In Plautus' Roman Comedies, the stock character of the slave employs mistaken identity or a disguise to deceive his master and others to invert the social order of the play, characterizing the slave as intelligent, cunning, and deceitful. Michael Shapiro writes in Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages that English playwright John Lyly expanded upon the Plautine slave to create the Lylian page, who appears in subplots to create "tonal contrast" with an ironic perspective on the main action by satirizing their masters and authority figures through "asides, punning, and parody" (66). In The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Shakespeare elaborates on the Lyly's page by creating Julia, the cross-gendered Lylian page, who utilizes her advantages of appearing as a man and thinking like a woman to provide satiric insights on the male perspective, specifically in a soliloquy in Act 4, Scene 4. By examining the use of feminine line, apotheosis, allegory, epiphany, and epanaphora in her soliloquy, Julia's characterization shows her as an androgynous Lylian page who has the ability to think as a woman but act as a man and that provides a satiric perspective on how men objectify women for courtly love since she must restore the play from its inverted order. In The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies, Penny Gay defines courtly love as a prominent literary idea from the medieval period that characterizes the idealization of a woman in an ascendant position over the man so that his emotional self-worth increase because of her; he also yearns for her body and soul to unite with him, as the pinnacle of moral existence (35).

By inverting the hierarchy of courtly love, the internal structure of Julia's soliloquy in Act 4, Scene 4 employs allegory, alliteration, epanaphora, epistrophe, feminine line, and apocope to characterize her with masculine qualities but with feminine rationality and servitude to love, creating a satiric perspective. The internal structure of this soliloquy juxtaposes the two genders because Julia employs allegory, alliteration, epanaphora, epistrophe, feminine line, and apocope to characterize her as a woman in an ascendant position over the man so that his emotional self-worth increase because of her; he also yearns for her body and soul to unite with him, as the pinnacle of moral existence (35).

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Because I love him, I must p'ny him. This ring I gave him when he parted from me, To bind him to remember my good will; And now am I (unhappy messenger) To plead for that which I would not obtain, To carry that which I would have refus'd, To praise his faith which I would have disprais'd. I am my master's true confirmed love; But cannot be true servant to my master, Unless I prove false traitor to myself. Yet will I woo for him, but yet so coldly
As, heaven it knows, I would not have him speed. (Shakespeare 4.4.90-107)

Scansion reveals this soliloquy's rhythmic meter is iambic pentameter, yet the feminine line in line 90 ends with an extra unstressed rhythm on "message" to emphasize the importance of the letter that Julia carries. By juxtaposing that with the stress on "women", an androgynous style frames the composition of this soliloquy to remind the audience of Julia's manly disguise and womanly being. The alliteration in line 91 addresses her speech to Proteus, and because that line has an apocope and a feminine line, the stresses fall on "fox", "shepherd", and "lambs" to indicate an allegory in line 92. The allegory metaphorically compares Julia's disguise as a page with her ability to be fox-like by employing cunning and deceit because she is a shepherd or messenger for Proteus, in which Julia is responsible for herding his lamb, figuratively being Silvia, to become his object of courtly love. With these consecutive feminine lines, the style characterizes Julia with wit, cunning, and deceit, while retaining servitude to Proteus, from which an androgynous composure is presented.

Moreover, Julia adds a feminine aspect to her characterization showing her rationality and dedication to Proteus, despite his betrayal of their bond of courtly love. By using epiphany in both line 94 and 95 and epanaphora in both line 95 and 96, these figures of speech connect a series of thoughts that highlight Julia's rationality: Julia understands the reality of the situation and logically deduces that Proteus hates her because he loves Silvia. This creates dramatic irony as the audience already knows...
Shakespearean women are characterized by “clear-headedness, a frankness in facing fact, and a power of deciding what is to be done” to accompany their “shrewdness, wit, and courage without ceasing to be wholly feminine and the objects of desire” (52). Because Julia is rational and Proteus is irrational, by placing the two characters on stage together, juxtaposition occurs that contrasts his and her idea of what courtly love is and how it should be treated. This ridiculous and therefore satirizes how courtly love is considered a sacred custom because Proteus uses it as a device by which he gains power to manipulate and objectify women, while conversely Julia genuinely believes it has sacred bonds that must be upheld. In line 103 and 104, both a lexical and a notional set illustrate the hierarchy of the relationships between Proteus, Julia, and courtly love as a slave to him (Thurio) and his love; he and the love he exhibits for her are his masters. Julia’s sallies, its internal structure, and the figures of speech with it in all provide a characterization that she is an androgynous character who, in her disguise, can act with wit, cunning, and deceit and yet can also retain her rationality and beliefs in love, which offers a satiric perspective of how women are objectified by courtly love.

The scene structure of Act 4 allows Julia to think akin to a heroine and act akin to a Lylian page who satirizes Proteus’ attempts at courtly love by contrasting Proteus’ characterization with her asides, creating pathos with the audience. Because of how the selection, sequence, and focus of events are placed in Act 4, Scene 2, Julia becomes a prominent character as a messenger for Proteus, and Proteus becomes a prominent character as he attempts to woo Sylvia, juxtaposing both characters, which contrasts their characterizations. When Proteus truly loves a woman, but she is read (Shakespeare 4.2.105-106). Proteus’ characterization suggests that he lies, cares only for his romantic desires, and changes his appearance according to the object of his courtly love. Julia’s asides (Shakespeare 4.2.106-126) in this scene, conversely, suggest that while she loves Proteus she cannot speak it because that would reveal her true identity, so she displays her wit by satirizing Proteus’ spurious comments to undermine his character. By contrasting the two characters, Wolfgang Riehle writes in Shakespeare, Plautus, and The Humanist Tradition that each character becomes a main function of the plot through his or her characterization, either by direct speech or by reflection of another character (45). Julia’s ironic tone in her asides to the audience both diminish Proteus’ honour and amplify his characterization of dishonesty, which allows her to create a relationship with the audience through pathos for her honour and mistreatment. Riehle also notes that Shakespeare imparts this contrasting of characterization by placing Luciana and Adriana on stage together in The Comedy of Errors (46). In Act 2, Scene 1, both Luciana and Adriana are placed together to contrast Adriana’s characterization as a strongly opinionated wife regarding how a family or relationship should operate and Luciana’s characterization as a submissive female to her male master. Although each characterization is different, their differences are amplified by appearing on stage together and are reflected off the other’s. Julia’s freedom, however, to make those remarks are only because of her disguise as a Lylian page, but her satirical perspective is only possible because Proteus appears on stage with her, creating contrasting characterizations, so that her remarks to the audience are amplified by his characterization to create pathos with the audience, showing the androgyny of her character.

To restore the play from its inversion, Julia must both enact her feminine desire for Proteus’ courtly love and use her disguise to do so; only because of Julia’s androgynous nature is she able to do this, which satirizes the premise of the play that men control men through the objectification of courtly love. Julia’s use of witty asides (Shakespeare 5.2.7-28) communicate to the audience that she is both free from the constraints of patriarchy and that removing Thurio from the five lovers will restore the play to its symmetrical shape. The progression of Julia’s characterization from a neurotic, insecure woman in Act 1, Scene 2, to the object of Proteus’ courtly love in Act 2, Scene 2, and finally to a witty Lylian page who mocks Thurio’s attempt to woo Sylvia via Proteus illustrate that her disguise allows her to be both on stage and act androgynously by speaking in a manner that is unacceptable for a female. Moreover, Julia is liberated from the constraints of patriarchy, and ironically courtly love liberates her while it imprisons the other lovers, inverting the play’s composure which suggests that she is the only character capable of being influenced by courtly love while remaining rational. William Carroll points out in The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy that women are the ones who must change, partly because they are the only ones able of self-transformation and partly because the men have already transformed by falling in love, and a woman’s transformation is a change without any real consequences (313). As the analysis of Julia’s sallies illustrates in Act 4, Scene 4, she still loves Proteus, and her undying love guarantees the plays resolution in a traditional fashion, and Julia’s change, although more satiric in tone, is primarily through disguise, something which is not permanent but rather a temporary change. Her asides also echo the conventions of the Plautine slave; which, according to Riehle, allows the character to communicate with the audience in a way to direct the plot through “play-writing” (24). Comparatively, Julia’s asides tell the audience that Thurio is literally a joke and will not upset the symmetrical ending that is expected; likewise, in Pseudolus, Pseudolus engages in metatheatre by “play-writing” throughout the play, acting as director to the audience (24). In Julia’s case, “play-writing” takes the form of puns, irony, and wit to suggest that neither Thurio nor Proteus is fit for Silvia, because of which she is directing the play towards a symmetrical ending, wherein Valentine and Sylvia are rejoined as are Julia and Proteus. A symmetrical ending is only possible because Julia’s disguise changes her appearance to allow her masculine qualities and agency in a patriarchal society and because she retains her femininity so that a satiric perspective of courtly love is presented.

When Julia gives her soliloquy in Act 4, Scene 4, the internal structure, the figures of speech, and the style with which they are used suggest a pivotal characterization that becomes a catalyst for the remainder of the play. As an androgynous Lylian page, Julia is able to utilize her rational femininity with the agency and power that a male has in Elizabethan society, and because The Two Gentlemen of Verona is thematically centered in the idea of courtly love, Shakespeare ironically employs Julia as his main character to satirize to men treat women as objects of love, yet the men in the play are unable to return the play to its normal order and uphold women in the true sense of courtly love.

References
This paper explores the conflict between hegemonic and new masculinity in Phil Klay's Redeployment, illustrating the changing conception of gender roles and masculinity in storytelling about war. This paper juxtaposes traditional conceptions...
The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Photograph: Gary Calton for the Observer. Director Nick Bagnall and composer James Fortune take Shakespeare’s early satirical romance (some say, his very first play) out of time and relocate it in 1966 (love letters transform to 45rpm vinyl discs). They bend it into a music-led event with eight actors playing 12 roles (13 if we count musician Fred Thomas doubling as a hound dog) and also a variety of instruments in an onstage band (drums, guitars, sax, keyboard etc). The plot explores a range of loves – not all of them groovy. Valentine loves Sylvia. Proteus loves Julia until he meets Sylvia, decides he can’t live without her ...

Seamus Heaney

By Dipsikha Thakur

In his poem ‘Punishment’ from the poetry collection North (1975), Seamus Heaney picks up the voice of a witness who is suspended between the possibilities of love, silence, voyeurism, outrage and above all, the understanding of the process... Read Article »