Genre, Gender, and Trans Textualities
8 St Eufrosine’s Invitation to Gender Transgression

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Abstract
In the Old French Vie de sainte Eufrosine (c. 1200), gender transgression is central to the poet’s pedagogical techniques. The fusion of masculine and feminine elements in Panuze’s lamentations and in the roles he assumes demonstrates the depth of his virtuous love for his daughter. The poet imitates Panuze, both showing the audience how to cultivate virtuous love and involving them in the transgression of gender to do so. Throughout, the poem presents masculine and feminine traits as equal. Eufrosine’s transgressive models offer modern readers the opportunity to rethink medieval orthodoxy and, consequently, the history behind modern identities and inequities.

Keywords: St Euphrosine, St Alexis, gender, exemplarity, hagiography, medieval, Old French

What if the queerness of medieval saints was meant to be imitated, and not just by those called to a saintly or celibate life? In the medieval French and English traditions, we have long recognized that St George’s submission to tortures that penetrate his body, St Catherine’s bold and effective preaching, and St Margaret’s violent slaying of a dragon (to name only a few) all reflect behaviours that transgress modern ideas of pre-modern gender ideologies.1 The last few decades of scholarship on gender identities and roles among the clergy, monks, nuns, and others have suggested that such transgressions are, in fact, simply extreme forms of not uncommon ideals.

1 George: Riches, ‘St George’, pp. 65-85; Catherine: Vitz, ‘Gender’, pp. 79-99; Margaret: Mills, Suspended Animation, p. 124. See also Ogden, ‘Centrality’.

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among the celibate, and perhaps even among the merely chaste.2 However, even as we recognize a broader circle of potentially transgressive imitators of the saints, the belief endures that, in medieval European cultures, gender ideologies were essentially hierarchical and normative.3

The tension between the atypical gender behaviour of the saints and modern conceptions of medieval gender ideologies is perhaps most noticeable in scholarship on the group of legends about holy people designated as ‘transvestite’ or ‘cross-dressing’ saints or as monachoparthenoi (monk-virgins). Surviving in many languages and composed from Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages, these narratives, many of which lack a verifiable historical basis, tell of a pious young person who grows up female for a time and later dresses in masculine clothing to pursue a religious calling; other characters then perceive the protagonist as a man until they or the saint eventually identify the saint as female, generally close to the saint’s death.4 These works present an intriguing paradox that has attracted significant scholarly attention: although they are apparently orthodox expressions of faith, they focus on the unorthodox motif of cross-dressing.5 With regard to the different versions of the Life of St Euphrosyne (‘Eufrosine’ in Old French [OF]), scholars have put particular emphasis on the fact that the saint is isolated in a solitary cell and that she dies as a woman; they see these elements as efforts to ‘restore the social order’.6 Evidence suggesting that the Lives’ authors found the ambiguities of gender and desire ‘fascinating’ and ‘enticing’, they argue, either reflects anxieties or subconscious yearnings, or serves to entice audiences towards a transcendent ideal defined in opposition to earthly realities.7

Among many scholars working on these narratives, there lingers, then, a ‘tendency […] to view the Middle Ages as somehow having had a single interpretive stance, one shaped by a single ecclesiastical discourse of misogyny’, as Jacqueline Murray argued about medievalists in the 1990s. Murray counters this tendency by showing the value of looking at how

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3 See, for example, Phillips, ‘Gender’, pp. 309-10.
4 For a list of these saints, see Hotchkiss, Clothes, pp. 131-41. See Bychowski in this volume on ‘transvestite saints’ (pp. 245-65, especially 245-53), and Schäfer-Althaus, Gendered Body, pp. 156-57.
5 Bernau, ‘Translation’, pp. 12-14, summarizes the prohibitions against cross-dressing.
7 Clark, Medieval Men, p. 199-200 (but see also p. 209); Gaunt, ‘Straight Minds’, pp. 167-69. For a highly nuanced reading, see Campbell, Gift, especially pp. 16, 116, 214.
individual texts address similar topics from different viewpoints and towards different ends. For their part, Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero have suggested that ‘in studying the specificity of a particular “moment,” it might, precisely, be more pleasurable and ethically resonant with our experience of the instabilities of identity-formation to figure that “moment” as itself fractured, layered, indeed, historical’, allowing ourselves to see multiple perspectives at work at any moment in history, and appreciating both alterity and ‘desirous identifications’ in our relationship to the Middle Ages. Before we decide how to categorize perspectives (dominant, subversive, orthodox, subconscious, etc.), and whether to enjoy a ‘desirous identification’ shared across time or to maintain a firm alterism in our reading of the seemingly familiar gender ambiguities in the Lives, shouldn’t we collect as much evidence from as many diverse sources as we can?

The following analysis focuses on the OF Vie de sainte Eufrosine, which conveys a significantly different perspective to those described by scholars working on the Latin and Old English (OE) versions. An anonymous 1,276-line poem in alexandrine epic stanzas, the work survives in four manuscripts, the oldest from around 1200 and a later group made for wealthy aristocrats in the early fourteenth century (studied elsewhere in this volume by Vanessa Wright). In the discussion that follows, I use an edition of the Life based on the earliest manuscript, retaining the OF forms of most of the characters’ names to insist on their particularity to this version of the legend (as opposed, for example, to ‘Euphrosyne’, the saint whose life is recounted in many languages). I make an exception for the name that Eufrosine goes by during most of the work: ‘Emerald’, a common noun that captures the character’s gender ambiguity. In addition to its poetic form, merging romance and epic elements, a certain number of features distinguish this version of the Life. For example, when the protagonist secretly takes vows, she receives a name (‘Esmerade’) that ‘both men and women have’. Pronouns and names hereafter will vary by context following the poet and the saint, who sometimes identify Eufrosine-Emerald as

9 Fradenburg and Freccero, ‘Introduction’, p. xix. See also Mills on visual representations of the monachoparthenoi (‘Visibly Trans?’).
10 Regarding variations among the main Latin (Bibliotheca hagiographica latina no. 2723), OE, and OF versions of Euphrosyne’s Life, see Ogden, ‘Centrality’, pp. 4-5.
11 Ogden, Hagiography (hereafter HRVE), pp. 24-39.
12 ‘Esmerade’, l. 445; ‘Cis nons est comunaz a marle et a femele’, l. 446. Quotations (OF and translations) are from my forthcoming edition of the Life of St Eufrosine (referred to as E) as it appears in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Misc. 74.
female, sometimes male, and sometimes neither. A vision from St Sophia inspires Eufrosine-Emerald to don knightly clothing and flee to a monastery. When his beauty inspires ‘evil thoughts’ among the other monks, Emerald, sent off to a solitary cell, pronounces a long prayer of thanksgiving that she ‘will be put in a chamber with [her] lover’, God. Lengthy passages of direct discourse relate Eufrosine-Emerald's struggles over how to honour conflicting loyalties to God, father, and abbot; her father Panuze's despair over the loss of his beloved daughter; and Emerald's advice that comforts Panuze, who does not recognize his counsellor as Eufrosine. The poem ends with an eloquent, affectionate epilogue that is unique to this version of Euphrosyne’s Life and, indeed, to the earliest copy of Eufrosine, and that evokes an intended audience unskilled in Latin.

As we might suspect from these features, Eufrosine expresses a strong interest in love and in the obstacles to it that result from gender roles: essentially, the Life tells of an individual who abandons a clearly feminine identity to pursue love for God. In approaching union with God, Eufrosine-Emerald moves from gender transgression (dressing a female body in masculine clothing) to gender transcendence (inhabiting an identity without gender). I have argued elsewhere that such extreme gender fluidity conveys saints’ exceptional heroism. Here, I examine how Eufrosine’s father and the poet themselves engage in gender transgression in ways that translate the saint’s extraordinary virtue and actions into less perfect but more imitable forms.

I use ‘gender transgression’ to denote behaviour and perspectives that do not conform to the binary gender roles that are typical in Eufrosine and, indeed, in much contemporary literature; ‘transgression’ acknowledges that this unusual behaviour contravenes common expectations – both medieval and modern. I do not mean, however, that Eufrosine suggests this transgressive

13 ‘Cogitaïon male’, E, l. 570; ‘Or serai mise en canbre ensemble mon amant’, ibid., l. 645.
14 The OE and Latin versions contain variations of some of these speeches.
15 The intended and real audiences remain anonymous. Campbell (Gift, pp. 205-22) and I (HRVE, pp. 26-33) present different interpretations of who they may have been. Lifschitz (Religious Women, pp. 166-70) and Grossel (‘Quand l’enfant’, p. 82, n. 1) offer evidence for female audiences (monastic and secular) of other versions of Euphrosyne’s Life.
18 See HRVE, pp. 94-95, 205, regarding Panuze’s and the poet’s persona’s roles in Eufrosine’s didactic strategies. For the OE, cf. Stallcup, ‘Old English Life’, pp. 18-19, and Norris, ‘Genre Trouble’, pp. 138-39. Like me, Campbell studies how Eufrosine juxtaposes gender identities to convey ideas that exceed articulation, but, whilst Campbell emphasizes the ultimate untranslatability of these ideas, my argument here focuses on how the translation of virtue can succeed, albeit imperfectly (‘Translating’, pp. 236-45, 256-57).
behaviour is reprehensible. The Life does not present either expectations of distinct gender roles or their disruption as inherently good or bad: context and intentions define their morality. This is where distinguishing between ‘common’ and ‘normal’ becomes highly important. As Karma Lochrie shows, ‘normal’, an invention of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, attributes positive value to (and even idealizes) the average, but, to medieval thinkers, the common state after the Fall was always a corruption of the ideal.\(^{19}\) By setting aside the concepts of ‘normal’ and ‘norms’ as alien to medieval perspectives, we perceive more easily the varying moral judgements that medieval authors pass (and refrain from passing) on behaviour they see as typical as well as that which they present as transgressive.

In *Eufrosine*, the poet deploys common expectations regarding binary gender to show the limitations of worldly life, and by reconfiguring gendered behaviours and concerns, they convey the possibility of escaping those constraints.\(^{20}\) Using Panuze, themself, and even the audience, the poet teaches that gender transgression can express an otherwise ineffable form of love, and that this love is an inherent quality of the soul that can be cultivated through transgressive action. Rather than reinforcing or even accepting gender hierarchies, the *Eufrosine* poet argues that active gender transgression – both within the cloister and beyond – offers salvation.

Modelling transgression in perspective

Through Panuze’s lamentations and actions, the poet invites the audience to scrutinize the baron’s love for his child, transgressions of gender roles, and exemplarity: Panuze is by no means a clearly positive example of virtue. In part, his complexity reflects the poet’s meditation on the OF *Life of St Alexis* (c. 1080) and its troubling perspective on familial love as incompatible with virtue in this world. Like *Eufrosine, Alexis* tells of a young person who flees his wealthy home to serve God; he then returns to live there, unrecognized, for seventeen years.\(^{21}\) In both poems, discovery

\(^{19}\) Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, pp. xxii-xxxiii. Lochrie’s discussion of the multiple senses of ‘natural’ is also extremely useful.

\(^{20}\) As argued below, the singular ‘they’ is the appropriate way to refer to the poet, who uses various techniques to avoid a binary gender identity.

\(^{21}\) The relationship between *Eufrosine* and the Alexis Lives remains unclear, but since *Eufrosine* may have influenced the later Alexis texts, including one in the same manuscript as *Eufrosine*, I use the earlier Hildesheim version. For the relationship between the Lives, see Storey, ‘Reminder’, pp. 385-93, and McCulloch, ‘Saint Euphrosine’, pp. 181-85.
of the child’s flight and later death prompt lengthy lamentations by the family. In *Alexis*, the values and concerns of these laments reflect gender roles consistent with the findings of modern studies of medieval gender: while Alexis’s father’s sense of honour and justice are quite pronounced, the women’s lamentations emphasize bodily connections and hyperbolic emotions.\(^\text{22}\) By contrast, in *Eufrosine*, direct repetitions of phrases as well as rewordings of prominent themes from *Alexis* lend Panuze a gender-transgressive perspective.

All of the echoes of *Alexis* in Panuze’s lamentations emphasize worldly concerns. For example, borrowing from Alexis’s father, Eufemien, the *Eufrosine* poet conveys Panuze’s sense of the futility of all his work to establish the honour of his child. Panuze laments, “‘Daughter, for five years *I have toiled for you*, | […] Had *rich houses and manors* constructed | *So you would be honoured* as long as you lived’”, while Alexis’s father exclaims, “‘Oh, son, to whom will go my large inheritance, | […] | *My great palaces* in the city of Rome? | *For you I laboured* for them, | *So that you would be honoured* because of them after my death’.”\(^\text{23}\) From Alexis’s mother, the *Eufrosine* poet takes a deep physical connection that is grounded in the past dependence of child on parent. In an *ubi sunt* passage, Panuze asks, “‘My daughter, where is the *flesh* that I nourished?’”; Alexis’s mother exclaims, “‘My son Alexis, your tender *flesh*! | […] Why did you flee from me? I carried you in my womb’.”\(^\text{24}\) The connection is so deep that the parents cannot understand how they can continue to exist without their children.\(^\text{25}\) In a similar vein, Alexis’s bride declares that she would be better off dead.\(^\text{26}\) Deprived of their loved one, Panuze and Alexis’s mother – and Alexis’s bride, too – are each incapable of seeing any future happiness: ‘I will nevermore be happy’ echoes from one poem to the other.\(^\text{27}\) As for Alexis’s bride, she also shares with Panuze

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\(^\text{22}\) See, for example, Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 148; Bouchard, *Discourse*, p. 122; Phillips, ‘Gender and Sexuality’, pp. 310-11.

\(^\text{23}\) “‘Filhe, mut sui por vos, cinc ans at, travilhiez, […] | Faites *riches maisons, manoirs* edeifiez, | *Por vos mete a honor en tant ke vos viviez*’ (*E*, ll. 690–93); “‘O filz, qui erent mes granz ereditiez, […] | Mes *granz paleis* de Rome la citét? | Ed *enpur tei* m’en estiee penéét, | Puis mun decés *en fusses enoréét*’ (*A*, ll. 401–05). Emphasis added. I use Storey’s edition of *Alexis*, referred to as *A*; translations are mine.

\(^\text{24}\) “‘Ma filhe, u est la cars que j’avoie norrie?’” (*E*, l. 1160; cf. 705, 1154); “‘Filz Alexis, de la tue carn tendra! | […] Pur quem fuïs? Jat portai en men ventre’” (*A*, ll. 431, 453; cf. 131, 437–442, 444, 453, and 456–58).


\(^\text{26}\) *A* l. 485.

\(^\text{27}\) “‘Jor mais ne serai liez’” (*E*, l. 687); “‘Ja mais n’ierc lede’” (*A*, l. 135); “‘Ja mais ledece n’avrai’” (*A*, l. 492). Cf. Panuze’s initial emotionality, contrasted to his wife’s wisdom (*E*, ll. 27–29).
a keen awareness of the saint’s loss of physical beauty: they exclaim over
the disappearance of their loved one’s beautiful face and mouth.\(^{28}\) Whether
or not the *Eufrosine* audiences recognized the allusions to *Alexis*, it seems
highly likely that Panuze’s perspective combined identifiably masculine
and feminine traits.

This fusion of gendered concerns could well mark Panuze’s grief as es-
pecially sinful.\(^ {29}\) Combining the perspectives of all three of Alexis’s family
members, Panuze’s lamentations condense into one character the grief that
emphasizes Alexis’s father’s, mother’s, and bride’s profound incomprehension
of the saint – an incomprehension that Eufemien ascribes to his identity as
a sinner.\(^ {30}\) Similarly, material wealth, worldly honour, and particular love
prevent Panuze from recognizing God’s will. Moreover, the inclusion of the
bride’s perspective in Panuze’s lament lends the latter certain undertones
of incest: the father who speaks longingly of the lost physical beauty of his
dughter – her laughing eyes, pale face, and beautiful mouth – and regrets
not having cared for her sounds rather more like a lover than a parent.\(^ {31}\) Is
the poet deploying the hagiographical motif of the (usually pagan) father
who desires and persecutes his saintly daughter – ‘a way of signalling the
inherently corrupt nature of human relationships’, as Emma Campbell
argues for other Lives?\(^ {32}\)

It is perhaps in this very troubling emotion, however, that we also begin
to see how the combination of perspectives may indicate that in *Eufrosine*,
more clearly than in *Alexis*, terrestrial love – with all its limitations – turns
out to be the primary path to spiritual progress rather than an impediment.
In studying the uses of incest in various Lives, Campbell distinguishes
between the corrupt form, just cited, and the transcendent: in certain Lives,
the intensity of the spiritual love between characters can only be expressed
through the image of incest – that is, by exceeding the limits of acceptable
worldly relationships.\(^ {33}\) The concluding stanza of Panuze’s final lament – his
last words in the Life – strongly suggests such an intensely spiritual love.
His words echo, in quick succession, certain ideas of Alexis’s parents and
then, with a final parallel to the bride’s lament, express a sudden faith in

28 *E*, ll. 1162-63; *A*, l. 481.
29 Norris convincingly argues that in the OE, the father’s lamentations provide the occasion
for his daughter to save him miraculously from the sin of excessive sorrow (‘Genre Trouble’,
pp. 130-37).
30 Kelly, *Place*, pp. 94, 104; *A*, l. 394.
31 *E*, ll. 1164-66. See, too, ll. 919-21 and 1135.
32 Campbell, *Gift*, p. 89.
33 Campbell, *Gift*, p. 95. On the incestuous holy kinship, see ibid., p. 89.
Eufrosine’s saintly ability to intercede with God on his behalf. Although the abrupt shift from incomprehension to faith is paradoxical and may seem illogical, Panuze’s change in perspective indicates that after deeply human love inevitably leads to profound grief, this grief can serve as a catalyst to faith and perhaps spiritual understanding. This is, after all, the premise of Christ’s incarnation.

The baron’s spiritual understanding is clear in his request to his now-dead ‘filhe Eüfrosine’ (‘daughter Eufrosine’) to maintain the relationship Panuze had with Emerald by continuing to serve as the baron’s spiritual guide. He thus shows full recognition that Eufrosine and Emerald are the same person, and that Eufrosine is now an intercessor to whom he can still speak and who can continue to help him beyond death. His faith in his child seems to depend equally on their loving familial relationship (with all the joy and pain that it has entailed) and the spiritual friendship that developed between them as men.

The blending of spiritual love, faith, grief, and terrestrial attachments evident in the ending shows that Panuze’s combination of gendered perspectives reflects both his spiritual imperceptiveness (in the particular concerns) and his transcendent spiritual love (in their combination). It is important to note that all these concerns and emotions – masculine and feminine – function as obstacles to and as expressions of love alike, and that there is no hierarchy among them. Moreover, Panuze demonstrates this combination of gendered perspectives throughout his lamentations, before he has encountered Emerald as well as after. It would thus appear to be an inherent part of his character rather than an imitation of the gender transgressions of his child. The combination is, however, more pronounced in the final lines as he realizes the depth of his loss, sorrow, and anger and then expresses his faith; the ability to move from imperceptiveness and resistance to faith would suggest that he has learned, from his interactions with Emerald, to cultivate this inherent trait. For Panuze, as for Eufrosine-Emerald, gender transgression is not in itself a sin or a virtue, but rather an expression of the human soul’s highest nature as genderless. As the poet comments, ‘Panuze laments for his daughter, as nature demands.’

34 E, ll. 1166–68; A, ll. 458–59, 455 (Mother). E, ll. 1169–70; A, l. 410 (Eufemien). E, ll. 1171–75; A, ll. 486, 490, 492–95 (Bride).
35 HRVE, pp. 93, 113–30.
36 E, l. 1166.
37 Cf. Campbell, Gift, p. 100.
39 ‘Panuzes plaint sa filhe, si que requiert nature’ (E, l. 1230).
baron's grief for Eufrosine – in its queer combination of paternal, maternal, and spousal aspects – is natural, acceptable, and even virtuous because it stems from deep spiritual love.

Cultivating virtue through transgressive action

If Panuze's lamentation expresses his innate virtue, then the poet's comment that the baron's grieving is natural suggests that this virtue is shared (to a greater or lesser extent) by all people: the *imago Dei* obscured by sin but nonetheless enduring in all human beings.\(^{40}\) The following line of the Life, however, indicates that this natural virtue is insufficient in some way. The poet notes, 'But Abbot Teodose is happy about the event'.\(^{41}\) The contrast between the two men's reactions, emphasized through the direct juxtaposition, reminds the audience that one of the main problems of the story has been Panuze's rebellious grief against God's will. By recalling this problem, the poet suggests that Panuze's verbal acknowledgment of conversion is not sufficient. As Alison More has noted, patristic and medieval theologians saw conversion not as a momentary experience, but as 'a journey towards holiness and ultimately towards God'.\(^{42}\) The final sixteen lines of the narrative provide a resolution focused entirely on the actions that demonstrate the baron's developing conversion – we have no further access to his thoughts. The fact that these actions lead to a sense of resolution reinforces the earlier suggestion that natural virtue needs to be cultivated, and shows the audience that actions are an effective means of perfecting virtue.\(^{43}\)

In their fusion of masculine and feminine aspects, Panuze's actions indicate that exemplary virtue for men, as for women, involves active abandonment of their typical gender roles.\(^{44}\) Panuze's explicit imitation of Eufrosine-Emerald in the concluding episode of the Life translates the saint's extraordinary actions into a potentially realizable paradigm. From one perspective, Panuze's final actions seem unexceptional: moved by sorrow for his daughter, he retires to a monastery to devote his life to serving God.


\(^{41}\) ‘Mais l'abes Teodoses est lies de l'aventure’ (*E*, l. 1231).

\(^{42}\) More, ‘Convergence’, p. 34 and p. 45, n. 2.

\(^{43}\) Alain de Lille, who […] had declared that the virtues started from nature, had also taken the position that virtue was something people acquired with practice, a *habitus* (Cadden, ‘Trouble’, p. 218).

\(^{44}\) Cf. note 2 above and More, ‘Convergence’, especially p. 33.
Certainly, the Life does not directly identify Panuze’s actions as transgressive in any way, merely suggesting that they are exceptionally pious.\textsuperscript{45} Within the context of the social systems set up in \textit{Eufrosine}, however, his behaviour looks quite different: he submissively follows his daughter’s directions about money, makes himself completely dependent on and obedient to men, and occupies an enclosed space identified as a woman’s.

From the beginning, the \textit{Life of St Eufrosine} establishes the ability to pursue, control, and dispense riches in the acquisition and assertion of power as a defining characteristic of secular masculinity. Not surprisingly, women serve as instruments for transferring wealth from man to man.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, the young men of Alexandria desire Eufrosine and her father’s wealth equally.\textsuperscript{47} Panuze himself refers to Eufrosine as his ‘treasure’ (‘tresor’) and ‘gem’ (‘gemme’), showing that he, too, sees her as closely linked to his wealth.\textsuperscript{48} Even if his almsgiving to churches and to the poor shows his inherent piety, its very public nature also contributes to his power and status.\textsuperscript{49} Part of Eufrosine’s own gender transgression involves participation in the masculine control of money when the saint asserts a feminine identity as Panuze’s daughter in order to claim the masculine power of determining what will happen to the family inheritance.\textsuperscript{50}

Within the narrative logic of the text, the direction that Eufrosine gives Panuze does not necessitate any gender transgressions on the latter’s part, but the baron chooses actions that place him in both masculine and feminine roles. To fulfil the saint’s request that the inheritance be given to the monastery, Panuze could simply occupy the role of Eufrosine’s son, waiting until his own death to donate the money. In fact, his first financial actions after her death are perfectly in keeping with his masculine relationship to wealth: he builds an expensive sepulchre for his daughter, as he did for her mother, and then gives generous alms to churches and paupers.\textsuperscript{51} In the very next line, however, he takes the remainder of his wealth and gives it all to Abbot Teodose.\textsuperscript{52} Completely absent from this scene is any indication that Panuze has patriarchal/baronial responsibilities. Although we earlier learned that the baron and

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\item \textit{E}, ll. 1244-48.
\item Cf. Campbell, \textit{Gift}, p. 52.
\item \textit{E}, ll. 142-44.
\item Ibid., ll. 208, 928.
\item See, for example, ibid., ll. 104-06, 908-12.
\item Ibid., ll. 1119-23. \textit{HRVE}, pp. 92-93; 199.
\item \textit{E}, ll. 1226-29; 107, 118; 1237-39.
\item Ibid., ll. 1240-41.
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his wife ‘all their days […] maintained a very wealthy household’, there is now no mention of any dependents.53 The poet thus removes Panuze from his masculine roles when he chooses the feminine role of inheriting wealth only to transfer it immediately to a new source of support.54 The gender transgression here – and the poet’s lack of concern about it – is striking when we look at how other OF Lives deal with similar situations: there is no question in Alexis of Eufemien abandoning his wealth and position, while in Guillaume de Berneville’s Vie de saint Gilles, the protagonist’s household expresses eloquent, troubling, and ultimately unresolved objections to Gilles’s excessive charity.55

The particularities of Panuze’s life in the monastery further reveal both his gender transgression and his virtue. Rather than simply becoming one of the community, Panuze apparently inherits ‘his daughter’s cell’, where he then lives, lying ‘there […] on the mat where he had found her’.56 The poet thus defines the space Panuze occupies very explicitly as that of a woman, an association heightened earlier when the poet and the saint characterized the cell as a chamber where the nun Emerald would be with her lover (God).57 However, the cell is also the space that allows Emerald to become part of a community of men, and to speak to Panuze as an equal. The poet makes no explanation for why Panuze might need this special accommodation. Given these circumstances, the baron’s occupation of the cell, like his use of money, seems not only to imitate his child’s actions but also to re-enact the gender transgressions of those actions. In this ‘physical and spiritual […] imitatio’, as Campbell cogently argues, Panuze ‘both literally and metaphorically inhabits his daughter’s cell as an indication of a crucial shift in perspective that promises more intimate knowledge of the saint and the spiritual viewpoint with which she is identified’.58 Panuze’s actions within the cell demonstrate the deep understanding of his daughter that he gains from inhabiting this space: the poet mentions no further grief but instead recounts how the baron’s extreme asceticism wins renown for the abbey, remarking on Panuze’s complete obedience before invoking him as

53 ‘Demenerent lor tens a mut riche barnage’ (ibid., l. 25).
54 Finding that the somewhat later Golden Legend defines feminine charity as excessive, Cullum characterizes St Francis’s ‘feminised form of piety and charity’ as consistent with larger trends of saints’ ‘transgendered behaviour’ that serves ‘to destabilise normative expectations and thus to highlight the call of God’ (‘Gendering Charity’, pp. 148-49).
55 Gilles, ll. 281-340.
56 ‘la cele sa filhe’ (E, l. 1242); ‘Illuc […] sor la nate u il l’avoit trovee’ (ibid., l. 1243).
57 Ibid., ll. 595-98, 645.
58 ‘Epistemology’, p. 216.
a ‘good petitione[r] toward God on our behalf’.\textsuperscript{59} In the end, although still a secondary character, Panuze attains the role of saintly intercessor.

As a model for a worldly but devout audience, Panuze’s actions might seem, in their broadest sense, to demonstrate more imitable forms of Eufrosine’s extraordinary virtue, and, in their specificity, to show that ideal virtue, associated with gender transgression, is unattainable in this world. Like Panuze, some audience members could seek solace from grief by giving up wealth to join a monastery and cultivating obedience through the actions of monastic life. Those with more responsibilities could still give charitably and submit to God’s will. Audience members cannot, however, imitate the specific behaviours that involve Panuze in gender transgression: it is only in response to Eufrosine-Emerald’s actions of disposing of the family wealth and inhabiting an unusual space in an unusual way that Panuze chooses actions pertaining to both masculine and feminine roles. Given Panuze’s final exceptional position, the baron’s extreme virtue might seem to mark him, like his daughter, as liminal: his gender transgressions cannot continue in the world and need to be excluded from society, contained within the cell and within a celibate life. It would seem that the divisions of humanity in gendered roles are an inevitable characteristic of the corrupt world after all.

Translating transgression into daily practice

The idea that \textit{Eufrosine} reinforces gender hierarchies within the world and holds up gender transcendence as an ideal only for exceptional celibates, however, becomes much harder to maintain when we see which aspects of Panuze’s exemplarity the poet amplifies in the epilogue. In fact, the epilogue ignores monasticism as a path to salvation and instead emphasizes virtuous love. Here, the poet adopts gender transgressive roles to express love for the saint, much as Panuze did in his lamentations, and then proceeds to transgress the boundaries between composer and audience, drawing readers into the same transgressions and inviting them to perform acts of love and faith.

In part, the poet uses the same technique as we have seen in Panuze’s lamentations, weaving together language (and here, sounds) from different characters’ prayers in the Life, both male and female. While Abbot Teodoce addresses the saint as “\textit{Lady Eufrosine, friend of our Lord God}”, the poet

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{E}, ll. 1244-46, 1248; ‘Tu nos soies o lui a Deu bons plaidois’ (ibid., l. 1252).
apostrophizes Eufrosine as ‘Lady Eufrosine, God’s bride and friend’.60 The echoes emphasize the poet’s authority and respectful attitude towards the saint, and reaffirm institutional approval of Eufrosine’s status. Since Teodose’s lines open his public eulogy of the saint, the poet’s repetition of them endows the poet with a particularly clerical masculinity. From Panuze, the poet borrows not only an expression of faith in Eufrosine as an intercessor at the Last Judgement.61 He even – in the rhymes – adopts the sounds in which Panuze expresses his grief and his faith. Both passages conclude with a stanza of lines ending in the sound -ie followed by another in -or/-ort: the rhyme sounds of Panuze’s speech – “amie/... vie/... deport/... confort/... resort/... port” – echo in the poet’s ‘envie/... compagnie/... amor/... dolçor/... flor/... labor’.62 Although the sounds are immaterial, their existence of course depends entirely on the use of bodies. Consequently, the repetition of the sounds here, combined with the expression of faith in the saint as an intercessor, suggests an optimistic view of terrestrial existence: even if embodiment and relationships sometimes create obstacles to faith, they are also essential to the pursuit and expression of virtue. In addition, by repeating the sounds used by the saint’s nearest relative, the poet proclaims a deep attachment to the saint and demonstrates that anyone can follow Panuze – loving the saint is not confined to those who knew her in life. Finally, from Eufrosine herself, the poet borrows a supplication that their work be well received: Eufrosine-Emerald says to God, “Accept my humble service in this life” while the poet prays to the saint, ‘Receive with love my humble service’.63 The poet imitates both the saint’s humility and active devotion. By selecting words that the saint speaks at the moment she offers her love to God, when she characterizes herself in extremely feminine language, as female beloved (‘amie’), handmaiden (‘ancele’), and sinful woman (‘pecheris’), the poet emphasizes the feminine roles they borrow with the saint’s words.64 Just as Panuze’s lamentations draw on the words and ideas of Alexis’s family to show the extent and depth of his grief – and therefore of his love for Eufrosine – the poet’s borrowings from Eufrosine,

60 “Eüfrosine dame, amie Damledé” (ibid., l. 1206); ‘Eüfrosine dame, Deu espose et amie’ (ibid., l. 1257). Emphasis added.
61 Ibid., 1174-75, 1269-74.
63 “Recueil le mien petit servise en ceste vie” (E, l. 635); ‘Le mien petit servise recivez par amor’ (ibid., l. 1267). Emphasis added.
64 Ibid., ll. 637, 638, 641.
Panuze, and Teodose allow the poet to express forms of love that exceed individual subjectivities and identities.65

Some of these echoes have previously caught the attention of critics, leading to discussion about the author’s sex. When Florence McCulloch noticed the repetition of the phrase ‘my humble service’ in the saint’s prayer and in the epilogue, she proposed that the poet might be a woman.66 Christopher Storey dismissed the hypothesis as having ‘no convincing reason’, Simon Gaunt determined that it was ‘not [...] persuasive’, and I myself have previously argued that the poet, who explicitly describes themselves with masculine nouns, should be treated as male.67 However, both the poet’s claim to a masculine identity and their troubling of that identity deserve equal respect. It is particularly interesting that the poet combines the words of male and female characters to speak of the poem’s genesis: the poet echoes Teodose’s words as a preface to describing the discovery of the story in a library book, while ‘my humble service’, borrowed from the self-feminizing saint, refers to the composition of the poem. The poet thus associates the scholarly work of finding the Life and translating it into romans (vernacular French) with a male cleric, and the devotional work of composing the Life ‘with tenderness’ with a female saint.68 Clearly defined and even stereotypical roles here combine to evoke the poet’s gender fluidity.

The conclusion to the epilogue deepens the gender indeterminacy of the poet. Just after repeating Emerald’s phrase, ‘my humble service’, the poet claims the identity of a ‘wretched [masculine] sinner’ (‘chaitif pecheor’) – in the rhyme position no less – and then curiously that of a ‘boiseor’, a ‘[masculine] deceiver’.69 Why would the poet, at a key moment of establishing authority, declare themselves a deceiver? ‘Boiseor’ may simply be paired with ‘pecheor’ to emphasize the poet’s humble recognition of their sinfulness. Nonetheless, the word also evokes Panuze’s multiple denunciations of his daughter’s deceit: in his opinion, she has deceived, misled, confounded, and tricked him.70 At the same time, the poet’s use of ‘pecheor’ echoes Emerald’s self-identification as a ‘pecheris’ (feminine sinner) just after she offers her ‘humble service’, like the poet.71 The context of the saint’s words – a prayer that explores the

65 Cf. HRVE 129-30.
68 ‘[P]ar dolçor’ (E, l. 1268).
69 Ibid., ll. 1270, 1272. See ‘boiseor’ in Tobler-Lommatzsch, col. 1033-34.
70 “deceü” (E, l. 1150), “malemens sui menez” (l. 1153), “confondu” (l. 1153), “tricherie” (l. 1159). He utters these accusations in the midst of his grief before he regains faith in his daughter.
71 Ibid., ll. 641-42.
intricacies of chosen identity, power, truth, deception, and sin – allows the possibility that Eufrosine-Emerald's gender transformation is in some way sinful, but it in no way defines how. Instead, it emphasizes the responsibility of witnesses to recognize truths that depend on multiple sources of meaning: God's assumption of true fleshly 'clothing', says Emerald, allowed the apostles to recognize him but deceived Leviathan into thinking God was just a man.\textsuperscript{72}

Might the epilogue's elliptic allusion to these themes establish the poet's authority as a transgender imitator of a transgender saint – a messenger whose ability to convey an ineffable truth depends, as Eufrosine's does, on inhabiting an identity that people confounded by sin see as deceitful? It is impossible to say: the saint's sin and the poet's deception remain obscure. Nonetheless, all of these elements indicate that we should take the anonymity of this poet, at least, as a conscious choice to avoid a single gendered identity.\textsuperscript{73}

Engaging the audience in transgression

The poet models for the audience, then, a love for the saint and a transformation of that love into the action of composing Eufrosine, both using language that transcends gendered identities. This model leaves little room for a merely passive understanding, since the poet explicitly invites the audience to participate, through reading the Life and voicing its words, in this same active love:

\begin{quote}
Now, as soon as I read it, I received your protection. 
Inspired by love for you I have rewritten [the Life] in French, 
Not in order to improve it with greater refinement 
But because I want it to be heard by more people. 
If someone else joins me in loving you, I will not be in the least jealous. 
I would like to have the whole world in my company.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} Emerald notes twice that Leviathan was deceived (‘deceüs’, ibid., ll. 609, 613) when God “received, through a virgin, real flesh and a real soul” (“Voire car et voire arme de virgene receüs”, l. 603) and came to earth “clothed in human form” (“d’umanité vestus”, l. 617). She contrasts Leviathan’s imperceptiveness to the disciples’ recognition (“reconeüs”, l. 621).

\textsuperscript{73} I am belatedly beholden to Karl D. Uitti for challenging me to take McCulloch’s suggestion seriously and for his unwavering refusal to be convinced by my earlier arguments against the poet’s female identity.

\textsuperscript{74} ‘Ore cant je l’ou liute, reçui t’avourie. | Por t’amor ai ta vie en romans recoilhie, | Non por li amender par maior cortesie, | Mais par ce ke je vulh qu’ele plus soit oïe. | S’atres t’aimet o moi, je n’en ai nule envie. | Tot le siecle en voroie avoir a compagnie’ (E, ll. 1261-66).
Although the final line of the stanza – ‘Tot le siecle en voroie avoir a compagne’ – might seem at first like a coy suggestion rather than a direct invitation, it eliminates the distinction between poet and audience. If we read it, especially aloud, we are saying that we want others to join us in loving Eufrosine, and we are therefore already participating in the poet’s project to spread that love to the whole world. We should note the all-inclusive use of ‘the whole world’, too. Rather than addressing the listeners as ‘Sagnors’ (Lords), and thereby defining the primary audience as masculine and distinct from the speaking voice, as the later copies of Eufrosine and many OF Lives do, the poet dissolves all boundaries among devotees of the saint. 75

Since the very next line of the poem echoes the saint’s offering of ‘servise’ (service), the final stanza, with its continuing use of the first person singular, implicates the audience further in both the production of the poem and the imitation of the saint’s devotion:

Receive with love my humble service.
If I have not done it well, I have at least done it with tenderness.
Call on God, our dear Redeemer, for me,
That he have mercy on me, the wretched sinner,
That he never think my grave misdeeds come from animosity,
That he make settlement with this his deceiver while I still live,
And allow me to come, through fasting and weeping
For the sins I have committed, before my judge.
And you, holy maiden, noble one, sweet flower,
Reward me now for my intent and my labour. Amen. 76

As we have seen, the poet here merges the words of the saint, Panuze’s expression of faith in the saint as intercessor at the Last Judgement, the masculine subject position of the ‘chaitif pecheor’, and the ambiguous identity of ‘boiseor’; the reader voicing these perspectives joins the poet in occupying multiple identities. In discussing the nature of the poet’s love for the saint, Gaunt, while rejecting McCulloch’s supposition that the poet

75 See HRVE, p. 46, for a discussion of how the later copyist changes the relationship between narrative voice and audience; pp. 220-21 address other aspects of how the poet engages the audience’s virtue.
76 ‘Le mien petit servise recivez par amor. | Se je ne l’ai fait bien, je l’ai fait par dolçor. | Apele Deu por moi, nostre chier redemptor, | Qu’il ait de moi mercit, le chaitif pecheor, | Ne les mie[n]s grands forfais ne mes toz a iror, | Prende droit en cest siecle d’icest sien boiseor | Et me laist parvenir, et o june et o plor | Des pechiez que j’ai fais, devant me jugeor. | Et tu, sainte pucele, franque rien, dulce flor, | En itant moi meris m’entente et me labor. Amen’ (E, ll. 1267-76).
is female, notes that ‘were we to assume the text was written by a woman, this would have interesting implications for a “queer” reading, given the eroticism of the narrator’s relationship with the saint’. If we agree that the poet transcends any singular gendered identity, then their love for the saint is undoubtedly queer. Consequently, the audience who reads the epilogue lovingly participates in this same queer love, exceeding the boundaries of individual worldly relationships, just as we have seen in Panuze’s love for Eufrosine. The virtuous, salvific value of this excessive love should not be underestimated. The love and its expression in devotional acts like composing or reading Eufrosine are the offerings that the poet-audience makes to the saint to convince her to argue for the poet-audience’s salvation at the Last Judgement; rather than sinful, this love is what may compensate for grave misdeeds. Although fasting and weeping for one’s sins are necessary here, too, the structure of the stanza lays the emphasis on love, tenderness, and labour. The poem as a whole amplifies this emphasis, showing penitential actions as one form of devotion, but teaching love as the primary path to virtue and salvation.

Conclusion

As models, Panuze and the poet contribute to the growing body of evidence that some medieval thinkers, writing as clerics, saw fixed gender roles as a limitation connected to sin that could be overcome through the cultivation of virtue. How should we situate this anti-hierarchical perspective in relation to the extensively documented misogynist literature? Yes, Eufrosine dies a woman, Panuze a man, and the poet self-identifies using masculine pronouns, but how they inhabit those identities matters: Eufrosine dies a female monk recognized for her power, Panuze dies an enclosed, silent, obedient, and dependent monk, and the poet constructs a voice and perspective out of a variety of subjectivities. For the characters, the transgressions do take place at the edge of secular society and within monastic life, but they are also the key dramatic elements of a story; the poet’s invitation in the epilogue opens the possibility of cultivating virtue and transgressing gender in daily activities such as reading and responding to literature. Combined with Eufrosine’s and Panuze’s examples, those activities might involve relations to authority figures, money, and space in worldly life. If

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78 L. 1271.
we decide to subordinate Eufrosine’s transgressive pedagogy – along with Catherine’s and George’s and the rest – as unorthodox or subconscious, then we buttress a monolithic idea of the Middle Ages as the antithesis of what we ‘moderns’ hope to be. Consequently, we fortify the historical foundations for attitudes like misogyny or transphobia, thereby legitimizing these attitudes, at least for some people. Enjoying Eufrosine’s transgressive ideals does not demand a naïve refusal of medieval ‘realities’. Sharing with Eufrosine the pleasure of the transgressions demands questioning our understanding of those realities and recognizing that people across time have seen gender inequities as constructed and changeable.\(^{79}\) If we allow ourselves to read Eufrosine’s invitation to gender transgression as intentional and orthodox, we destabilize – even if only a little – the foundations of current inequities, demonstrate the value of medieval literature for rethinking modern problems, and contribute to revealing the deep history of people now recognized as trans or genderqueer.

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\(^{79}\) See also Gutt, ‘Transgender Genealogy’, p. 130; Mills, ‘Visibly’, pp. 541, 553-56; Campbell, ‘Hagiography’, pp. 394-95; Bychowski, in this volume (pp. 245-63, especially 247-50, 258, 261-63).


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