

Cross-Dressing the Early Modern:

Exploring Transformations through Dress



Dressing the Early Modern Network Conference

Friday 23 September 2022, Supported by the University of Cambridge,
Online 10.00am BST

Cross-dressing in the early modern period is a phenomenon that happened for various reasons in different contexts. Whether it was done to conceal one's sex in order to protect the wearer or to resume a different identity, dress served as a powerful tool that could be used to disguise and blur gender expectations. From cross-dressing in literature, theatre and stage to cross-dressing in images and art, there are ample historical accounts of various social classes that reveal these transformations. From male actors dressing as women to female courtesans dressing as men the spaces of cross-dressing vary from public to private and the boundaries are often unclear. Disguise, whether it was done for pleasurable pursuits such as during masquerade balls or whether it was done for protection, or professional reasons, reveals various implications of dress in the early modern.

This conference aims to generate a discussion about cross-dressing in the early modern period and explore the significance of transformation through dress in various settings and spaces.

Please register here to attend this conference:

<https://crossdressingearlymodern2022.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Organised by Jola Pellumbi and Sara van Dijk, Dressing the Early Modern Network,
and Ana Howie and Alessandro Nicola Malusà, University of Cambridge.

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10:00 Welcome by organizers

10:10-11:40 Session 1: Places and Motivations for Cross-Dressing

Chair: Professor Peter McNeil (University of Technology, Sydney)

10:10-10:30 *Saints and Sinners: Female Bodies and Male Attire in Late Medieval England*
Eleanor Birch (Pembroke College, Oxford)

10:30-10:50 *The Mystery of the Dark Garment: Self-representation as Virago in the Self-portraits of Sophonisba Anguissola (c. 1535 - 1625)*
Alla Cherniak (Ben Gurion University, Be'er-Sheva)

10:50-11:10 *A Man's Clothing – a Woman's Pleasure*
Cynthia Sadler (European University Institute, Florence)

11:10-11:40 Discussion

11:40-12:15 Break

12:15-13:45 Session 2: Cross-Dressing in Theatre and Plays

Chair: Professor Laura Gowing (King's College, London)

12:15-12:35 *"Virgins' tears [...] Might blanch a blackamoor": Blackface and Transmasculinity in The Fatal Contract*
Ezra Horbury (University of York)

12:35-12:55 *Constructing Identity through Embodiment: How the Kerchief Created Onnagata's Gender in the Early Edo Period (1603-1700)*
Sophie Eichelberger (University of North Carolina)

12:55-13:15 *Cross-Dressing to Protect and (Pre)serve: Lope de Vega's Vengeful Vixens*
Philip Allen (Midwestern State University, Texas)

13:15-13:45 Discussion

13:45-14:30 Break

14:30-16:00 Session 3: Depictions of Cross-Dressing

Chair: Professor Ulinka Rublack (University of Cambridge)

14:30-14:50 *Cross-Dressing in the Floating World: the Portrayal of the Niwaka Festival in Edo Ukiyo-e*
Gefan Wang (King's College, London)

14:50-15:10 *"Talora in abito di femmina, talora di maschio": Roleplay of Powerful Women in Mica Overlay Miniature Portraits*
Marco Bei (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

15:10-15:30 *Displaying the Power of Women: Cross-Dressing and Inversion in Amalia van Solms's Cabinet at Honselaarsdijk*
Sandra Racek (Northwestern University / Art Institute of Chicago)

15:30-16:00 Discussion

16.00-16.15 Concluding Remarks

16:15-17:00 Online Coffee Room / Social Chat (optional)