

The Shape of Sex

Nonbinary Gender
from Genesis to
the Renaissance

Leah DeVun

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The Shape of Sex

Introduction

Stories and Selves

In the fall of 1331, in the Catalan town of Perelada, Guillem Castelló of Castelló d'Empúries petitioned a court to have his marriage annulled. His reasoning was simple: his wife, Berengaria, was unable to have sex. The result was anything but. To verify his claims, Guillem sought the expertise of a surgeon, Vesianus Pelegrini. After a thorough examination of Berengaria, the surgeon came to a startling conclusion. Berengaria, in his view, was not a woman at all. Instead, Berengaria had

a male penis and testicles like a man, and she is so narrow that she can barely urinate through an opening that she has in a fissure that she has in the vulva, [which] lies beneath her penis. She has a flap stretched between her thighs like the wings of a bat, which covers the fissure in the vulva whenever she draws her knees toward her head. She has more the aspect of a man than a woman, and there is no way in which Guillem or any other man can lie with her, nor can she render her conjugal debt, nor conceive nor bear a child.¹

According to Pelegrini's testimony, Berengaria possessed both traditionally masculine and feminine physical attributes. In modern language, Berengaria might now be called "sex variant" or "intersex."

Preserved in a manuscript now held in the Arxiu Històric Provincial in Girona, the summary of the case fills just one handwritten page (see fig. 0.1), yet it captures in detailed prose how an Iberian medical practitioner understood and described Berengaria's body. The record, however, betrays no interest in the

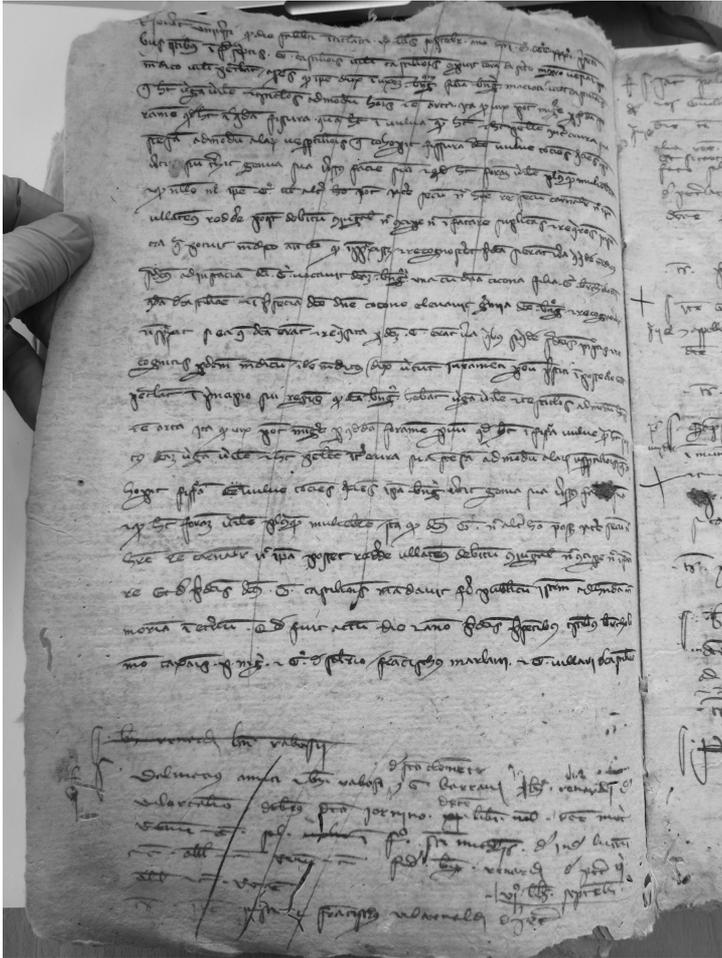


FIGURE 0.1 Berengaria's story. Girona, Arxiu Històric de Girona, Notaria de Peralada, 26 bis. *Llibre de Bernat Sunyer*, years 1331–32, fol. 52v.

consequences for the affected parties: for Berengaria and her* husband, for their extended families, or for their broader community. The brief account breaks off before we learn anything about what Berengaria had to say about her own body or about what the court ultimately ruled. We find no hint of Berengaria's

*. I use the pronouns she/her for Berengaria, in keeping with the only archival source in which Berengaria's story appears, and bearing in mind that we cannot know how Berengaria identified. I do not wish to impose further pronouns on Berengaria.

experiences growing up, nor anything regarding how, at a moment of crisis in her marriage, she reacted to news that her anatomy had “more the aspect of a man than a woman.” The clarity of Berengaria’s examination, in fact, lies in stark contrast to the opacity of the events that surrounded it. No documents have surfaced to amend these silences; we can only speculate as to what happened to Berengaria’s marriage, as well as to her fate thereafter.

During the fourteenth century, marriage was a contract that required certain standards of behavior from partners. At that time, wives were responsible for familial tasks, including rendering the “conjugal debt”—that is, having sex with their husbands—and bearing and raising children.² Considering whether Berengaria could fulfill these duties, Pelegrini, who had practiced in the area for more than two decades, found that “[no] man can lie with her, nor can she . . . conceive nor bear a child.”³ His testimony indicated that a capacity for sexual intercourse with a man, as well as an ability to bear heirs, were key to his—and the court’s—definition of womanhood. During this same time period, as I explain later in this book, other surgeons went further, arguing that surgical operations could “correct” bodies like Berengaria’s and return them to the “natural form” of a man or a woman.

In villages across northeastern Catalonia, lineages were closely intertwined, and residents were intimately familiar with the life stories and family histories of their neighbors.⁴ Episcopal visitation records depict villagers as remarkably well-informed about the minutiae of their neighbors’ private lives. In the nearby village of Vic in 1331–32, residents were sufficiently aware of one couple’s marital problems to report to authorities that the pair completely lacked “carnal relations.”⁵ But marriage in the fourteenth century was rarely about just the two partners. It was often equally, if not more, valuable for their extended families, for whom marriage cemented alliances. In Iberian villages, a marriage was typically announced by a public ceremony, or by the reading of the banns (a formal declaration of a couple’s intent to marry). As a result, Berengaria’s neighbors would likely have known of her impending marriage; and just as important, they would have known of its ultimate failure.⁶ We can imagine that news of Berengaria’s case reached her village, providing fodder for gossip and, if Berengaria’s anatomy wasn’t already known, perhaps dampening her or her family’s prospects.⁷ While some marriages in the area were dissolved with relative ease, other breakups led to tension and animosity, with profound effects on the community. As the historian Michelle Armstrong-Partida observes, some spouses chose to leave a village after a breakup caused by infidelity or abandonment, rather than face what amounted in the fourteenth century to a “great scandal.”⁸ Rumors about Berengaria’s case could have led to scandal, too, perhaps even causing Berengaria or her former husband to migrate, setting into motion other historical narratives that we can only imagine.

Beyond that, because Pelegrini described Berengaria's anatomy as predominantly male, it is possible that Berengaria later adopted a male legal status.⁹ Chances are that Berengaria's case had momentous, and perhaps disastrous, effects.

Reading the extant record of Berengaria's life, we can see how the workings of the court—its inspections and classifications and processes—loom ever larger, while Berengaria herself shrinks, almost to the point of disappearing from view. What really happened—that is, whatever Berengaria truly felt or experienced—remains unknown. In this medieval version of what Marisa J. Fuentes calls a “palimpsest of material and meaning,” we cannot find anything approximating a “voice” or a “subjectivity.”¹⁰ We can glimpse Berengaria's story only fleetingly, even as the archive limits the extent to which we can ever recover or historicize it. Though we know far more about Berengaria's anatomy than she ever likely would have wanted, we know nothing of her own perspective. We can offer little more than guesses as to what Berengaria was thinking.

The absence of Berengaria's own thoughts is especially poignant because in the Middle Ages thinking about nonbinary sex was a constant and long-lived pursuit. In discussions that ranged far beyond legal decisions and that appeared in an expansive range of texts, authors of all stripes—from judges to clerics to surgeons to poets—repeatedly embraced the idea of nonbinary-sexed figures they called “hermaphrodites” or “androgynes.” During the late antique and medieval periods, such nonbinary figures appeared repeatedly as analytical tools that explained or defined the very nature of human identity. For the better part of a millennium, from 200–1400 CE, a host of thinkers—among them, theologians, cartographers, natural philosophers, lawyers, moralists, surgeons, and alchemists—identified nonbinary-sexed figures as embedded in, and able to shed light on, critical debates about sex, gender, species, and the nexus of embodied and cultural difference that we now call race. Even as actual individuals with atypical sex anatomies were rendered practically voiceless during the period, authors and artists spoke volumes about these topics through the concept of nonbinary sex. I trace their discussions across different genres of literature, looking carefully at how they explored human nature through images of hermaphrodites, androgynes, and other figures that lay outside the “binary division”—as one thirteenth-century thinker put it.¹¹ To be sure, such analyses took place on a different intellectual stage than did Berengaria's case before the Catalan court. And yet, these lofty considerations of sex and human nature reflected the very conditions of vulnerability that shaped Berengaria's fate.

Few of the thinkers featured in this study probably ever knowingly met what we now call an intersex person. Much of their “thinking with” hermaphroditism, androgyny, and other nonbinary ideas took place in the abstract and focused on

types and concepts rather than on known individuals. But such abstract thinking had real-life consequences all the same. As I explain, when theorists used ideas about nonbinary sex to define “self” and “other”—whether to distinguish Christians from non-Christians, humans from nonhumans, or neighbors from foes—they radically shaped the fates of actual living people.¹² Speculative thinking about bodies and the ways in which those bodies are genuinely experienced cannot be entirely separated. In light of this entanglement, I shift back and forth in this book between *ideas about nonbinary sex* and *actual intersex individuals* (like Berengaria), showing how they interacted with and influenced each other.

This study bears witness to the considerable burden that sex- and gender-marginalized people shouldered in meaning-making and human-making in the history of premodern Europe. For over a thousand years, bodies that did not fit a sexual binary became a concentrated site of meaning where arguments about sex, gender, sexuality, animality, religiosity, and the nature of life on earth all played out. In such arguments, ideas about nonbinary sex provided an epistemological touchstone. Although intersex individuals were socially and textually marginalized, ideas about nonbinary sex were central to the fundamental categories that ordered the world. My book ranges widely across Christian European thought and society to explore how and why efforts to define human experience so often relied on ideas about nonbinary figures.

This book is therefore about language and fundamental ways of thinking—about how our ideas about sex and anatomy are never just about a physical act or about our physical bodies; instead, they are always ideas about what it means to be human and what it means to be a self in relation to other selves and to the world. I emphasize here the ways in which human identity in premodern Europe was wrapped up in—and worked out upon—the real or imagined properties of nonbinary sex, which gave rise to an exceptionally powerful concept. Ideas about nonbinary sex categories appeared in many areas of premodern thought because they were implicated in how thinkers imagined all kinds of diversity. And yet such ideas were also a special pressure point, allowing premodern authors—and allowing us today—to stop and think about how we think.

SEX AND SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION

Classification always depends on boundaries, and boundaries always define who or what is included by deciding who or what is excluded. That is, we know what is inside a category by delineating what is outside it. Such delineations set up a

binary—a pair of distinct qualities that oppose and support each other. But as soon as we imagine a binary, we tend to breach it in our thought, to imagine what lies between or beyond its contours.¹³ We often, for instance, perceive black and white as a binary pair, yet once we think about their opposition, it is almost impossible not to also consider the shades of gray that exist between.

As I explain in this book, premodern thinkers embraced nonbinary sex as a part of their own classificatory systems in an effort to delineate boundaries and, often, to suggest how those boundaries might be crossed. Although “hermaphrodite” is now generally considered a derogatory term (as I explain below), in the premodern period, the word had linguistic roots that made it an especially apt tool for thinking about boundaries. “Hermaphrodite” carried with it a multilayered inheritance from classical antiquity: the term was a portmanteau of Hermes and Aphrodite, the deities who, in Greco-Roman mythology, gave birth to the bisexed god Hermaphroditus.¹⁴ The name Hermes, moreover, derived its root from *herma*—the Latin word for boundary stone—an etymology that highlighted the boundary-marking and boundary-crossing ideas inherent in the term.¹⁵ The concept of hermaphroditism made perhaps its most influential appearance in Ovid’s first-century Latin poem *Metamorphoses*. In that text, a female water nymph named Salmacis attempts to seduce the youth Hermaphroditus at the site of her fountain. When Hermaphroditus, who is portrayed in the poem as male, rejects Salmacis’s advances, she petitions the gods to join them forever. The result is a conjoined creature of both male and female parts: Hermaphroditus and Salmacis “were no longer two, nor such as to be called, one, woman, and one, man. They seemed neither, and yet both.”¹⁶ The legacy of this tale, which characterized hermaphroditism as a fusion, a negation, and a transformation of sexed categories, continued to reverberate throughout the ancient and medieval worlds, and it is a story I return to many times in this book.

In the Middle Ages, the term “hermaphrodite” gave expression to a wide variety of boundary-related notions, some of which resonate with our far more recent terms, “intersex” and “transgender” (more on those in a moment). Like those terms, “hermaphrodite” sometimes was used to describe an individual like Berengaria. But more frequently, a “hermaphrodite” was a concept that offered a highly flexible means to order the world. By drawing and crossing boundaries, the idea of a hermaphrodite enabled—and forced—communities to sort people, ideas, and situations into interrelated binaries and, moreover, to assign to them a positive or negative value. This idea could serve as a vector of fluidity and metamorphosis but also, at other times, as a hybrid that constricted and policed categories. These divergent paths allowed ideas about nonbinary sex to be used toward contrary ends: thinkers could emphasize the instability of premodern

bodies through images of nonbinary-sexed figures, who (they believed) transgressed or made irrelevant dichotomous roles. Yet, at other times, nonbinary imagery served to tighten and enforce those boundaries.

This interplay between metamorphosis and hybridity, between flux and stasis, was the process by which ideas about nonbinary sex shaped what it meant to be human and, by extension, who could enjoy humanity's safeguards and privileges.¹⁷ As I argue here, a full analysis of such ideas transforms our understanding of sex, gender, and human history. Ideas about nonbinary-sexed figures underpinned how writers imagined all sorts of categories: those of male and female—certainly—but also those of species and nature, and of belief and culture. What is more, when we analyze this history, I suggest we cannot help but reenvision our own categories, too.¹⁸

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP AND PREMODERN PERSPECTIVES

My perspective in this book is informed by much recent theorizing in queer, feminist, intersex, and transgender studies, in critical animal studies and post-human studies, and in Black feminist and decolonial thought. Scholars in these fields have been pioneers in dismantling any easy separation of humans from nonhumans, foregrounding the role of sex and gender in defining humankind, and making clear how ontological categories are inflected by race and place. This book adopts certain frameworks and observations by those scholars, who (for the most part) study modern society and culture, but it also revises some of their chronologies and approaches. As we shall see, episodes from the distant past are often strikingly similar to our own current debates about sex, gender, and identity, and they expand our modern chronological view. Yet, in other ways, pre-modern categories are foreign to us, suggesting that sex and gender have starkly different meanings when viewed across time.

Up until the mid-twentieth century, “hermaphrodite” was a common term in medical and sexological literature used to describe variations in sexed characteristics that, as the scholar Iain Morland dryly observes, “some people find confusing.”¹⁹ During the late twentieth century, affected individuals begin to view “hermaphrodite” as an offensive and outdated term. For a new generation of thinkers, the word was misleading: it conjured up an individual who, like Ovid's mythic creature, had two complete sexes—a physiological impossibility. It also connoted sexual fetishes and fantasies that stigmatized individuals and negatively affected their experience of health care. A group of activists and scholars

instead proposed “intersex” as the preferred term, and they began to describe intersex variations not as pathologies but as sources of identity and pride. Even more recently, many individuals have embraced the term “DSD” (an acronym for *disorders or differences of sex development*), signaling that they view—or at least find it beneficial to describe—their variations as disorders warranting medical attention, although others have rejected this nomenclature.²⁰

Both intersex and DSD operate as umbrella terms for dozens of diagnoses, encompassing perceived ambiguities or disagreements among components of sex: internal sex organs, chromosomes, hormones, and external genitalia.²¹ Some variations are apparent at birth, while others become obvious only at the time of puberty. Researchers estimate that one or two of every two thousand people possesses an intersex variation, a common-enough incidence that scholars and activists have suggested that multiple gradations of sex between male and female should be considered normal.²² In general, in today’s global north, when an infant with an intersex variation is born, doctors assign a male or female sex to that infant and, in many cases, they also perform surgeries or other medical interventions to make that infant’s body look more like what they think a male or female person should look like.²³ Although activists have denounced cosmetic genital surgeries on intersex infants for decades, physicians have been slow to curtail them. In addition, because certain physicians have advised parents to keep their children’s diagnoses secret from them, some people with intersex variations describe being unable to access or understand their own medical histories.²⁴ Some have experienced feelings of “dread and horror” stemming from unwanted or damaging treatments or from confusing exams. Some describe having never felt at home in their assigned sex.²⁵

The surge in intersex studies of the 1990s and early 2000s grew out of a desire to address these ethical violations and the secrecy that surrounded them. Pioneering scholars and writers such as Bo Laurent (Cheryl Chase), Morgan Holmes, Iain Morland, Thea Hillman, Suzanne Kessler, Alice Dreger, Elizabeth Reis, David A. Rubin, and Katrina Karkazis, among others, have written important studies of intersex within different social and medical contexts, advocating for the health of affected individuals and their right to bodily autonomy (many of them writing from their own perspectives as people with intersex variations).²⁶ A number of scholars in this field have, in addition, grounded contemporary thinking about intersex within a larger historical framework, creating an expanded account of intersex and its treatment across time.

Scholars in transgender studies (also known as trans or trans* studies) have also been at work creating a broader history of transgender self-perceptions and practices. Their efforts date back to Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors*, a

groundbreaking study that identified figures from the historical past as “transgender,” that is, as individuals whose sense of gender identity or whose gender practices did not match the sex to which they were assigned at birth.²⁷ While Feinberg’s initial effort, now more than twenty years old, has been criticized for anachronism, scholars and readers have also recognized the immense power of identifying historical ancestors. If anti-transgender sentiments now often rely on ideas about “traditional” gender (i.e., the assumption that transgender practices are new and historically unprecedented), transgender histories can offer a way for trans people to “arm themselves” against charges that “nobody like them ever existed before 1990 or so,” as the scholar Alex Baldassano explains.²⁸ In their book *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, editors Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura suggest that transgender history brings together “different methods for excavating pasts that certainly contained gender-variant cultural practices, without necessarily imposing the name ‘transgender’ on historical moments.”²⁹ Transgender history, then, allows us to foreground different kinds of gender-crossings from the past, making them legible and meaningful to readers now. Such histories can foster a sense of connection between gender-crossing individuals across time, and they can make the existence of such communities in the future more imaginable.³⁰ They can also educate non-gender-marginalized people, enabling them to understand that diverse categories of sex and gender are significant, and that they cannot be left out of our standard histories.

Intersex people—that is, those born with bodies that are not considered typically male or female—and transgender people—in simple terms, those born with bodies that do not fit their gender identity or whose practices defy gender norms in some way—are distinct groups.³¹ Most people with intersex variations do not identify as transgender (although some do). But the two communities have commonalities: above all, both groups argue that they should be allowed to live according to their own gender identities and to control what is done (or not done) to their bodies. They view these demands as a matter of human rights. Both groups face discrimination and, because certain intersex activists and scholars have aligned with the LGBT community, their political and intellectual movements are in certain respects linked.³²

The interrelation of transgender and intersex is particularly important for my book because some of the gender-crossings attributed to “hermaphrodites” in premodern Europe more closely resemble what we now call “transgender” than what we now call “intersex.” As a result, this study grounds its subjects in the history of both groups. Because it is the least pathologizing term and the one most often used in social science scholarship, I use “intersex” when referring to individuals with sex-variant bodies in the past, although “intersex,” too, has its

critics.³³ Intersex is a modern term, but it is analogous to, and hence descriptive of, a category of intermediate sex that some thinkers identified during the premodern period. I also use “transgender” as an analytical, rather than an identitarian term, to speak of past gender-crossing practices, as I explain in chapter 5. When discussing ideas and myths about sex and gender categories, however, I often retain the specific vocabulary of my primary sources: “hermaphrodite,” “androgyne” (Greek for “man-woman”), and “neither” or “both” sexes.³⁴ I also consider a range of other bodies that fit uneasily into premodern male-female binaries, including asexuals, sodomites, eunuchs, castrates, impotent men, women with “enlarged” genitals, and others. I use “nonbinary” to encompass all of these ancient and medieval categories, although I am aware that many intersex and transgender people do not today identify as nonbinary. I am also aware that many people now view “hermaphrodite” as an offensive and retrograde term, rightly relegated to the dustbin of history in favor of less stigmatizing vocabulary. I hope readers will accept my use of it here as I engage critically with my primary sources. In the course of that engagement, I try to avoid reifying derogatory language and concepts while also remaining attentive to historical specificity.³⁵ Because ancient and medieval ideas about hermaphroditism and those about modern intersex or transgender are not precisely equivalent, the terms cannot always be used interchangeably, nor can we place all the subjects of this study into a teleological arc in which premodern categories eventually become what we now recognize as modern ones.³⁶ In some cases, to be sure, ancient and medieval ideas about sex and gender are very similar to, and even seem to anticipate, our own. In other cases, however, premodern ideas are starkly different: sometimes they are far more restrictive and derogatory than our current ones, but at other times they are more accepting and can present themselves in rich and imaginative ways. While similarities between past and present speak to the deep roots of our current assumptions about sex and gender, the many differences between them also unsettle those assumptions. Recent scholarship has already taken up this point, suggesting how earlier models of sex and gender might give voice to transgender, intersex, or queer identities in new and unexpected ways, both supporting and challenging the ways in which we talk about sex and gender today.³⁷

This relatively new dialogue between intersex studies, transgender studies, and premodern history does more than just show us that sex- and gender-variant people have a long presence in the historical record. It also opens up insights into the formation of classificatory systems themselves, the very structures that render certain anatomies and individuals “variant.” Through historical analysis, we can document how hierarchical and oppositional modes of sex and gender come into being, rather than accepting them as natural, real, or immutable.³⁸ This mode of historical

analysis is often called a “denaturalization” of sex and gender, and it follows the historian Joan W. Scott’s famous observation that a fixed male-female binary reflects neither nature nor consensus but rather “overt contests” and “the refusal or repression of alternative possibilities.”³⁹ Exploring such contests across time can persuade us to view with new skepticism the seemingly unambiguous categories of “male” and “female.”⁴⁰ It can also help us to remember that societies in the distant past thought about sex and gender deeply and creatively, just as we do now.

NONBINARY SEX AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF TIME: A CHRONOLOGY

The chronological arc of this book is simple, even as the ideas are anything but: we find an embrace of the idea of nonbinary sex among authorities in early Christianity, its rejection at the turn of the thirteenth century, and a new enthusiasm for its novel and expanded properties at the dawn of the Renaissance. I begin my first chapter in the third century, but I move quickly to the European medieval period, which is the main focus of this book. Each chapter leads us through a different cluster of related texts, tracing the twists and turns of people who were thinking about—and through—the concept of nonbinary sex and exploring the often-vast ramifications of that thinking.⁴¹

In chapter 1, we find ancient and medieval Christians who hailed “androgyny” as a transcendent combination of male and female—the original condition of humanity, created by God and chronicled in the first chapters of the biblical book of Genesis. By this argument, Adam was made initially as an “androgyné” (or “man-woman”)—a state of pure and primal undifferentiation and at odds with the divisive male and female sexes that followed thereafter. While a number of authorities rejected this opinion—often conflating androgynes with what they described as deviant and double-sexed “hermaphrodites”—a countertradition persisted, claiming nonbinary sex as a divine and human ideal. The distinctive relationship between Adam and Eve, moreover, set the stage for broader social structures of family, kingdom, and church; therefore, belief in a “primal androgyné” had the power to undermine society’s foundational order. This chapter also considers the Christian theology of the resurrection, another fundamental doctrine that developed during the period, and one that held that all humans would reclaim their bodies at the end of time as they entered the afterlife. This chapter explores the ways in which theology defined human sex by considering which bodies were perfect enough to experience eternity.

If some early Christians believed androgyny to be a human ideal, shifting political currents eventually led to more ambivalent attitudes toward nonbinary sex. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a heightening of religious tensions between Christians and Jews in northern Europe, as well as a worsening of prospects for crusaders in what Christians called the “holy land,” prompted Christians to more adamantly distinguish and demote the “others” around them. Chapters 2 and 3 reveal two manifestations of this broader trend, discussing how authors portrayed hermaphrodites as both monsters and beasts in an effort to substantiate differences between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. In chapter 2, I begin with a “world map”—the English Hereford *mappamundi*—which invoked both nonbinary sex and the legend of the so-called “monstrous races” to comment upon the crusades. The map depicted a turbaned figure as a mythical, bilaterally split “hermaphrodite,” drawing upon ancient and medieval myths to brand its subject as monstrous, sexually deviant, and dubiously human. Here and elsewhere, authors were concerned with characterizing geographic, religious, and racial “others” as different from Christians—and inferior to them—on the basis of both bodily and cultural traits. In that capacity, ideas about nonbinary sex actively shaped the reality of the period, suggesting which bodies could not fit within Christian territory and justifying violence that was all too real.

Chapter 3 continues this approach by looking at a virulently polemical image of a nonbinary-sexed hyena in the Aberdeen Bestiary, which served to dehumanize Jews, as well as to paint them as duplicitous agents of spiritual pollution. Such connections contributed to an ongoing campaign in thirteenth-century England to remove Jews from Christian society. The production of this and other similar images presaged or coincided with violent massacres of Jews in England, as well as the expulsion of Jewish communities from the region in 1290. Here again, I show how medieval Christians used images of nonbinary-sexed figures to substantiate divisions and to displace non-Christians elsewhere, outside the territorial and ritual bounds of Christian kingdoms. Once more, ideas about nonbinary sex played an important role in demarcating limits and demonizing religious and racial outsiders, and then removing them from Christian society.

Chapter 4 considers natural philosophers and legal theorists as they struggled to define which sexes were human ones. The thirteenth century saw an influx of naturalist ideas into Latin Europe from the classical Greek and Islamic worlds. Those texts offered new ways of systematizing distinctions between men and women, as well as between different kinds of creatures. Their appearance in Latin Europe shaped a new and foundational belief among some European naturalists that what we now call intersex—generally called “hermaphroditism” by medieval authors—did not exist in the human species. Beginning in the mid-thirteenth

century, certain natural philosophers claimed male and female to be the only proper human sexes, a theoretical model that complemented their views that lower creatures such as plants and “imperfect” animals could express multiple sexes but that higher creatures such as humans came in just male and female types. As a result, intersex became for them a “monstrosity” rather than one of several natural possibilities of human sex, as previous medical models had imagined. In this chapter, I also examine the opinions of Roman and canon lawyers, who proposed a different way of dividing humanity into sexed categories but who also enforced male-female binaries in their approaches to inheritance, baptism, ordination, and other matters.

Chapter 5 confronts efforts not only to think about nonbinary sex in the abstract but also to alter the physical bodies of actual individuals. In Italy and France in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, surgeons devised ways of “correcting” atypical sex anatomies by surgically removing parts of people’s bodies. These brutal surgeries, and the textbooks that justified them, reveal contradictory efforts to define sex by means of behavior, sexual desire, and physical shape. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate how considerations of nonbinary sex categories prompted authorities to define the human sexes, to place humanity within a larger natural order, and to manipulate their fellow humans to fit within that imagined order. Their conclusions led to new bodily ideals along with new roles for medicine to play in their regulation.

As my first five chapters demonstrate, writers and thinkers from the twelfth to the fourteenth century generally favored the erasure of nonbinary sex from both the human body and the broader community (although their arguments were never unidirectional nor monolithic). But as new theories about the body surfaced at the end of the period, so too did new ideas about sexual difference.⁴² Even as actual people with sex-variant anatomies were steeped in a history that overwhelmingly viewed them as defective or atavistic, novel arguments in the fourteenth century began to exalt ideas about nonbinary sex as a path to utopic and forward-looking freedom. As chapter 6 shows, indebted to growing optimism about the possibility of metamorphosis, as well as to developing ideas about sex in medieval art and literature, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century authors proposed a new and ideal figure, the “alchemical hermaphrodite.” This figure shared much with its antecedents, yet it also diverged from them sharply. This alchemical hermaphrodite was a transformative concept—as well as a chemical product—that could reportedly change other objects and people. As a figure of metamorphosis, the alchemical hermaphrodite suggested new ways of being in the world—and ones that went far beyond ordinary categories and divisions. Some alchemical authors even claimed that Jesus combined not only human and

divine attributes but also masculine and feminine ones. This alchemical “Jesus hermaphrodite” possessed awesome powers of transmutation, purifying both bodies and spirits. Contemporary authors claimed that the emergence of the Jesus hermaphrodite was crucial because the apocalyptic end of time was near. While the early “Adam androgyne” represented early human society, the “Jesus hermaphrodite” assured humanity’s ultimate salvation. These two figures, which flourished at the beginning and the end of the period I survey here, identified nonbinary sexes as the anchors of eschatological time: its origin and its final reconciliatory end.



It is not always clear what premodern history—so remote from us in time and intellectual context—has to offer to people now, who might crave both a usable past and a more radically transformative future. Yet because this history is so removed from us, I argue it has exceptional power. Where we do find resonances between past and present, we are reminded that our own current controversies are far from unique. And where the premodern period stands as a world completely apart, it testifies to the simple fact that dramatic change has happened, and that it is indeed still possible. When we perceive an earlier period in all its alterity and, further, when we see the profound shifts that occurred even within that period, we can see how new futures come into being—how, as Susan Stryker says, “The flesh can, at times, come to signify anew.”⁴³ This book follows these new futures as they unfold in the distant past, demonstrating that our ordering of sex, gender, and embodiment in our own era “is not natural, inevitable, or eternal.”⁴⁴ We might also consider how our own ordering shapes the questions we ask about the past—how we make the past, too, signify anew.

The book’s title, *The Shape of Sex*, refers to the shape of the body, the focus of so much inquiry and contestation during the premodern period. Yet it also speaks to the ways in which bodily sex came to “shape” the ancient and medieval worlds, transforming their social, religious, and natural landscapes. It also, further, points to how sex still continues to shape our cultural views. The scholars M. W. Bychowski and Ruth Evans have recently and helpfully suggested that, with respect to nonbinary sex, we might move across temporal registers, acknowledging “the presence of the past in the now and of the now in the past,” and noting how such dislocations can “disorien[t] claims over what genders exist when and where.”⁴⁵ I devote this study to such sentiments. Premodern ideas about nonbinary sex—uniting fusions, mixtures, and negations; in the service of medical decisions, social and religious dilemmas, and cartographies of people

and places—are all different from each other, and they are all different in certain respects from what we now call transgender or intersex. And yet, even as we acknowledge these differences between past and present—between categories, vocabularies, and imperatives—it is important to point out that, just as in the premodern era, our modern debates have at their heart who gets to be human.

To declare oneself “human” is to define what is “not human.” Such articulations force us to contend with, or at least imagine, those who are not “us”—and to decide whether to assimilate or reject those outsiders. Each time we make these decisions, we define our relations with the world and with ourselves. It is through narrating these acts, we might say, that we write a story of our self. I document here a premodern story of self that entangled male and female, human and animal, and race and religion in ways familiar (inviting modern thinkers to consider an expanded timeline for our own modern exclusions) and unfamiliar (suggesting that those exclusions are not inevitable but the result of specific historical circumstances). *The Shape of Sex* tells a premodern story of self that enabled thinkers to define who they were, who they were not, and who was deserving of a livable life. If we look and read carefully, as I suggest here, this premodern story of self might prompt us to engage more effectively with our own humanity. It might help us to see more clearly how we write our own stories of self and other—of representation, symbol, and image—and it might illuminate how we piece together, both in the past and the future, the direction of historical change.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Arxiu Històric de Girona, Notaria de Peralada, 26 bis. *Llibre de Bernat Sunyer*, years 1331–32, fol. 52v:

habebat virgam virilem et testiculos ad modum hominis et est arta ita quod vix potest minere per quoddam foramen parvum quod habet in fissura vulve quam habet suptus dictam virgam virilem et habet pellem inter crura sua stensam ad modum alarum vespertilionis que cohoperit fissuram dicte vulve tociens quociens ipsa Berengaria vertit genua sua versus faciem suam et quod habet formam virilem plus quam muliebrem, ita quod dictus Guillelmus nec alter homo posse iacere secum nec habere rem carnaliter nec ipsa posset reddere ullatenus debitum coniugalis nec concipere nec infantare.

Michael R. McVaugh discovered the case and discusses it and Vesianus Pelegrini briefly in his *Medicine Before the Plague: Practitioners and the Patients in the Crown of Aragon, 1285–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 206. As I have noted, I use female pronouns for Berengaria, following the vocabulary of the primary source, and in an effort to avoid imposing further pronouns on Berengaria.

2. Husbands were obligated to render the conjugal debt, too. I discuss impotence cases in chapter 5.
3. On Vesianus Pelegrini, see McVaugh, *Medicine*, 206n56.
4. Michelle Armstrong-Partida, “Priestly Wives: The Role and Acceptance of Clerics’ Concubines in the Parishes of Late Medieval Catalunya,” *Speculum* 88:1 (2013): 166–214.
5. Armstrong-Partida, 182, 182n47.
6. On publicizing a marriage, see Marie A. Kelleher, “The Fragility of the Female Sex: Women and the Law in the Fourteenth-Century Crown of Aragon,” PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2003, 88–90; for the many different opinions and rules on what constituted legitimate marriage, see James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

If Berengaria and Guillem’s marriage was annulled (as the historian Christof Rolker suspects), then the two families were obliged to return the marital gifts they exchanged. Such payments could be substantial, as well as the source of considerable dispute. Christof Rolker, “The Two Laws and the Three Sexes: Ambiguous Bodies in Canon Law and Roman Law (12th to 16th Centuries),” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte kanonistische Abteilung* 100 (2014): 207; for



- marital payments and disputes, see Kelleher, 119–28, 149, and *passim*. For Pope Alexander III's ruling on annulments for *arctatio* ("anatomical impediments to intromission"), see Thomas G. Benedek and Janet Kubinec, "The Evaluation of Impotence by Sexual Congress and Alternatives Thereto in Divorce Proceedings," *Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia* 4:2 (1982): 129–30, and chapter 5 in this volume.
7. Christof Rolker, however, has identified medieval marriage cases in which a rather relaxed attitude toward intersex pervades. See "Der Hermaphrodit und seine Frau: Körper, Sexualität und Geschlecht im Spätmittelalter," *Hist. Z.* 297 (2013): 593–620. It is also possible that Berengaria's unusual body caused a stir at the time of her birth, as, for instance, in a case of 1437–1438. See my discussion of birth and birth attendants in chapter 5.
 8. Armstrong-Partida, 197, 208.
 9. See chapter 4 for a discussion of Roman and canon law on intersex.
 10. Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 6.
 11. See discussion of legal categories in chapter 4 in the section devoted to Roman and canon law.
 12. For "life chances," see Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of the Law* (Brooklyn, NY: South Bend, 2011), 11–13, 19–47.
 13. For theories of opposition, see G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Rodney Needham, ed., *Right and Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). For borderlands and nonbinaries in classification, see Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 300–305; Jenny L. Davis, Lal Zimman, and Joshua Raclaw, "Opposites Attract: Rethorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality," in *Queer Excursions: Rethorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–12.
 14. *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2017).
 15. M. W. Bychowski, "The Isle of Hermaphrodites: Disorienting the Place of Intersex in the Middle Ages," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 9:2 (2018): 163.
 16. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1971), 4.375–9 (I: 204): "velut, si quis conducat cortice ramos/ crescendo iungi pariterque adolescere cernit/ sic ubi complexu coierunt membra tenaci/ nec duo sunt et forma duplex, nec femina dici/ nec puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque videntur." As scholars have pointed out, Hermaphroditus was already to some extent gender-nonconforming before his transformation in *Metamorphoses*. Other legends held that Hermaphroditus was born with male and female attributes. M. Robinson, "Salmacis and Hermaphroditus: When Two Become One: (Ovid, *Met.* 4.285–388)," *Classical Quarterly* 49:1 (1999): 212–23; Georgia Nugent, "This Sex Which Is Not One: De-constructing Ovid's Hermaphrodite," *differences* 2:1 (1990): 160–85. See also Ruth Evans, "Gender Is not Genitals," along with other works collected in Evans, ed., *Medieval Intersex: Language and Hermaphroditism*, special issue of *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 9:2 (2018); Vanda Zajko " 'Listening With' Ovid: Intersexuality, Queer Theory, and the Myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis," *Helios* 36:2 (2009): 175–202; Cary J. Nederman and Jacqui True, "The Third Sex: The Idea of the Hermaphrodite in Twelfth-Century Europe," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6:4 (1996): 497–517.
 17. My argument is indebted to Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone, 2001).
 18. See, as a parallel, Joy Ladin's moving statement that modern transgender experience is above all a "human experience," and that the questions transgender people face are shared by all: "Everyone, transgender or not, must decide what aspects of ourselves we will and won't express, when we can't and when we must subordinate our individuality in order to fulfill our roles in relationships, families,

- and communities. . . . the crisis [this experience] dramatizes is . . . the crisis of realizing that either we live what makes us different or we cannot live at all." Ladin, "In the Image of God, God Created Them: Toward Trans Theology," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34:1 (2018): 56.
19. Iain Morland, "Intersex," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1–2 (2014): 111.
 20. The nomenclature is controversial, and DSD is also the subject of much criticism. See Ellen K. Feder, "Imperatives of Normality: From 'Intersex' to 'Disorders of Sex Development,'" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15:2 (2009): 225–47; see also the statement of ISNA on their shift to the term DSD, accessed March 4, 2019, <http://www.isna.org/node/1066>. C. G. Costello, "Intersex and Trans* Communities: Commonalities and Tensions," in *Transgender and Intersex: Theoretical, Practical, and Artistic Perspectives*, ed. Stefan Horlacher (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 83–108.
 21. Alice D. Dreger and April M. Herndon, "Progress and Politics in the Intersex Rights Movement: Feminist Theory in Action," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15:2 (2009): 199–224; Morland, "Intersex," 111.
 22. Melanie Blackless et al. put the figure at two percent of live births in "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We? Review and Synthesis," *American Journal of Human Biology* 12 (2000), 151–66. This figure is disputed in Katrina Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke, 2008), 23–24.
 23. David A. Rubin, *Intersex Matters: Biomedical Embodiment, Gender Regulation, and Transnational Activism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017); Lisa Downing, Iain Morland, and Nikki Sullivan, *Fuckology: Critical Essays on John Money's Diagnostic Concepts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Georgiann Davis, *Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis* (New York: NYU Press, 2015); Julie A. Greenberg, *Intersexuality and the Law: Why Sex Matters* (New York: NYU Press, 2012); Elizabeth Reis, *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Morgan Holmes, ed., *Critical Intersex* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2009); Iain Morland, *Intersex and After*, special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15:2 (2009); Karkazis, *Fixing Sex*; Sharon E. Sytsma, ed., *Ethics and Intersex* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic, 2000); Suzanne Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Alice Domurat Dreger, ed., *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* (Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group, 1999); Cheryl Chase (now Bo Laurent), "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4:2 (1998): 189–211; as well as the information collected by the Intersex Society of North America (<http://www.isna.org/>) and Accord Alliance (<http://www.accordalliance.org>).
 24. Morland, "Intersex," 111; Karkazis, *Fixing Sex*.
 25. Sherri G. Morris, "Twisted Lies: My Journey in an Imperfect Body," in *Surgically Shaping Children: Technology, Ethics, and the Pursuit of Normality*, ed. Erik Parens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3–12; Human Rights Watch/interACT, "'I Want to Be Like Nature Made Me': Medically Unnecessary Surgeries on Intersex Children in the US" (July 2017), accessed March 4, 2019, available at <https://www.hrw.org/node/306688/>.
 26. Dreger and Herndon, 203–8.
 27. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon, 1996).
 28. A. Baldassano, "Bodies of Resistance: On (Not) Naming Gender in the Medieval West," PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2017, 1.
 29. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 11.



30. For community across time, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1999); Carolyn Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13:2–3 (2007): 177–95; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
31. For definitions of transgender, see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal, 2008), 19; Jack Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 1–21; David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). I am aware that the definitions I offer in this introduction are, by necessity, simplifications. Both intersex and transgender are umbrella terms for a spectrum of complex bodies, identities, and practices. Please see my discussion in chapter 5 in the section entitled Medieval Surgery in Modern Perspective.
32. See Thea Hillman's memoir, which describes complicated engagements between queer, trans, and intersex communities: *Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word)* (San Francisco: Manic D, 2008), 76, 129–37. Trans and intersex studies constitute distinct fields, but trans studies often seeks to engage intersex studies, historical studies of intersex have recently engaged trans studies, and some prominent works of theory discuss both trans and intersex. On the two fields' interaction, see David Rubin, 74–76; Stefan Horlacher, "Transgender and Intersex: Theoretical, Practical, and Artistic Perspectives," in *Transgender and Intersex: Theoretical, Practical, and Artistic Perspectives*, ed. Stefan Horlacher, 1–27. Among other recent examples are Kathleen P. Long, "Intersex/Transgender," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of 21st-Century Feminist Theory*, ed. Robin Truth Goodman (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 121–41, and Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, trans. Kevin Gerry Dunn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 106–19.
33. For criticism, see Karkazis, *Fixing Sex*, 18–21. In using "intersex" for medieval individuals, I follow recent scholarship in premodern disability studies, including Sara Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and Richard H. Godden and Asa S. Mittman, eds., *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2019).
34. That is *hermaphroditus*, *androgynus* (from the Greek for "man-woman"), *nec* and *utriusque sexus* ("neither" and, in this context, "both sexes").
35. See Intersex Society of North America, "What's the History Behind the Intersex Rights Movement?" accessed March 4, 2019, <http://www.isna.org/faq/history>; April Herndon, "Getting Rid of 'Hermaphroditism' Once and For All" (2005), accessed March 4, 2019, <http://www.isna.org/node/979>; Hillman, 25–29. A number of affected individuals in Europe now identify themselves as "hermaphrodites" or "herms," but this terminology remains pejorative in the United States. Costello, 85.
36. For a characterization of transgender historical studies, among many examples, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Stryker, *Transgender History*, 19; Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 317–70; Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortorici, "Trans, Time, and History," in DeVun and Tortorici, eds., "Trans* historicities," special issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5:4 (2018): 518–39, and the forthcoming *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality Before the Modern*, ed. Greta LaFleur, Anna Kłosowska, and Masha Raskolnikov. Others have proposed "trans temporality" as a method for thinking about transgender's relation to time and history. See Kadji Amin, "Temporality," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1:1–2 (2014): 219–22; Jacob Lau, "Between the Times: Trans-Temporality, and Historical Representation," PhD diss., University of California, 2016; Simon D. Elin Fisher, Rasheedah Phillips, and Ido H. Katri, eds., "Trans Temporalities," special issue of *Somatechnics* 7:1 (2017).

37. M. W. Bychowski, Howard Chiang, et al., “Trans*historicités: A Roundtable Discussion,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5:4 (2018): 658–85; Baldassano, 1–32, 270–73. Strassfeld notes some have claimed premodern categories such as *tumtum* and *androgynos* as a part of trans/intersex Jewish history: “Classically Queer: Eunuchs and Androgynes in Rabbinic Literature.” PhD diss., Stanford University, 2013, 97n164.
38. For trans as a methodological approach, see Susan Stryker, “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10:2 (2004): 212–15; Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, “Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?” *WSQ* 36:3–4 (2008): 11–22; for questions about what constitutes “cultural studies from an intersex perspective,” see Iain Morland, “Afterword: Genitals Are History,” *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 9:2 (2018): 209–15.
39. Joan W. Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91:5 (1986): 1068, 1074.
40. Sharon Block, “Making Meaningful Bodies: Physical Appearance in Colonial Writings,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12:3 (2014): 524–47.
41. My work builds on some excellent and path-breaking histories of ancient and early modern intersex, usually discussed as “hermaphroditism,” as well as a range of older and new studies in medieval studies that bring nonbinary sex categories and “transgender” figures to the fore in new ways. See Marie Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Jennifer Nicholson (London: Studio, 1956); Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Kathleen P. Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006); Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, “The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1:1 (1995): 419–38. Evans, *Medieval Intersex: Language and Hermaphroditism*; M.W. Bychowski and Dorothy Kim, eds., “Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism,” special issue of *Medieval Feminist Forum* 55:1 (2019); David Rollo, *Kiss My Relics: Hermaphroditic Fictions of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Irina Metzler, “Hermaphroditism in the Western Middle Ages: Physicians, Lawyers and the Intersexed Person,” *Studies in Early Medicine I—Bodies of Knowledge: Cultural Interpretations of Illness and Medicine in Medieval Europe*, BAR International Series 2170, ed. Sally Crawford and Christina Lee (2010): 27–39; Max Strassfeld, “Translating the Human: The *Androgynos* in *Tosefta Bikurim*,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3:3–4 (2016): 587–604; Daniel Burton-Rose, “Gendered Androgyny: Transcendent Ideals and Profane Realities in Buddhism, Classicism, and Daoism,” in *Transgender China*, ed. Howard Chiang (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 67–96; Karl Whittington, “Medieval,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1:1–2 (2014): 125–9; Nederman and True, 497–517; Maaïke Van der Lugt, “Sex Difference in Medieval Theology and Canon Law: A Tribute to Joan Cadden,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46:1 (2010): 101–21; Van der Lugt, “Pourquoi Dieu a-t-il créé la femme? Différence sexuelle et théologie médiévale,” in *Ève et Pandora: la création de la femme*, ed. Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 89–113 (notes on 262–67); Van der Lugt, “L’humanité des monstres et leur accès aux sacrements dans la pensée médiévale.” Accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00175497/document>. Published in *Monstres, humanité et sacrements dans la pensée médiévale*, ed. A. Caiozzo et A.-E. Demartini, 135–161. Paris: Créaphis, 2008.
42. As theorists of sexuality have pointed out, even as discourse produces expressions of power, it also simultaneously exposes and undercuts that power: that is, the language of domination might be used to oppose that dominance, and identical terms might come to support opposite goals. In this way, dominant discourse can become “reversed”: it can become a stumbling block, or even a starting point for opposition and resistance. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New



- York: Vintage, 1990), 92–102; Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 18–28.
43. Susan Stryker, “General Editor’s Introduction,” in DeVun and Tortorici, 516.
44. Stryker, “General Editor’s Introduction,” 516.
45. Evans, “Gender,” 122; Bychowski, “The Isle of Hermaphrodites,” 175.

I. THE PERFECT SEXES OF PARADISE

1. James le Palmer (attributed), *Omne bonum*, BL Royal MS 6 E VII/1 (Ebrietas-Humanus), fol. 205r: “Et quia talis homo nec uir nec mulier esse uidetur et utrumque uidetur.” On this manuscript, see Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Omne Bonum: A Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge*, 2 vols. (London: Harvey Miller, 1996).
2. *Omne bonum*, fol. 205r-v: “quisquis uspiam nascitur homo id est animal rationale mortale quamlibet nostris inuisitatum sensibus gerat formam corporis seu colorem seu motum sensuum seu sonum seu qualibet ui qualibet parte qualibet qualitate naturam ex illo uno protoplausto originem ducere nullus fidelium dubitaverit.” He cites from Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*, Libri XXII, ed. B. Dombart, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1877), 16:8 (II: 135–36). English trans. in *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), 663.
3. See Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), 66–67; Wayne A. Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *History of Religions* 13:3 (1974): 186n90; Elliot R. Wolfson, “Bifurcating the Androgyne and Engendering Sin: A Zoharic Reading of Gen. 1–3,” in *Hidden Truths from Eden: Esoteric Readings of Genesis 1–3*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Susanne Scholz (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 97; the Midrash Rabbah describes Adam as two-sexed and “double-faced.” See Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, 15. The Roman god Janus was also frequently pictured as double-faced in medieval iconography. Janus symbolized cosmic generation and the propagation of the human race; he was also identified with Adam. For Janus’s connection to cosmic generation and the four elements, see Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 76–77, 142–44, and 570–71n46. Maria Grazia Cittadini Fulvi and Vania Gasperoi Panella, *Dal mondo antico al cristianesimo sulle tracce di Giano: il simbolismo della porta e del passaggio in relazione al dio bifronte* (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2008).
4. David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 128–31, 171; for duplicity as two-faced, see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 74.
5. On primal androgyny, see Meeks, 165–208; Maryanne Cline Horowitz, “The Image of God in Man—Is Woman Included?” *Harvard Theological Review* 72:3–4 (1979): 175–205; Van der Lugt, “Pourquoi,” 95–103; Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 35–61; Taylor G. Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference* (London: Routledge, 2016); Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 77–90; Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Martin wonders if the term should continue to be used, given its connotations of male-female equality, which I address in this chapter. I use the term here because it is so well known.
6. “Hexaameron” refers to the “six-day work” of creation by God.