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Not before Cross-Dressing: *Cinaedi* under Attack - *vestes fallentes* and *galbini mores* in the Literature of Early Imperial Rome

“*Nulla frontis fides.*” - “You can’t trust appearances!” With this battle cry, the male narrator of Juvenal’s second *Satire* takes the pose of a “moral crusader,” (Braund, *Juvenal* 1996, 168) and launches an assault on the *Socratici cinaedi*. He is scandalized by their two-faced hypocrisy, since in public they behave as strict moralists (*tristes*), while privately enjoying a life of decadent pleasure (*obscaeni*). It is all the more astounding that the narrator allows his attack to be continued for thirty verses by Laronia, a female prostitute. Does this “cross-writing” serve as an adequate authorial gesture for criticizing the *molles*, who not only excessively engaged in passive sexual practices (*subire, lambere*), but also spun wool in a professional manner (2,56: *Penelope melius, levius Arachne*), thus usurping “female” terrain? After this brief exchange of roles, the male narrator launches into a third assault against these effeminates, who do not style themselves as virile moral apostles, but as “confessed” transvestites in women’s garments, turn the Bona Dea cult into a “male” event. No “true” women allowed! The climax of these inverted rituals is a “same-sex-wedding” between the “bride” and “her” husband.

Is this simply a raving satirist engaging in polemic against an established “male homosexual subculture” (Richlin, *JHistSex* 3,1993, 541ff.) or a “third sex” (Hirschfeld)? Does the text reflect a “confusion of both gender and status” (Garber, *Vested Interests*, 27)? Or is a demanding, witty game hidden behind the text’s moralizing façade, in which the *poeta doctus* tests the erotic reading competency of the *lector doctus*?

In this paper, I will provide insight on these questions by examining the intertextual play between Juvenal’s second satire and a series of “hypotexts” (Genette, *Palimpsests* 1982), primarily Martial’s epigrams. I will concentrate on three central problems: first, the “confusion of gender” in male-male marriage; second, the “confusion of status,” (offenses against the *lex Roscia theatralis*); finally, the camouflage of passive sexual tendencies by a conservative way of dressing (cross-dressing), clearly masculine body hair, a conservative, morally rigid speech (“cross-speaking”), and excessively strong odors. The basic strategy of this invective is to foil the attempts of *cinaedi* to remain inconspicuous. To “reveal” them provides the narrator (and the intended reader) with the greatest pleasure.

It is heartening to recall that not all cross-dressing in Roman literature inevitably breaks out into “misocinaedic” invective. For example, Ovid (*fast.* 2,305ff.) does not laugh at Hercules when he spends the night in a cave with Omphale, wearing her clothes. Instead, the person tricked by this cross-dressing is the target of Ovid’s amusement: Faunus believes the *vestes fallentes*, and is rudely awakened when he discovers the hero’s hairy calves.