Valerie Traub. Valerie was my undergraduate teacher and advisor, and without her guidance and training, I'm sure I wouldn't be where I am. She continues to this day to support me and read my work, and I can't even begin to explain how much this – and her friendship – mean to me.

Phyllis Rackin took me under her wing before I arrived at the University of Pennsylvania and I haven't forgotten that. I'm very glad she did because she turned out to be a wonderful mentor and role model. Her passionate, life-long commitment to feminism and progressive politics is an inspiration to me (as it has been to so many others). If, at the end of my career, I can look back and say that I was half as dedicated as she has been during hers, I'll consider myself a success.

The word that I always use to describe Peter Stallybrass is “amazing” and I think it suits him like one of his silk shirts. For me, it is the only word that begins to capture the creativity and range of Peter's intellect, not to mention his boundless enthusiasm. The debt that I owe Peter and his work will, I suspect, be immediately apparent to anyone who reads this book or even hears about its subject matter, but I have nevertheless tried to acknowledge it in my notes (as is the custom). In the end, however, these are really only signposts to something far more pervasive.

In addition to finding a wonderful set of advisors, I have also had the good fortune to be part of several vibrant scholarly communities. First, at the University of Pennsylvania, I benefited from the innovative teaching and scholarship of people like Rebecca Bushnell, Margreta de Grazia, Lynda Hart, and Maureen Quilligan. Margreta read my entire dissertation, and the project still bears the imprint of her comments and critique. I benefited, as well, from the intelligence, wit, and camaraderie of fellow students like Rebecca Bach, Stephen Best, Jeannine DeLombard, Lynn Festa, Rayna Kalas, Cynthia Port, Suzie Verderber, and Antonio Viego. The Furness Library was

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgements

xi

a terrific place to work, and many people there gave me invaluable help with my research: especially Michael Ryan, Dan Traister, Lynn Farrington, John Pollack, David Azolina, Sarah Cohen, and Owen Williams. While I was still at Penn, I met a group of scholars who I now think of as the core of my academic community: Jeff Masten, Nick Radel, Rick Rambuss, Pat Parker, Gail Paster, Stephen Guy-Bray, Gil Harris, Madhavi Menon, Henry Turner, and Wendy Wall. Finally, I want to thank the friends who made my time in Philly as enjoyable as it was productive: Stephen Best, Myrna Gabbe, Rachel Greene, Russ Gage, Kendall Johnson, David Roman, and Sarah Werner. Virgil Marti deserves special mention for being so fabulous and for always being able to make me laugh.

London has been my home away from home for some time now. I first discovered the city with Sophie Carter and Dan White, and even now, its streets and locales conjure good memories of those times. At the British Library, Antje Bank, James Daybell, Frans DeBruyn, Jerome de Groot, Sharon Ruston, Chris Mouns, Markman Ellis, and Sue Wiseman all shared tea and good company. And finally, Eliane Glaser followed me home from the BL one day, and turned out to be a great sidekick and partner in crime. She helped me work through many of the ideas in this book, and also distracted me enough from the project to keep me going. I thank her for being brave.

I am very pleased to be able to call New York City my home. Scott Westrem deserves much of the credit for helping bring me here, and I am also grateful to him for his generosity in showing me the ropes once I arrived. I was already friends with Mario DiGangi before we became colleagues, but in the intervening years I've come to appreciate him even more. I can't count the number of times I've barged into his office with some question about teaching or research (or just to chat), and he always has the perfect response. Many of my other colleagues at Lehman have also provided encouragement and/or assistance along the way, especially Gerhard Joseph, Anne Humphreys, Jack Kligerman, and Walter Blanco.

Joe Wittreich and Stuart Curran are like family. They have done their best to try to give me a little NY polish and culture, and while I am grateful for this, I think that the thing that I cherish most about them is simply their irrepressible *joie de vivre* – it always brings a smile to my face. One of my primary sources of scholarly engagement (and good food!) here in the city is the Renaissance Group: Natasha Korda, Mary Bly, Bonnie Gordon, Fiona McNeill, and Bianca Calabresi (as well as honorary members Fran Dolan and Scott Shershow). They not only helped to shape this book through their comments, but they also consistently stimulated me with their own research and conversation.

Finally, I want to thank my friends here and further afield, especially Ana Eire, Dave Laski, James and Jean Lin, Karen Moulding, and Cara Murray.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14472-8 - Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture  
Will Fisher

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## xii Acknowledgements

I've been lucky to have Robert Kaplan as a neighbor since I arrived in the city. Commiserating with him has, more than anything, helped me get by in the current political climate. Alan Stewart's wit and conviviality are a constant treat and I'm very glad that he landed here. I also thank him for generously opening his home to me on several occasions. To Kerry Moore, I am grateful for all of the stories, and for knowing just how to tell them. I am also grateful to her for being so adept at retying the knot of our friendship (I can almost feel her tugging my sleeve as I write this). Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank Julie Crawford and Liza Yukins, for simply being their warm and wonderful selves.

My parents' love and support is the rock on which this book was built. I know that things haven't always been easy for them, but we've managed to find a way through. My brother, Scott, and sister, Jean, hold down the fort at home and help me with all my ridiculous projects. My auntie Karen is my soul sister (not to mention a confidante and a co-conspirator in the family). And finally, my grandparents, Henry and Mabel Schmidt, are a blessing that I am very grateful for. My grandmother's generous heart and strength of character are just two of the many things I treasure about her. Unfortunately my grandfather didn't make it to see this book's publication, but he is certainly not forgotten, and I take some comfort in knowing that he and his signature baby-blue blazer lurk in these pages.