Preface

Our curiosity roused by a few chance findings of female cross-dressers, we started to collect cases systematically in 1979 as a by-product of our more regular historical research. This resulted in the book *Daar was laatst een meisje loos: Nederlandse vrouwen als matrozen en soldaten*, published by Ambo in 1981. The offer from Macmillan to publish an English translation of the Dutch book made us renew our investigations. From September 1985 to September 1986 we rewrote the text completely and the result turned out not to be a translation but a new and different book. Many people contributed to both the Dutch and the English version. Cross-dressing or transvestism is a subject which can only be researched systematically to a limited extent and we owe many references to historians, archivists and others who knew we were looking for information on this subject. Among those we want to thank are C. R. Boxer, J. R. Bruyn, Peter Burke, Herman Diederiks, Bas Dudok van Heel, Florike Egmond, Petronella Elema, Els van Eyck van Heslinga, Sjoerd Faber, Eco Haitsma Mulier, Gert Hekma, Arend Huussen, Gert Jan Johannes, Jean Jüngen, Maria Leuker, Theo van der Meer, C. F. L. Paul, Joke Spaans, and Pieter Spierenburg. And, of course, without the help of librarians and archivists a work like this is not possible.

René Grémaux let us read his dissertation in progress on 'sworn virgins' in the Balkans and we profited much from the discussions we had. Anna Clark and Julie Wheelwright shared their work in progress on female cross-dressers in England with us. Estelle Cohen and Ivan Gaskell in England, Andrea Michler in France, and Wayne Tebrake in the United States helped us in finding books which were not available in the Netherlands. We also want to thank the Department of History of the Erasmus University at Rotterdam for the facilities offered and our colleagues for their support. Anton Blok, Florike Egmond, Theo van der Meer and Pieter Spierenburg commented on earlier versions or parts of it, much to the benefit of the book. We profited from presenting and discussing our ideas on transsexuality and Maria van Antwerpen at the conference 'Sexualiteit in de Achttiende Eeuw', 13–15 September 1984, at Gent. We are also grateful to Jean-Louis

Flandrin for giving us the opportunity to discuss our ideas at his seminar at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales at Paris, 21 March 1986. The lively discussions there certainly made us reconsider some of our ideas.

Judy Marcure translated most of the drafts and corrected the final text, giving her last comments even on the eve of her emigration to Australia. We want to thank her for her enthusiasm and support. We are also grateful to the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (ZWO) for subsidising part of the translation.

Finally our greatest debts are to Florence Koorn and Ed Elbers who gave us, over the years, ample moral and practical support. They also, from their own disciplines as a historian and a psychologist respectively, suggested much literature and discussed many ideas with us. Therefore we dedicate this book to both of them.

RUDOLF M. DEKKER
LOTTE C. VAN DE POL

I spoke to you of Amazons before . . . but I could give you many examples of women on our own ships who did men's service and were exceptionally brave. Of these I could tell many amusing stories only they would take up too much paper. I could also tell you how I myself have discovered women in soldier's clothing in our armies and made them change their dress. During my days in the army a girl in the cavalry was caught plundering and suffered herself to be hung without making her sex known. This the sergeant on duty told me; he had her undressed after she had died and felt sorry about it. And are such women not also Amazons?

Nicolaas Witsen
Amsterdam statesman and amateur geographer, 1641–1717
(J. F. Gebhart, *Het leven van mr. Nicolaas Cornelisz. Witsen*, Utrecht, 1882, II, p. 408)