

# “Who is the Third Who Walks Always Beside You?”

# Representations of Non-Binary Gender in Modernist Literature

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

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This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/L503848/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities

September 2019

# Abstract

This thesis offers new readings of texts from the height of main-period modernism, arguing that we can productively understand them as exhibiting prototypical examples of what we would today call non-binary gender. These texts have previously been read as androgynous, camp, transvestite and even queer, but I will argue that main-period modernism took place in a cultural moment in which the divisions between male and female were eroding, giving rise to non-binary gendered forms in some of its foremost literary works. This study also elaborates upon what exactly distinguishes these texts as non-binary, enumerates the tropes which the authors used to set up their non-binary subjects, and examines what this means for the presentation of sexuality within the texts, particularly for the prevalent bisexuality of the focal characters.

Chapter one focuses on Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando,* a text which sparked the practice of transgender analysis of modernist texts, arguing that theorists have mistaken Orlando for a trans woman when we might better understand the character as breaking the gender binary. *Orlando* is compared with T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land,* where I make the argument that the Tiresias figure in the poem is gendered in a similar manner to Orlando, with facets of maleness and femaleness to both personae. The second chapter moves on to contrast James Joyce’s *Ulysses* with Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood,* arguing that both Leopold Bloom and Robin Vote fall outside of a binary type. Leopold seems to imagine himself moving between male and female, whereas Robin rejects the constraints of both binary genders. The final chapter seeks to expand the queer canon through a re-examination of two little-read works; Natalie Clifford Barney’s *The One Who is Legion,* and Alan L. Hart’s *The Undaunted.* I will argue that *The One Who is* *Legion* follows many of the tropes of the previous texts, and therefore serves as a prime example of non-binary modernism, whereas *The Undaunted* treats all of its characters as though they were transgendered.

I also demonstrate that this phenomenon of non-binary modernism was by no means universal, and offer a more binary trans example from Radclyffe Hall, and reactionary cisgender voices from Pound, Lawrence and Lewis. I conclude that there is no single trait that makes a modernist text non-binary, but rather that a cluster of related traits might push us to include a given text under the label of non-binary modernism.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my partner, Sophie Cocker, for their constant support throughout the PhD process. I can think of nobody else whom I would allow to see my writing at its shoddiest.

Thanks also go to Maryam Jameela, Miranda Debenham and Mollie Marsh; the indefatigable editors. It is a great help to know people who are consistently more enthusiastic about your writing than you are.

My gratitude also goes to my supervisors - Adam Piette (whose notes, where comprehensible, were always illuminating) and Ágnes Lehóczky (without whom I am quite sure I would have no interest in poetry at all).

This project was funded by White Rose College of Arts and Humanities.

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# Introduction

In May of 2014, as I was just starting to write the proposal for this thesis, *TIME* magazine ran its now-famous cover-story, entitled ‘The Transgender Tipping Point’. Laverne Cox - a trans actress most famous for playing a trans character on Netflix’s ‘Orange is the New Black’ - graced the cover, and is quoted as stating in the article that “We are in a time now […] when more and more trans people want to come forward and say ‘this is who I am’.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Though the article acknowledges that the struggle for transgender rights is by no means over, its overall tone is positive – this was a cultural moment in which it genuinely seemed like progress in the trans movement could only continue from strength to strength. A lot of this upward trajectory could be attributed to the increased visibility of trans people in the public eye – the article pointed not just to Cox’s stellar career, but also to trans models being used in an ad campaign by Barney’s, and presenter Janet Mock’s bestselling memoir on the subject of her transition. Though it didn’t dwell for long on the subject, the article also acknowledged that some trans people reject the gender binary, “seeing gender as a spectrum, rather than a two-option multiple choice question.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This is an oblique reference to the existence of non-binary genders – a group of similar identities which began to enter the mainstream of the Western public consciousness in the 1990s. These non-binary identities include individuals who identify as a third gender, a combination of genders, or as no gender at all, and it is this set of identities which will form the central focus of this thesis.

However, as I come to submit in 2019, the optimism of *TIME*’s declaration of the ‘transgender tipping point’ leaves a somewhat bitter taste in my mouth. The increased visibility of trans people in everyday life has led to a backlash from anti-trans campaigners (from both far-right groups and ‘gender critical/ trans exclusionary feminists’), in the form of harassment, legal action and violence. Within British academia, Dr. Kathleen Stock circulated on twitter an open letter she sent to *The Sunday Times -* undersigned by some thirty other academics – which declared that academic freedom was being curtailed by Universities’ ties to the LBGT charity, Stonewall. Amongst other things, the letter decried “specialist trans policies, in addition to general equality policies, which outlaw ‘transphobic’ teaching and research materials”, and stated that “many of us would deny that pronouns refer to an inner feeling of gender identity, and wish to say so”.[[3]](#footnote-3) The letter was quickly decried as transphobic, and a counter-petition was started by Dr Caroline Dodds Pennock – of my own University of Sheffield – which stated that “we are writing to register our support for policies and practices which are inclusive and supportive of our trans colleagues and students.”[[4]](#footnote-4) This received over 3600 signatures from university staff across the country in its first day. Despite the positive response to the petition, it is dismaying that an affirmation of something so basic as the use of a trans student’s pronouns needed to be argued at all.

In Britain, trans healthcare is still chronically underfunded, and I have friends and loved-ones who have been on waiting lists for treatments, hormones and surgeries for as long as three years. In America, the Trump administration has targeted numerous freedoms for trans individuals, including the Department of Defence’s ban on transgender service members (April 12, 2019), the summary dismissal of all complaints to the Department of Education from trans students citing gender identity discrimination (February 18, 2018), and the proposal of the removal of protections from discrimination for transgender patients in healthcare (May 24, 2019), to name but a few.[[5]](#footnote-5) In Scotland, parliament has elected not to extend legal recognition to non-binary individuals, in spite of the 62% of Scottish citizens who answered that the government should recognise non-binary identities in the public consultation on the matter.[[6]](#footnote-6) Westminster has elected not to announce its response to the consultation on the Gender Recognition Act until after its recess, at the end of 2019;[[7]](#footnote-7) until then, my passport still insists that I am a man to anyone who cares to look at it, and my partner and I cannot marry under our actual genders.

It is against this mixed backdrop of slow progress and backward steps that I wrote this thesis, which examines the representation of non-binary genders not in society but in literature, taking these new ways of thinking about gender and using them as a lens through which to view the text, in order to tease out the literary roots of Western non-binary thought. I will argue that some of the first examples of what would, today, be termed a non-binary attitude to gender began to enter the English literary canon around the turn of the 20th century, alongside the rise of modernist literature. Modernism characterised itself by its remarkable break from traditional ways of viewing the world, the dissolution of former hierarchies, and a revolution in the ways of thinking about culture, psychology and the socio-political norms of personhood. With this in mind, it is only to be expected that the modernists were the first to challenge the strict binary gender structures which had prevailed in Europe and America up to and throughout the Victorian period. The texts examined in the first two chapters have been chosen for their well-known dealings with non-normative sexuality and gender, which critics have chosen to interpret previously in the light of transvestitism, androgyny of style and personality, and transsexuality. However, I hope to show that Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* take a truly non-binary attitude to the presentation of their focal characters. The third and final chapter takes up two relatively unknown works of the period, Natalie Clifford Barney’s *The One Who Is Legion* and Alan Hart’s *The Undaunted*, in order to show that they too have a great deal to offer the queer canon.

This project arose from an annoyance. I touched upon philosophy during my undergrad years, and was particularly drawn towards classical philosophy. One module focused purely on Plato’s *Symposium,[[8]](#footnote-8)* which I took the time to read before the class began, and was delighted to find a treasure trove of queer themes – men who appeared to love men and women, a male couple who loved one another exclusively, hymnals given to the potentials of same-sex love, one of very few classical references to lesbianism, and a tantalising myth containing an androgyne being. However, upon attending the first lecture, after a run through the meaning of ‘*eros’* and a brief tour of how to go about referencing the dialogues, we finally received a warning. The exact words of the warning escape me now, but the gist ran something like this: do not make the mistake of referring to the characters within the text as ‘gay’, because this term is not of the time. The characters, though they appear queer, are not to be taken as being like a modern homosexual – to do so would be a grave anachronism. We received a now familiar quote from Foucault, a reminder that “homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now [c18th] a species.”[[9]](#footnote-9) I remember, at the time, feeling a vague sense of disappointment, then nodding my head and moving on to write two distinctly run-of-the-mill essays on the subject of Pausanias’ ramblings.

With hindsight, I’m better able to articulate why I felt so disappointed – make no mistake, I do recognise the difference between these individuals from the 4th Century BCE and myself, and I have no great disagreement with Foucault (at least in this instance). Rather, my problem was that there was no corresponding admonition that we should not recognise the likes of Glaucon and Adeimantus as straight men – in fact, we were actively reminded that most of these men would take wives and raise families, even after (or whilst) practicing pederasty, with no hint of the irony of this potentially throwing their straightness into question. Smilingly, we were told that this was a book about love in general, a universal kind of love, and quietly, more insidiously, about a love that is more readily subsumed by a straight paradigm than it is a queer one. This kind of statement is far more damaging to the queer listener than the straight – the former is denied one of precious few historical examples of *somebody who looks like me*, whereas the latter is unquestioningly allowed to continue along in the belief that *all of history looks like me.* The past is a different country to all, but its difference to the marginalised is emphasised, and vice versa for the dominant group. The purpose of this investigation is, put very roughly, to provide an antidote to this effect, to assert what should be the relatively unassuming statement that *some of history looks like me.*

To elaborate, I mean by ‘antidote’ that I intend for this series of readings to be ‘reparative’ in the sense that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick used the term. In her essay ‘Paranoid and Reparative Readings (or, you’re so paranoid you probably think this essay is about you)*’,* Sedgwick highlights the fact that contemporary queer criticism (and criticism in general) has become dominated by a paranoid impulse. As she puts it, “in a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systematic oppression, to theorize out of anything but a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious or complacent.”[[10]](#footnote-10)  However, she goes on to point out that this dominance of the paranoid hermeneutic is not necessarily a universally beneficial one, insofar as paranoia proposes that “‘anything you can do to me I can do worse’ and ‘anything you can do to me I can do first’ to myself.”[[11]](#footnote-11) This is to say that the queer reader can become caught up with reproducing, within themselves, the negativity which general society ascribes to them, *in anticipation of society doing so.* As contrast and remedy, Sedgwick proposes the ‘reparative’ reading, the aims of which she defines as being “additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer an inchoate self.”[[12]](#footnote-12) In short, the reparative reading seeks *use* and *strength* from a text, to the good of the reader, having accepted that gaining a deeper knowledge of the flaws of the text will not necessarily take the reader anywhere useful or new.

Before discussing the readings that might come from the application of modern transgender thinking and terminology to modernist literature, it would first be prudent to explain the genesis of such terminology, and how we came to think about transness in the first place. I would like to follow Richards, Bouman and Barker’s Genderqueer and Non-Binary Identities in highlighting the fact that any thorough discussion of transness should not start with Freud, Ellis or Hirschfield – as has often been the academic standard of the past – but rather begin by elucidating some of the practices relating to third-gendered positions and roles in pre-1900s and non-Western societies.[[13]](#footnote-13) These include the ‘sworn virgins’ of Albania, “the biological female who, later in life, after having been socialized as a woman for many years, reconstructs herself as a ‘social man’”,[[14]](#footnote-14) a practice which still exists today, though it began to fall off with the rise of communism in Albania. The Thai Kathoey position themselves variably as effeminate gay men, women, or “a second kind of woman”.[[15]](#footnote-15) The umbrella term ‘two-spirit’ has been adopted by first-nations communities to include a number of third-gender positions,[[16]](#footnote-16) such as the Cree napêw iskwêwisêhot, ‘man who dresses as a woman’ and iskwêw ka napêwayat, ‘woman who dresses as a man’*.*[[17]](#footnote-17) Likewise, the Hijra of the Indian subcontinent consist mainly of small commune-based groups of assigned-male individuals lead by a guru figure, who often dress in women’s clothing, and who historically practised castration.[[18]](#footnote-18) These last two, Hijra and Two-Spirit, are both examples of third-gendered identities which were damaged or outlawed during Western colonisation – British colonial powers, for example, passed “laws criminalizing emasculation” which remained in place even after they withdrew from India.[[19]](#footnote-19) This is all to say that non-binary gender identities have existed since before our modern usage of such terminology, and vastly predate the (massively outdated) Western model which charts the origin of transness to the operating theatre of Magnus Hirschfield, and the ‘wrong body’ model of trans being.

In Western thinking on transness, Freud first proposed a theory of ‘psychic hermaphroditism’ in his 1905 essay *The Sexual Aberrations*, as a potential explanation of a condition which was known at the time as ‘inversion’ (now known by the de-pathologised terms homo/bi-sexuality). He begins from the fact that as the human foetus is developing, its sexual characteristics are indistinguishable – a phenomenon which he refers to as ‘bisexuality’ (intersex):

These long-familiar facts of anatomy give rise to the idea of an originally bisexual disposition that is transformed, in the course of development, toward a monosexual one, with small residues of the atrophied sex.

It would have seemed consistent to transfer this conception to the psychical sphere, and to understand inversion in its varieties as an expression of psychical hermaphroditism.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Here we see that Freud’s conception of psychic hermaphroditism is closely bound up with developmental bodily androgyny; if we can see in the body of the man the vestigial remnants of pre-natal femininity (nipples etc.), it would be reasonable to suppose that the same might be true of the mind. According to Freud, it would be this latent femininity in the mind of the male which caused a same-sex attraction. However, Freud later rejects this idea, stating that among the Greeks “men with the strongest masculine appearance feature among the inverts”,[[21]](#footnote-21) and that therefore it is the qualities of the opposite sex within the love-object which the invert desires, which explained the pederasty of the ancients.

Despite Freud’s rejection of the concept of psychic hermaphroditism, the theory did gain ground with other theorists of the time, particularly the sexologist Havelock Ellis, who published similar theories within the year. In *The Theory of Sexual Inversion*, he states that “there are a considerable number of subtle approximations to the opposite sex in inverted persons, both on the physical and psychic side.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Coupled with the belief that same-sex desire was accompanied by a physical resemblance to the opposite sex, Ellis held that the persona of the invert would take on certain traits of the opposite sex. However, he also states that there is another type of inversion, which “leads a person to feel like a person of the opposite sex, and to adopt, so far as possible, the taste, habits and dress of the opposite sex, while the direction of the sexual impulse remains normal”.[[23]](#footnote-23) He termed this phenomenon ‘sexo-aesthetic inversion’, or ‘Eonism’, after the 19thcentury Chevalier D’Eon, a male-assigned individual who ‘posed as’ a woman for the latter years of their life. This was an important advance on the theories of Freud, insofar as it created a distinction between sexual orientation and gender-identity, which was previously completely lacking.

In 1906, Karl M. Baer became the first recorded individual to undergo female-to-male gender-affirming surgeries, under the auspices of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld. Baer’s case is somewhat unique, insofar as he appears to have been born intersex and was assigned female at birth, but it is important to note because he won full legal rights to live as a man and marry a woman in 1907, in his native Germany.[[24]](#footnote-24) He also wrote a semi-autobiographical novel about his experiences, Aus eines Mannes Mädchenjahren (Memoirs of a Man's Maiden Years), in collaboration with Hirschfeld, which was also released in 1907 under the pen name ‘N. O. Body’. The precise details of Baer’s intersex status and surgeries have been lost, possibly due to the forced closure of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute of Sexology) in 1933 by the Nazi regime, and the subsequent burning of the institute’s archives and the majority of Hirschfield’s work. The Memoirs’ narrator, however, describes himself early in the text in a manner which is very similar to what we do know of Baer’s life:

I was born a boy, raised as a girl. The fabric of my life was twisted from tangled threads until, with a mighty blow, the inner nature of my masculinity tore apart the veil of half-truths that upbringing, habit and vital necessity had spun about me. One may raise a healthy boy in as womanish a manner as one wishes, and a female creature in as mannish; never will this cause their senses to be forever reversed. But customs and habits bind so tightly that it needed an impulse from without, which was, however, also felt strongly from within, before I resolved to take the decisive outer transformation.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Here, the author touches upon many of what would become Hirschfeld’s central talking points in his later writings on trans individuals. He demonstrates a strong sense of having always conceptualised himself as male, possessing a core of masculinity at odds with his body, an “inner nature” that would become Hirschfeld’s concept of ‘identity’. Likewise, Baer displays a familiar dichotomy of transness; this personal identity is highly resistant to efforts to counter it (“never will this cause their senses to be forever reversed”), whilst the assigned identity is difficult to escape from, being composed of societal customs and performative habits which are deeply ingrained. The language used by the narrative voice is also somewhat difficult to decode – he states “I was born a boy, but raised as a girl”, at this point leaving open whether this was a trans feeling realised early on, or whether he was born with male genitalia and simply treated as a girl. However, given that the section finishes on the decision to take “the decisive outer transformation”, we quickly arrive at the realisation that the former was true – N. O. Body was assigned female at birth, but felt strongly that he was male, aligning perfectly with the ‘wrong body’ model of transsexuality which would later come to dominate Hirschfeld’s writing on the subject.

The history of female-to-male surgeries is more difficult to trace than the corresponding male-to-female procedures because of the relative usefulness of many of the processes associated with female-to-male transitioning in the treatment of various medical problems in cis female bodies. Mastectomy, for example, has long been practiced for medical and ceremonial reasons, with the earliest attested mention of mastectomy for the prevention of breast cancer was recommended to Empress Theodora by her court physician Aëtius of Amida , in 548 AD.[[26]](#footnote-26) Likewise, vaginal hysterectomies had been used as early as 1507, by Berengarius of da Carpi of Bologna, in the treatment of inverted uteruses,[[27]](#footnote-27) and the abdominal hysterectomy was first performed by Charles Clay in 1843 in Manchester, England, though the patient died in the post-operative period.[[28]](#footnote-28) Likewise, early cases of transmasculine feeling are likely to have been obfuscated by the conflation of woman-loving-woman sexual desire and transmasculine gender identification: indeed, prominent Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing famously said of female sexual inversion (i.e. lesbianism) that it consisted of “the masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom”,[[29]](#footnote-29) typifying the conflation of queer love and queer gender at the time.

Conversely, the history of male-to-female gender-affirming surgeries is comparatively well known, and considerably easier to track. The first recorded case of which records survive is that of Dora Richter, who worked as a domestic servant at the Institut before receiving an orchiectomy in 1922 (performed by Dr. Levy-Lenz), and subsequently a penectomy and an early form of vaginoplasty in 1931 (performed by Prof. Dr. Erwing Gohrbandt).[[30]](#footnote-30) These preceded the more well-known case of Lili Ilse Elvenes, who entered the institute in 1930 and was the second woman to receive Gohrbandt’s surgeries in 1931.[[31]](#footnote-31) All of the above treatments also fell under the purview of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, who headed the Institut for the duration of the first incarnation of its existence. Hirschfeld is credited with writing many of the earliest texts on trans phenomena in the West, including the pioneering Die Transvestiten in 1910, which distinguished between cross-dressing and homosexuality. It also cautioned that "it is a mistake if one imagines that both (sexes) are two fully separate entities, one from the other; to the contrary, the constantly present merging of both into one […] is the core for the genesis of a personality”,[[32]](#footnote-32) positing a universal bisexuality in much the same vein as that which we saw in the work of Freud and Ellis in the previous section. This was followed in 1923 by ‘Die Intersexuelle Konstitution’ (The Intersexual Constitution), published in the Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen (Yearbook for Intermediate Sexual Types), which is credited with being the first text not only to distinguish between transvestites and ‘seelischer Transsexualismus’ (‘psychic transsexuality’, coining the latter word) but also to separate the categories of ‘neurological gynandromorphs’ from ‘physiological hermaphrodites’[[33]](#footnote-33) (sic.) – that is to say, laying clear the distinction between transsexuals and intersexed individuals.

In 1908, social philosopher Edward Carpenter (who lived relatively openly as a homosexual man with the poet George Merrill for much of his life) contributed his own thoughts to the field of sexology. His work, *The Intermediate Sex*, attempts to provide an account of same-sex desire and create a place in society for the inverted individual as an intermediary between men and women. Unlike Ellis, he held that “in bodily structure there is, as a rule, nothing to distinguish the subjects of our discussion from ordinary men and women”,[[34]](#footnote-34) though he agreed with the positioning of transgender phenomena as extreme examples of homosexuality. However, he also wrote at length on the possibility of the Uranian (his term for invert/homosexual/bisexual) occupying a midpoint between man and woman:

It is beginning to be recognised that the sexes do not or should not normally form two groups hopelessly isolated in habit and feeling from each other, but that they rather represent the two poles of one group - which is the human race; so that while certainly the extreme specimens at either pole are vastly divergent, there are great numbers in the middle region who (though differing corporeally as men and women) are by emotion and temperament very near to each other[...] Nature, it might appear, in mixing the elements which go to compose each individual, does not always keep her two groups of ingredients - which represent the two sexes - properly apart, but often throws them crosswise in a somewhat baffling manner.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Perhaps because of his own status as a queer individual, Carpenter’s writing showed a much greater degree of sensitivity and warmth towards the feeling of the ‘inverts’ themselves. He makes a distinction between the bodies of his subjects and their ‘natures’, in much the same way we might today talk about transgender individuals. More than this, he writes of characters in whom there is “a union or balance of feminine or masculine qualities”[[36]](#footnote-36), who might possess “through their double nature, command of life in all its phases, and a certain freemasonry of the secrets of the two sexes which may favour their function as reconcilers and interpreters”.[[37]](#footnote-37) Here, Carpenter seems not only open to the idea of non-normative (that is, non-male/female) manifestations of gender, but asserts that such individuals might hold a privileged knowledge because of their intermediate position. This concept can be traced back as far as Tiresias of the ancient Greeks,[[38]](#footnote-38) who was consulted by the Gods themselves because he was the only individual who knew both manhood and womanhood. This knowledge, thought Carpenter, allowed the uranian to ease the 20th Century anxiety that communication was breaking down between the sexes, that men and women were becoming polarised in their differences as feminist activists became more vocal in their articulations of the subjugation of women.

The next great shift in trans thought is seen around the 1960s, where trans phenomena ceased to be seen as an extreme variation of homosexuality (at least in theoretical terms), and the distinction between gender and sex was properly defined. In 1965, John F. Oliven wrote in *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology* that:

Where the compulsive urge reaches beyond female vestments, and becomes an urge for gender change, transvestitism becomes ‘transsexualism.’ The term is misleading; actually, ‘transgenderism’ is what is meant, because sexuality is not a major factor in primary transvestitism.[[39]](#footnote-39)

This constitutes the earliest known use of the term ‘transgenderism’ (preceding the other common citation, Harry Benjamin, by a full year), and demonstrates the shift from the emphasis on sex and sexuality to gender. In 1966, Harry Benjamin released his book *The Transsexual Phenomenon,* which stated that “True transsexuals feel that they *belong* to the other sex, they want to *be* and *function* as members of the opposite sex, not only to appear as such.”[[40]](#footnote-40) This same book also attempted to create a seven-point scale to match Kinsey’s sexual orientation scale, which Benjamin termed the ‘The Sex Orientation Scale (S.O.S.)*.[[41]](#footnote-41)* Its seven categories ranged between 0 (“any person of normal sex and gender orientation for whom ideas of "dressing" or sex change are completely foreign and definitely unpleasant”) and VI (“High Intensity Transsexual”), and listed potential treatments for each stage above I, including gender-affirming surgeries.[[42]](#footnote-42) Crucially, Benjamin distinguished between queer genders and sexualities, stating that stages on his scale could refer to any individual “whether that person is hetero-, bi-, or homosexual.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Further than this, in his 1968 book *Sex and Gender,* Robert Stoller distinguishedbetween the state of being physically male, the sense of maleness, and masculinity. This is summed up in his description of a young boy growing up, as follows: “By this time, he knows he is a male (whether a masculine one or not). Normally, the male external genitalia are a sign to the individual and to society that this is a male, but they are not essential to producing the sense of maleness.”[[44]](#footnote-44) We see here that biological markers of male sex i.e. the penis, are distinguished from one’s sense of being male (‘maleness’) and also from the state of being masculine (i.e. acting in stereotypical male fashion). These distinctions would become useful and highly important for trans debate in the years to come.

Whilst the status of trans individuals was at no point fully or unproblematically accepted during the 20th century, the academic debate surrounding trans existence and access to gendered spaces came to a head around the 1980s. In 1978, Sandy Stone resigned from her position as sound engineer of Olivia Records, because of controversy surrounding her status as a trans woman in a lesbian-aligned company (although it should be noted that Stone had disclosed her status as trans to Olivia before working for them). Janice Raymond went on to write about this event, and others, in her 1979 book *The Transsexual Empire,* which put forward the transphobic position that “the male-to-constructed-female transsexual exhibits the attempt to possess women in a bodily sense while acting out the images into which men have moulded women”,[[45]](#footnote-45) essentially arguing that trans women are men who reinforce the gender binary. This polarised debate into trans-inclusionary feminists and trans-exclusionary feminists, and directly served to motivate some of the earliest trans feminist writings. 1979 also brought Lou Sullivan’s essay ‘*A Transvestite Answers a Feminist’,* which sought to question “when a man wishes to appear as a woman or a woman as a man? Where do they begin to be real?”,[[46]](#footnote-46) and provided one of the earliest engagements from a trans man on feminist criticisms of trans identity. Within a year of *Empire’s* publication, Carol Riddell published her review of the book, *Divided Sisterhood*, which criticised Raymond’s methodologies and conclusions. They were deemed “dangerous to trans-sexuals because it does not treat us as human beings at all”,[[47]](#footnote-47) providing one of the most prominent calls from union between trans-inclusionary and trans-exclusory feminists.

Finally, for this section, the 1990s brought the first articulations of non-binary identities *as such,* rather than the more nebulous extensions of Benjamin’s ‘low-intensity transsexuals’ or Carpenter’s ‘intermediate types’. Kate Bornstein’s *Gender Outlaw* served to define gender fluidity as “the refusal to remain one gender or the other”,[[48]](#footnote-48) and advanced the concept of the ‘outlaw’, “who subscribes to a dynamic of change, outside of a given dichotomy”[[49]](#footnote-49) – both of which helped to articulate a third position outside of male or female. Less than a year later, the term ‘genderqueer’ was coined by activist Riki Anne Wilchins in *In your face* newsletter.[[50]](#footnote-50) This same time period also saw the lexis of trans/gender deepened outside of genderqueer positions – Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Liberation* (1992) served to cement the word ‘transgender’ as the catch-all term for individuals who occupied gendered positions outside of those they were assigned at birth, whilst also calling for increasing freedoms for such individuals to live their lives free from violence.[[51]](#footnote-51) Likewise, the term ‘cisgender’ also came into use in the 1990s, although its status as the most logical antonym for ‘transgender’ make its origins somewhat difficult to track, and several unrelated groups appear to have been using it at roughly similar times. It is most commonly attributed to Dana Leland Defosse, from a post to Usenet newsgroup alt.transgendered,[[52]](#footnote-52) and was later popularised by biologist/trans theorist Julia Serano in her 2007 book *Whipping Girl.[[53]](#footnote-53)* The introduction of cisgender as a term meant that debate no longer had to distinguish between ‘trans and normal’, ‘trans man and man’ or even ‘trans and not-trans’ – it set up trans and cis as distinct but parallel categories. The term ‘non-binary’ is if anything even harder to trace, although Charlie McNabb states in *Non-Binary Gender Identities* that “sometime in the early 2010s, the term nonbinary gained popularity and quickly became the new umbrella term.”[[54]](#footnote-54) The first attested usage in this modern sense appears to go to *Time Out* magazine in 2013, which wrote “Somewhere in the mix are the gender queer, non-binary folks who reject established gender norms”.[[55]](#footnote-55) The prevalence of sources such as .usenet, *Time Out,* and*In Your Face* should serve to demonstrate that these terminologies are not merely a product of the academy, which are then projected outwards, but rather that they are a hybrid product of the everyday lives of trans people, of researchers and activists, all seeking to articulate things which, up until very recently, went unsaid.

To say, as we have seen, that modernist literature and ‘modern’ thought on transgender topics essentially saw their genesis at the same time – at the birth of the 20th century – one might be forgiven for questioning why exactly it has taken until the early part of the 21st for theorists and critics to begin investigating the influences that the one might have had upon the other. Certainly, it seems that ‘queer modernism’ as a broader catch-all category has been practiced, if not named, from as early as the 1950s, though queer genders received far less attention than queer sexualities, which were themselves becoming ‘proper’ objects of academic study at roughly the same time as trans subjects, under the conflated label of ‘invert’. Indeed, Jay Prosser argues in *Second Skins* that may of the references to gender fluidity in early queer theory were used as a trope of queer sexualities, eliding the one into the other.[[56]](#footnote-56) In her ‘Modernism at Night’ introduction*,* Heather Love asserts that “of all the forms of marginal modernism that have emerged over the past couple of decades, queer modernism seems particularly likely to merge into modernism proper”.[[57]](#footnote-57) So resonant are the themes in some of modernism’s holy texts that some of the most influential articles on the subject predate the birth of gay and lesbian studies proper by several decades. Although it was almost immediately retracted, John Peter’s ‘New Interpretation of the Waste Land’ offered a radical re-reading of the subject of the poem as a man mourning the irreconcilable loss of a romantic partner, who also happened to be male.[[58]](#footnote-58) This reading was built upon in the 1969 re-release of the essay, in which Peter included an addendum identifying the Hyacinth Girl as Jean Verdenal.[[59]](#footnote-59) Later Eliot scholars picked up on this thread, including James E Miller in ‘T. S. Eliot’s ‘Uranian Muse’’,[[60]](#footnote-60) and R A Kaye in ‘‘A Splendid Readiness for Death’: T S Eliot, the homosexual cult of St. Sebastian and World War 1’.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Another strain of analysis of modernist texts which moves beyond the reading of their queerness as simply sexual focuses on the prominent position of mixed- or cross- gender presentation within them. However, rather than take this presentation as a potential signifier of anything deeper within the character themselves, they arrive at a surface level reading of the kind: a male-bodied (treated here as synonymous with ‘male’) character wears female-coded clothes, and is thus a transvestite, or crossdresser. The prime example of this genre of reading is Gilbert and Gubar’s ‘Crossdressing and Re-Dressing: Transvestitism as Metaphor’, which focuses on many of the same texts that this thesis will. It analyses them in terms of the author’s treatment of crossdressing as a theme, dividing their findings according to whether said author is male or female:

Literary men, working variations upon the traditional dichotomy of appearance and reality, often oppose false costumes to true clothing. Sometimes, they oppose costume (seen as false or artificial) to nakedness (which is true, "natural," and the equivalent of a suitable garment or guise). Frequently, moreover, they see false costumes as unsexed or wrongly sexed, transvestite travesties, while true costumes are properly sexed.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Gilbert and Gubar contrasted this with their reading of the female modernists, who “not only regard all clothing as costume, they also define all costume as false”,[[63]](#footnote-63) seeing the female view of cross-dressing as revisionary and liberating. Unfortunately, this still upholds the characteristically second-wave feminist line of thinking which equates a male body with a male identity, and vice versa. This type of argument is repeated in many analyses of the ‘Circe’chapter of *Ulysses* because of the prominence of crossed-costumes within it, particularly given the chapter’s form as a playscript. Thus, Austin Briggs’ ‘Whorehouse/Playhouse’,[[64]](#footnote-64) Cheryl Herr’s ‘One Good Turn Deserves Another’,[[65]](#footnote-65) and Teresa Louro’s ‘Trafficking in the Wrong Costume’[[66]](#footnote-66) all compare the events of the chapter to either Vaudevillian cross-dressing or pantomime. Herr states that “it is a measure of James Joyce’s cultural savvy that in Ulysses the passages devoted to Leopold Bloom’s transvestite experiments occur within the dramatic context of the Nighttown episode”.[[67]](#footnote-67) However, I believe that these articles correctly recognise *Circe’s* form as dramatic, whilst undervaluing its nature as psychodramatic, therefore seeing Bloom’s cross-dressing as play, rather than gender-signifier. Likewise, Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* is also frequently read as a transvestite text par-excellence, both because of the scenes in which Robin is seen in men’s trousers and for Matthew O’Connor’s fondness for dressing in women’s clothing. This is seen in Sarah Hayden’s ‘What Happens When a Transvestite Gynaecologist Usurps the Narrator’,[[68]](#footnote-68) and Laura Veltman’s ‘The Bible Lies One Way, But the Night-Gown Another’, which calls O’Connor “perhaps literature’s first cross-dressing Catholic”.[[69]](#footnote-69) Even where these articles touch upon gender mixing and transgender potentialities, saying that O’Connor’s monologues “disrupt the masculine/feminine binary”,[[70]](#footnote-70) or that a text “may be undermining the easy cultural assumption that one is ‘really’ of a certain gender”,[[71]](#footnote-71) they remain focused on the idea of ‘false-costume’. This is in opposition to the recognition that the costume may be more true than the body itself, and therefore severely limit their reading’s usefulness from a transgender perspective.

When researching such texts as *Orlando, Ulysses,* and *Nightwood,* one of the key descriptors which surfaces is ‘androgynous’ i.e. ‘such and such a character is *androgynous’* or, less commonly, ‘the text itself, its form, is *androgynous’.* From a trans perspective, the concept of androgyny can be both useful and damaging, functioning simultaneously as a functional descriptor of a particular style or mode of being which is non-binary in the strictest sense of the term (i.e. neither wholly male nor female), but also as a way of eliding potentially trans embodiments into a cissexist paradigm. This latter takes the form ‘the *androgynous woman* only *appears* to be of indeterminate sex/gender, but *actually/properly* belongs to the category *woman*’. With this in mind, I regard the articles which analyse modernist texts as androgynous with a kind of wariness; they may be useful without necessarily being agreeable. Margaret Bolkting, for example, recognises that *Nightwood* “encodes an androgynous opposition to military ideology”[[72]](#footnote-72) in ‘The Great War and the Modern Gender Consciousness’, but later goes on to state that O’Connor has a “problematic nature” because “he calls himself a woman”[[73]](#footnote-73) – a prime example of androgynous theorizing serving to concretize rather than challenge cissexism. At the other end of the scale, Karen Kaivola states in ‘Revisiting Woolf’s Representation of Androgyny’ that “if Orlando’s identity is androgynous, that androgyny is mobile, not static: presenting not a smooth synthesis of opposition but a more chaotic hermaphroditic [sic] ‘intermix’, Orlando’s gender and her desires constantly change.”[[74]](#footnote-74) This conception of androgyny goes beyond presentation to identity, and beyond the binary; it seems almost trans-by-another-name. Likewise, when confronted with the enigma of Leopold Bloom, many theorists have named the ‘mixed-middling’s’ personality as androgynous; see ‘A New Approach to Bloom as “Womanly Man”’ by Joseph Allen Boone,[[75]](#footnote-75) *Towards Androgyny* by Carolyn Heilbrun,[[76]](#footnote-76) ‘Joyce’s Bloom: Beyond Sexual Possessiveness’ by Suzette Henke,[[77]](#footnote-77) and Leithauser and Sporn’s ‘Hypospadia: Linguistic Guidepost to the Themes of the *Circe* episode’.[[78]](#footnote-78) Mary Burgon’s ‘Androgynous Fatherhood in *Ulysses* and *Women in Love’* sees androgyny as a method of denying female creativity outside of the maternal, as a woman’s “[b]iological creativity may demand acknowledgement in the realm of nature, but her creative potential is rejected in the realm of other ‘making of art’”.[[79]](#footnote-79) Androgynous fatherhood then becomes a method of encroaching upon the woman’s generative role even within procreation, an argument which is echoed (though more positively) in Walkley’s ‘The Bloom of Motherhood: Couvade as Structural Device in *Ulysses’*.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Closely allied to this idea of androgyny is the concept of camp; Susan Sontag said that “the androgyne is certainly one of the great images of camp sensibility”,[[81]](#footnote-81) so it should come as little surprise that many theorists also analyse the texts I am using in terms of campness. And, like androgyny, camp can be both useful and damaging; camp loves gender transgression, but it doesn’t necessarily respect it, because camp respects nothing. The camp view of the world-as-play contains within it a nihilism that fails to recognise that some things are serious: a drag queen and a trans woman are not the same, but camp loves them both as if they were. This elision is typified by George Piggford’s ‘”Who’s that Girl”: Annie Lennox, Woolf’s *Orlando*, and Female Camp Androgyny’, which characterizes the camp eye as a method of understanding Orlando’s androgyny, stating that “[t]hose who can read the camp will also be disoriented (by Orlando); the difference is that they will revel in and celebrate this sensation”.[[82]](#footnote-82) This is followed by Madelyn Detloff’s ‘Camp Orlando’, which codifies camp as “a queer form of dramatic irony that creates an insider group which is in the know”[[83]](#footnote-83), in this case a group of people which appreciates and thus renders intelligible “Woolf’s own hyperbolic spoofs of normative gender performance” in Orlando.[[84]](#footnote-84) This camp reading has also been offered up as a potential method of understanding the famously impenetrable *Nightwood,* as in Margaret Gillespie’s ‘The Triumph of the Epicene Style’[[85]](#footnote-85) and alluded to in Jane Marcus ‘Laughing at Leviticus’.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Most importantly for this thesis, the last decade or so has seen a turn in modernist criticism towards the acknowledgement of the transgender themes present in its central texts. However, in order to properly understand this turn, we must begin over twenty years ago, by looking to analyses of Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness.* In 1998, Melanie Taylor released an article entitled ‘”The Masculine Soul Heaving in the Female Bosom”: Theories of Inversion in *The Well of Loneliness’,* which pointed out that Stephen’s identity as an invert contained both lesbian and trans connotations. She argued that “in constructing *The Well* as *the* lesbian novel and claiming its protagonist as lesbianism’s prime fictional icon, it was politically expedient that her masculinity should be side-lined”,[[87]](#footnote-87) asserting that whilst Stephen’s transmasculinity was readily apparent to readers, it had been ignored by critics for political and rhetorical reasons. In the same year, Jay Prosser released his influential monograph *Second Skins*, which also touched upon *The Well,* making a similar argument to Taylor:

What is remarkable about previous work on the book is how close it has come, in the same moment to claiming the novel’s subject as lesbian, to performing that reading where Stephen is a woman who really would be a man: that is, where she is not a lesbian but a male-to-female transsexual.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Prosser went on to contrast the realist portrayal of Stephen in *The Well* with the more typically modernist Orlando in Virginia Woolf’s book of the same name, arguing that “in spite of its fantastic sex change Orlando is emphatically not about transsexuality. Indeed, Orlando is not about the sexed body at all but the cultural vicissitudes of gender.”[[89]](#footnote-89) In many ways, *The Well* and *Orlando* are texts which beg comparison – they both concern themes of (ostensibly) queer gender and sexuality, they were published within months of each other, and Woolf defended Hall at *The Well’s* obscenity trial. It is this debate, started by Taylor and Prosser, which would invite trans defences of *Orlando,* and begin the study of trans modernism in general. *Orlando’s* status as a trans text is at once blindingly obvious and totteringly precarious – the character’s sex literally shifts from male to female, but, as Prosser observed, they never suffer from gender dysphoria or the like in the same manner that Stephen did. I will go on to argue later in this thesis that this is because theorists have mistakenly focussed on Orlando as exhibiting binary male-to-female transsexuality, whereas the novel is better understood as non-binary.

However, Prosser’s relatively simple assertion, that Orlando seems trans but isn’t really, and conversely that Stephen is a more authentic literary vision of a trans man, provided the spark for a new strain of modernist studies, with critics backing up the reading of Stephen as a trans. These included Moddelmogg’s ‘Modernism and Sexology’,[[90]](#footnote-90) which explicated the roots of Stephen’s invert identity in the sexology of Kraft Ebbing; and Laura Doan’s ‘”The Outcast of One Age is the Hero of Another”: Radcliffe Hall, Edward Carpenter and the Intermediate Sex’,[[91]](#footnote-91) which added Carpenter to the list of *The Well’s* sexological underpinnings. Others were less quick to subsume Stephen under the trans label, such as Heather Love in ‘”Spoiled Identity”: Stephen Gordon’s Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History’, which pointed out that these “idealist re-readings imagine a perfectibility belied both by Stephen’s loneliness and contemporary queer experience”,[[92]](#footnote-92) and Laura Green in ‘”Hall of Mirrors”: Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* and Modernist Fictions of Identity’,[[93]](#footnote-93) which likewise pointed out that the same openness that led both lesbians and trans men to identify with Stephen made it difficult to subsume her into either identity category.

Other critics sought to argue against Prosser, that Stephen and Orlando were not so dissimilar after all, that both might in fact be taken into a trans canon. Taylor, for example, later wrote of Orlando as enacting “a founding principle of transgender politics”,[[94]](#footnote-94) whilst Isabella Luksh argued in ‘Reading and Reassessing the Construction of Gender and Sexuality in Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando’* that Orlando “is not defined or restricted by one gender identity, and this experience falls under the broader definition of the term ‘transgender’.”[[95]](#footnote-95) Further readings affirming Orlando’s identity as transgender can be found in Jennifer Smith’s ‘A Highly Ambiguous Condition’,[[96]](#footnote-96) and Steph Craps’s ‘”How to Do Things with Gender”: Transgenderism in Woolf’s *Orlando’,* which dealt directly with Prosser’s stance by arguing that Orlando’s “subversion of deep-seated assumptions about gendered behaviour [is] supressed by its reduction to an escapade.”[[97]](#footnote-97) This idea, of Orlando’s trans function as destabilizing gender, is also found in Berman’s ‘Is the Trans in Transgender the Same as the Trans in Transnational’,[[98]](#footnote-98) which compares *Orlando’s* challenge to the male/female binary to its challenge to the Orient/Occident binary, and Lucas Crawford’s *Transgender Architectonics*, which links the novel to a “mode of aesthetic, rather than internal or pathological, disjunction.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Pamela Caughie also provided a particularly significant contribution to the field, in ‘The Temporality of Modernist Life Writing in the Era of Transsexualism’, given that it acknowledges that modernism was not only in its infancy at the same time as the study of transsexuality, but that trans thought “was also engendered by modernist aesthetics, formal innovations responding to and shaping a changing social discourse of sexuality and subjectivity”,[[100]](#footnote-100) recognising the intersubjectivity of trans practices and modernist artforms.

However, trans interpretations of modernist texts were by no means limited to *Orlando* and *The Well of Loneliness.* Emma Heaney’s monograph, *The New Woman – Literary Modernism, Queer Theory and the Trans Feminine Allegory,* provided sustained readings of Joyce, Barnes and Eliot as producing specifically transfeminine characters (Bloom, O’Connor and Tiresias, respectively), and declared that “These modernists were the first to claim that, although she might mean anything, the trans woman must mean something.”[[101]](#footnote-101) Trans readings of the works of Djuna Barnes were also provided by Michael Davidson in ‘Pregnant Men: Modernism, Disability and Biofuturity in Djuna Barnes’,[[102]](#footnote-102) and Ery Shin in ‘Djuna Barnes, History’s Elsewhere and the Transgender’, which argued that *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanac* display a “mythical transgenderism, but the transgender effects no real radical inversion of the status quo”,[[103]](#footnote-103) reflecting Barnes’ distaste for recuperative queer projects and labels. Tiresias himself also proved a productive site for trans modernism, with Ed Madden’s *Tiresian Poetics* providing a genealogy of the figure as “mythic transsexual”, “ambiguously gendered and sequentially sexed”[[104]](#footnote-104) in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, and Gary Sandison argued similarly for reading the speaker in Beckett’s *Embers* as a “transgender, transmortal mantic voice” in ‘Beckett’s *Embers* and the Modernist Ovid: A Tiresian Poetic’.[[105]](#footnote-105) Lucas Crawford likewise read Beckett as producing transgender texts, specifically in *Transgender Architectonics* and ‘”I’ll Call Him Mahood Instead, I Prefer That, I’m Queer”’ where he highlighted the fact that the frequent name changes of the speaker in *The Unnameable “*lands so closely to a ubiquitous event of contemporary transgender life”,[[106]](#footnote-106) bringing subjective, affective reading into the interpretation of the text as trans, just as I will later in this thesis.

Much as Taylor had earlier read Stein’s writing as trans in her thesis, Chris Coffman recently published a monograph which sought, through analysis of Stein’s writing, to examine the author herself as transmasculine. Whilst this thesis is uninterested in such biographic contentions, I believe that *Gertrude Stein’s Transmasculinity* is admirable for its vital acknowledgement of its own subjectivity, calling “into question the division between objectivity and subjectivity, and between fiction and autobiography”,[[107]](#footnote-107) in much the manner that Stein did in her own work. Coffman drew heavily from the framework of Valerie Rohy’s ‘Hemingway, Literalism and Transgender Reading’, which likewise suggested that “a transgender reading need not name Hemmingway as transgender, but must cease to defend him against transgender possibilities, [and] recognise that some of these possibilities may be possible.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Again, I think it unproductive to speculate whether an author was cis or trans (being dead, we can’t ask them), but we might fruitfully transplant the idea of ‘ceasing to defend’ an *author* from trans possibilities to the *text* itself, to read whilst awake to the possibility that a given subject or action within the text might be trans in nature. Ultimately, my frustration with nearly all of these critics reading modernist texts as trans is that, while they argue successfully enough that their given text is trans, they do not go far enough with what that transness can mean. When Heaney writes of Tiresias as transfeminine, or Coffman reads Stein and her writing as transmasculine, they remain wedded to a gender binary which need not apply when we are talking with trans in mind. Using the language of the non-binary – which was available whilst all these critics were writing, if not necessarily widely-known – we can more precisely articulate what Luksh came closest to in saying that Orlando “is not refined or restricted by one gender identity”,[[109]](#footnote-109) and expand this category outwards in order to show how it might be applied to other texts within the modernist canon.

The advances in trans criticism in literature detailed above were enabled by, and mirrored in, the rise in trans studies as an academic discipline and theoretical standpoint in its own right. Trans studies grew from queer theory in much the same way that queer theory itself grew from a combination of gay and lesbian studies and feminist theory – in fact, trans studies takes as one of its foundational texts Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, which also constitutes one of the foundations of queer theory. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler articulates the highly influential theory of gender performativity, in which “gender proves to be performance – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject which might be said to pre-exist the deed.”[[110]](#footnote-110) In this formulation, gender becomes a repeatedly instantiated chain of imitative interactions and negotiations with the idea of what it is to be male or female – an idea which ultimately proves to be ephemeral, having no prime originator, but which is nevertheless reinforced (often coercively) within society. This articulation of gender as a ‘doing’, denaturalising it from an innate and inescapable quality of a human being, making it instead an action consistently undertaken by an actor, led to the first articulations of an ‘un-doing’ of gender, and the first genderqueer activism along with it.

The first, and possibly most important, articulation of trans studies as we know it today was Sandy Stone’s ‘The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto’, which built upon Butler’s work, and also sought to answer Janice Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire*, which it references in the title. In the ‘Manifesto’, Stone pointed out that the modern trans individual, along with those past, was subject to a “textual violence”,[[111]](#footnote-111) pointing out the self-reinforcing diagnostic criteria for gender dysphoria syndrome, to which trans individuals had to conform in order to receive needed surgeries. Her example is the phenomenon of Harry Benjamin’s *The Transsexual Phenomenon* predicting the symptoms of prospective transsexuals to an extraordinary degree, only for it to emerge several years later that these patients were passing the book around amongst themselves in order to learn how to be accepted for the surgery in the first place. Stone also examined biographical and autobiographical accounts of the transitions of Jan Morris, Canary Conn, Hedy Jo Star and Lile Elbe to show that all reproduced the dominant, hegemonic view that male and female were starkly separate; that each ‘said goodbye’ to their prior, male self, underwent an operation and awoke a new woman. Thus, says Stone, the transsexual becomes “a hotly contested site of cultural inscription, a meaning machine for the production of ideal type. […] A story which culture tells itself, the transsexual body is a tactile politics of reproduction constituted through textual violence.”[[112]](#footnote-112) In highlighting both the coercion-through-text of the diagnostic criteria, and the self-regulatory tone of the earlier transsexual narratives, Stone sought to reconfigure the figure of the transsexual into the ‘posttranssexual’, “not a problematic ‘third gender’, but rather as a genre – a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored.”[[113]](#footnote-113) This is to say that the transsexual has previously been forced to erase their own history and lived experience, in place of which Stone calls for a posttranssexual configuration, which acknowledges admixture, polyvocality, “physicalities of constantly shifting figure and ground that exceed the frame of any possible representation.”[[114]](#footnote-114) This call for the visibility of the (post)transsexual, a figure who is by their nature hybrid, shifting, and disruptive of dominant hetero/cis-normative paradigms is what gave birth to trans studies. It is also taken as a central guiding principle of this thesis, calling attention to the previously hidden/unacknowledged hybrid identities in my chosen texts where they “reconstitute elements of gender in new and unexpected geometries”,[[115]](#footnote-115) in Stone’s words.

Although Stone used Butler in her opening statement of trans studies, performativity (and with it, queer theory more generally) has come into question within the field. Prosser argued that:

What gets dropped from transgender in its queer deployment to signify subversive gender performativity is […] the narrative of becoming a biological man or biological woman (as opposed to a performative or affective one) – in brief and simple terms, the materiality of the sexed body.[[116]](#footnote-116)

Gender performativity fails to account for the trans desire for bodily alteration; if gender were purely performative, surely simply changing the performance, and the intelligibility of said performance to the audience, would be enough, but this does not appear to be the case. Trans studies likewise diverge from queer theory in that the former address “non-normative gender identifications and embodiments” where the latter focuses upon “non-normative desires and sexual practices”, although trans studies (like queer theory) “defines itself against identity, offering a challenge to the perceived stability of the two-gender system”, according to Heather Love.[[117]](#footnote-117) However, this critique is in a way less far-reaching than queer theory would take it; where queer seeks the dissolution of stable identity categories, trans instead reconfigures them, moving outward from a stable cis male/female binary to a more proliferous – though still distinctly categorisable – set of gendered modes of being.[[118]](#footnote-118) In the same way, this thesis will seek to show how my chosen subjects challenge the concept of a stable gender binary that corresponds directly to natal sex, but, rather than treating this as a challenge to gender more broadly, I will instead show how the subject might be better understood under a scheme of genders which includes more options than simply ‘male’ or ‘female’ (i.e. non-binary identities), and which is not dependent upon natal sex (i.e. trans potentialities). However, Zein Murib also opens up the possibility for positioning sexuality as an object of trans studies, wherein the focus would become “expressions of desire that inflect sexuality”[[119]](#footnote-119) – that is, questioning how we view sexualities when non-normative expressions of gender, and non-normative gender identities, become involved. In this way, this thesis will also examine how we might conceptualise (and re-conceptualise) the themes of queer sexuality which have already long been objects of study in modernist criticism, in light of my re-readings of the subjects’ genders.

In 2014, the first issue of the *Transgender Studies Quarterly* was published, edited by Paisley Currah and Susan Stryker. This was the first journal to focus purely on trans issues from the perspective of the humanities, rather than a psychiatric, surgical or endocrinological perspective. The opening essay by Stryker and Currah has since become another defining text in the field, and promotes several key principals of this thesis. The authors state that:

The field encompasses the possibility that transgender people […] can be subjects of knowledge as well as objects of knowledge. That is they can articulate critical knowledge from embodied positions that would otherwise be rendered pathological, marginal, invisible, or unintelligible within dominant and normative organisations of power/knowledge.[[120]](#footnote-120)

This introduces the idea that writing from a transgender subject-position might grant a unique “perspectival knowledge”.[[121]](#footnote-121) This thesis is made possible because of the critical and analytical tools provided to me by my embodied subjectivity as a non-binary trans individual: I write on the value of these texts to a trans reader because I have found these values to be evident; I write on the familiarity of the trans phenomena in the texts because of a personal investment, rather than a putative objective academic interest. Part of this investment is in seeing people like myself in life, in history and in the art I consume, and in making them known, in making them intelligible to others, both cis and trans. On this note, Styker and Currah state that:

Transgender can, for example, be a useful neologism for interrogating the past. While it would be anachronistic to label a previous era’s departures from currently normative expressions of gender as ‘transgender’ in an identitarian sense, there is another sense in which transgender as a critical term demarcates a conceptual space in which it is possible to (re)name, (re)articulate and (re)assemble the constituent elements of contemporary personhood in a manner that facilitates a deeply historical analysis of the utter contingency and fraught condition of intelligibility of all embodied subjectivity.[[122]](#footnote-122)

Whilst Stryker and Currah are here discussing the anachronism of labelling an individual from a previous era trans according to their deviations from current gendered standards (i.e. calling a 17th Century French nobleman trans because he paints his face and wears a wig), the problem of anachronism is still an important one to discuss before beginning the main body of my thesis. In answer to this, I offer the defence that some (though not all) trans terminology was already in use between 1910 and 1940, when these texts were written, as examined above, and the general public were aware of the existence of trans individuals (although obviously the language of the time was considerably more binaristic). I have also shown already that theorists like Edward Carpenter had accepted the idea that an individual might not be fully male or female, thus articulating what it is to be non-binary without necessarily naming it as such. Likewise, it is not as though we no longer live in a modernist moment today; some of these texts are less than a century old. Nevertheless, I attempt to measure the divergence of a subject’s gender and sexuality from the norms of the society presented within the text, and to a lesser extent against the real-world society of the early 20th Century, rather than our own. This allows me to talk about a subject or text exhibiting non-binary traits when they, for example, combine norms which are seen as exclusively male with those which are seen as exclusively female. Finally, focussing on the latter part of the Stryker quote, I make these readings of early 20th Century textual subjects as non-binary because they are useful today in ‘(re)assembling the constituent elements of contemporary personhood.’ Showing that non-binary characters have existed in authors’ works, showing that even the people of the early 20th Century could take non-binary modes of thought and being, is useful from an activist standpoint insofar as it parries the accusation that non-binary genders have no history in the West, that non-binary identities are invalidated by the sheer recency of their coming into the public eye. In short, it is powerful to be able to point to texts which occupy a central position in an Anglophone canon and say “see, we have always been here.”

The following chapters of this thesis are dedicated to the (re)assemblages that Stryker was speaking of, whether in chapter one’s highlighting of the transgender themes haunting *The Waste Land* and *Orlando*, the (re)articulation of the non-binary nature of *Ulysses* and *Nightwood* in chapter two, or the (re)naming of *Legion* and *Undaunted* as deserving members of a queer canon in chapter three. This entire analysis is dedicated to addressing one simple over-arching question – ‘Are non-binary genders represented in main-period Modernist literature?’ The assumption contained within this question is that it is possible to apply such a label a-temporally, that is, to texts from around seventy years before such terminology was in common usage, the reasons for which I touched upon in the theory section above. I also hope to show, as part of my argument, why it is both useful (and, less urgently, correct) to do so. Contained within this over-arching question, I aim to answer three closely related corollary questions. The first such question asks: ‘If non-binary genders are present in main-period modernist literature, what distinguishes them from androgynes/cross-dressers/binary trans individuals, as they have been previously argued to be?’ As seen above, many of the texts that I have chosen to examine are already the recipients of a great deal of attention for other expressions of queerness, and I will argue that we should read the characters as non-binary alongside (in some cases, instead of) these corollary queernesses. I believe that this is necessary because previous critics either did not have access to non-binary models of gender, or refused to acknowledge such models, and have therefore made the category mistake of calling the subjects of my inquiry *either* male or female (whether cis or trans). The second subsidiary research question I address asks: ‘If non-binary genders are present in main-period modernist literature, are there any common tropes that might be used to identify non-binary themes or subjects within a modernist text?’ By this, I mean that I will seek to identify and articulate a number of tropes which I believe characterise the appearance of non-binary gender in main-period modernism, in order both to bring these texts together as a separate sub-category within the period, and also to enable other researchers to identify similar texts in the future. Finally, my third subsidiary research question runs: ‘If non-binary genders are present in main-period modernist literature, does non-binary gender stand for itself within these texts, or does it function as a metaphor for something else?’ I believe that it is necessary to answer this question because, as seen in the historical context section above, the distinction between sex, gender and sexuality was not as sharply delineated for the people of the early 20th century as it is today. As such, it is possible, perhaps even likely, that the non-normative genders I uncover in the texts will be bound up closely with non-normative sexualities. It may prove to be the case that even if non-binary gender can be said to appear in modernist texts, it may still act as a metaphor for something else, or prove to be difficult to isolate from queer sexuality, rather than being prototypical representation in-and-of itself. If so, I will identify what exactly non-binary gender may metaphorize, and whether these texts can still function as useful examples of non-binary transness even so.

Chapter one will lay the foundations of my argument, dealing with T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando.* Although these two texts are radically different in form, content and tone, I believe that they are united in one particularly pertinent way. Both texts present their focal subjects, Tiresias and Orlando respectively, as having multiple aspects/personae which make up their characters, who are variously male or female. In this manner, we see a model for a prototypical non-binary gender in modernist literature, more specifically of a bigendered individual i.e. one who possesses more than one gender. It is necessary to articulate this because, in spite of *Orlando* stating that whether “Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say”,[[123]](#footnote-123) critics have still failed to recognise Orlando’s binary-defying nature. From this fracturing of the psyche into multiple genders arises one of the key tropes which will emerge throughout this thesis; an inescapable link between non-binary gender and queer sexuality within the text, more specifically bisexuality. Essentially, the male aspects within the characters find themselves attracted to women outside the character, and vice versa, resulting in a kind of twofold heterosexuality. Likewise, the chapter will also highlight a recurring habit of modernist writers, wherein real, biographical same-sex love interests found themselves transfigured across gender lines within the texts. In Woolf’s case, Vita Sackville West became the eponymous male (for a while) Orlando, and in Eliot’s, Jean Verdenal is argued to have become the Hyacinth Girl. Both texts also feature highly empathetic, androgynous characters who function as go-betweens for the polarised sex/genders, which I link to the writings of Edward Carpenter, and set up as a touchstone for the rest of the analysis. Finally, chapter one also sets up the repeated trope of the inclusion of an (at least initially) unidentifiable character, whose ambiguous sex/gender frustrates the speaking voice. In the case of *The Waste Land* this is the “third who walks always beside you”, and Orlando features Princess Sasha, both of whom initially create a sense of confusion in the onlooking character. The chapter will examine all of these tropes, whilst also highlighting the ways in which the two texts treat them differently, as well as touching upon some of the more unique aspects of the two.

Chapter two will move on to focus upon James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood.* In contrast with *The Waste Land* and *Orlando,* these two texts exhibit examples of unified, singular, though still non-binary genders. Both Leopold Bloom, the ‘new womanly man’, and the ‘third sex’ Robin Vote, fall outside of binaristic conceptions of male and female, although again, criticism focuses upon their androgynous nature, whilst overlooking the potential for reading them as non-binary, as I will. Robin and Leopold are united by the fact that they suffer from extremes of depression and/or anxiety, which I will link to the writings of Havelock Ellis, who drew a parallel between ‘inversion’ and neurosis. The chapter will focus mainly on the ‘Circe’ episode of *Ulysses,* because it contains the most clearly psychodramatic view of Bloom’s conception of his own gender. We see Bloom’s body imaginatively shift and change, along with the way he refers to himself, and see him picture himself as a male lover of women and a female lover of men (linking back to the twofold heterosexuality identified in chapter one). This is contrasted with the presentation of Robin Vote, whose mind is as stubbornly inaccessible to the reader as it is to the characters around her, and whose sexuality is similarly shrouded. Examples of the tropes established in the first chapter will also be identified, particularly the use of queer gendered characters as sexual go-betweens. Leopold, for instance, appears at times to be especially empathetic towards women, even going so far as to share in menstrual pain. In *Nightwood*, on the other hand, this office is fulfilled by Matthew O’Connor, whose ramblings form the main insight into Robin Vote which the other characters (and the reader) receive. I will linger for some time on the significance of O’Connor, whom I believe to be one of the first concrete examples of a binary trans woman in Western literature. His (sic.) character will be contrasted with that of Robin, and I will build a case as to why the first should be read as binary- and the second as non-binary trans characters.

In the third chapter, I will move on from discussing established modernist texts like *Orlando* and *Ulysses*, to suggest two lesser-known texts from the same period that deserve a place on queer reading lists. The first of these two texts, Natalie Clifford Barney’s *The One Who is Legion,* seems in many ways to be the culmination of the tropes that I have identified throughout this thesis. The focal character, A.D., dies at the beginning of the novel, whilst a host of spirits fail to identify their sex/gender. The spirits then re-animate A.D.’s body, giving them a new personality made up of multiple male and female aspects, and set about trying to determine the circumstances of their suicide. These spirits, by their united nature, appear especially sensitive to the sufferings and emotions of others, much like Tiresias, Bloom, Orlando and O’Connor before them. I will also discuss the ways in which A.D. bears similarities to Barney’s sometime-lover, the poet Renée Vivien, who also died by suicide – much as Vita became Orlando and Verdenal became the Hyacinth Girl. *Legion,* and my other focal texts along with it, will be compared with Alan L. Hart’s *The Undaunted. Undaunted* is much more of a realist text than it is modernist, and is also the latest of my chosen texts, having been published in 1936. However, I felt that *Undaunted* must be included for the simple reason that, until this point, I have only discussed (apparently) cisgender authors writing transgender characters, whereas Alan L. Hart was one of the earliest recorded trans men to receive gender affirming surgeries in the United States. A respected medical doctor himself, Hart also wrote four medical fiction novels, as well as numerous short stories. My analysis will focus on the ways in which *The Undaunted* interacts with and subverts the tropes identified earlier in this thesis. Particular attention will be payed to Sandy Farquhar, a gay radiologist, who appears to be a stand-in for Hart himself. I will argue that Sandy inverts the trope of using non-binary gender as a byword for queer sexuality, by instead using queer sexuality as a more acceptable metaphor for trans gender. I will move on from this to argue that, within the context of *The Undaunted,* all of the characters seem in some way to see their gender as separate from their embodiment, and highlight the ways in which the text makes a moving argument for the acceptance of queer individuals (in both sexuality and gender) into mainstream society.

Before moving on, it should be noted that the relationship between the modern terminology surrounding gender self-identification and historical/literary figures is a complex issue, as should be obvious from the Plato example earlier. Part of the work of queer resistance in modern society is the fight against the non-consensual inscription of gender labels upon the individual that originate from their perceived sex-coding (i.e. hair, clothing, make-up, body type), rather than the individual’s self-identification. By extension, one might echo that the researcher should not look back on characters in literature from before the lexicon of transgender terminology existed and retroactively assign such labels to them. The problem is that the eye of the theorist of queer subjects seeks always to assign queerness to the acts and individuals in literature which do not necessarily identify themselves openly as such, in order to work against the (far greater) injustice of cis/straight culture in compulsively/reflexively assigning straightness, cis-ness, maleness where it is not, or should not be. If the narrator of ‘The Burial of the Dead’ remains silent on the subject of their identification, is it a greater act of violence to the character to assign maleness to them (as most critics have), than to suggest that their identity may be not be male at all? If Orlando identifies many Orlandos within herself, some male, some female, is it right to conclude that (by the end of the novel) she is female? Is it right to call her ‘she’? These are open questions, and they are ones to which I currently do not have an easy answer, but in a culture which so easily ascribes dominant paradigms (straightness, cis-ness) to anyone and everyone, fictional or not, it can certainly be said that to leave the subject unopened, unchallenged, unspoken is as good as taking the side of the oppressive paradigm.

With these issues in mind, this essay will try to follow a few basic principles with regard to identity labelling. First, if the character in question appears to be same-sex attracted in orientation, the term ‘homosexual’ will be used over the term ‘invert’ or ‘Uranian’ for preference, despite these terms being more contemporary with the artistic works themselves. This is because the denotative meaning of the terms is (roughly) interchangeable i.e. an individual whose sexual desires are directed towards people of similar gender, whereas the connotations of the term ‘invert’ are distinctly unsavoury i.e. a person whose sexual desires run contrary to what is ‘natural’. Similarly, care will be taken to distinguish between the personality and the identity of a particular character – that Leopold Bloom is feminine in manner is not a challenge to his being identified as male, but his imagining himself as a woman might be. Finally, I will attempt not to make the statement along the lines of ‘character x is of non-binary gender’, for the reason that such a labelling would be both anachronistic, and against the wording of the text in the strictest sense, insofar as it is limited by the binaristic language of the early twentieth century. Instead, I will make a statement along the lines of ‘the writer’s attitude to the character’s gender would today seem to be non-binary in nature’. This, hopefully, opens up the possibility to examine the potentials of the character to be read with an eye that does not ascribe maleness or femaleness to them unchallenged, but rather remains open to an elision of the boundaries between male and female in the way the character is presented.

# Chapter 1 –*The Waste Land* and *Orlando*

Tiresias, according to Ovid, was a man who found himself transformed into a woman for the crime of striking two copulating snakes. He remained in this form for seven years, until he found the same two snakes again, struck them, and was returned to his previous shape. Because he had inhabited these two forms, he was called upon to resolve a dispute between Juno and Jupiter, concerning which sex took more pleasure from the act of sex. When Tiresias answered that women took the most pleasure, siding with Jupiter, Juno was so angered that she struck him blind. As recompense, because Juno’s action could not be undone, Jupiter granted him the power of prophecy.[[124]](#footnote-124) [[125]](#footnote-125) Tiresias proved to be a popular source material for artists and writers, featuring in the work of Alfred Tennyson (*Tiresias,* 1885),[[126]](#footnote-126) Guillaume Apollinaire (*Les mamelles de Tirésias,* 1903),[[127]](#footnote-127) and *The Cantos* of Ezra Pound (1917-68),[[128]](#footnote-128) amongst others, in his role as both prophet and sexual interpolator. The following chapter focuses on two such treatments of the Tiresian figure as a crosser of sexual boundaries, as found in T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando,* and will lay out the gender binary-challenging uses to which the theme is put.

*The Waste Land,* a five-part meditation on urban decay, features Tiresias as a named character, acting as a type of sexual voyeur. It might be odd to suggest that Eliot, whose poetry is often accused of taking a misogynistic stance on gender and gender difference (with which I do not disagree), would have taken a queer attitude to gender in any of his poems. However, I believe that a strong argument can be made that this is the case within the context of *The Waste Land*, at the very least. In the notes, Eliot explains that “Just as the One-Eyed Merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.”[[129]](#footnote-129) This line suggests that all of the characters of *The Waste Land* are differing permutations of the same individual, opening up a reading of the poem as a sprawling psychodrama in which the reader is allowed access to a consciousness in which gender and identity are unfixed and fluid, in which male and female personae cohabit. This chapter will deal with what exactly it means for the two sexes to ‘meet in Tiresias’, drawing upon the early drafts of the poem in order to show the lengths to which Eliot went in order to create ambiguity regarding the speaker’s gender. This is combined with a reading of the failure of both heterosexual and homosexual relationships within the poem to argue that Eliot utilises the Tiresias figure to establish what will become a key commonality between the texts analysed in this thesis – the creation of a non-binary gendered character who is torn between the love of women and men.

In the second half of the chapter, I will move on to compare Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando,* which constructs the gender of its eponymous focal character in a very similar way to that used by Eliot in creating Tiresias. Orlando too contains a multitude of male and female aspects, which are called to the fore at differing points, and the novel already earns its place in the queer canon far more comfortably that *The Waste Land* ever did. However, unlike Eliot’s Tiresias, Woolf’s Orlandoresembles Ovid’s version of the character in that the protagonist turns from male to female halfway through the narrative, by similarly magical means. As examined in the introductory chapter, *Orlando* has already been discussed in terms of its usefulness as a trans text, with Jay Prosser stating that the fantastical elements preclude its trans status,[[130]](#footnote-130) and the dissenting voices of Crawford, Caughie and others providing arguments for its inclusion in a trans canon.[[131]](#footnote-131) [[132]](#footnote-132) With this context in mind, I will focus my arguments on why we might productively read Orlando as a specifically *non-binary trans* character, and what the critical ramifications for our understanding of their sexuality are in doing so. For *Orlando*, I will identify recurring tropes that characterise these texts as non-binary, in order to build up a critical rubric for use throughout the rest of the thesis.

Whilst this investigation focuses on the ways in which it might negate and complicate the gender binary, it is interesting to note first that *The Waste Land* itself is remarkable for the number of references to hybridity more generally. The theme of combination and admixture is placed in the reader’s mind early on in ‘The Burial of the Dead’ with the line “breeding/ lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ memory and desire”,[[133]](#footnote-133) later to be mirrored by the monstrous chimerical creatures that appear in ‘What the Thunder Said’, the “bats with baby faces in the violet light”[[134]](#footnote-134) which transgress even the boundary between species. Further, the language of the poem itself is a hybrid, the early sections being written primarily in English but straying also into German (“*Frisch weht der Wind*”[[135]](#footnote-135)) and French (“*Et, O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole*”[[136]](#footnote-136)). The later sections stray out of the European mode into Sanskrit with the words “Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.// Shantih shantih shantih”,[[137]](#footnote-137) adding a crossing of the Occident/Orient binary to the language crossing of the poem, and turning it from the incidental to the crucial underpinning of the section, such that a true understanding of ‘What the Thunder Said’ can only be gained either by possessing the ability to read the Sanskrit, or by reading the footnotes for the meaning (if only partial, as Eliot admits that the translation he offers is “feeble”[[138]](#footnote-138)). However, this theme of hybridity becomes particularly fraught when we examine the lines:

I will show you something different from either

Your shadow at morning striding behind you

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you[[139]](#footnote-139)

The emotional logic of these lines is echoed later in the lines “I was neither/ living nor dead”.[[140]](#footnote-140) In these two excerpts, we see the poem set up a binary opposition – the shadow rising or falling, the living and the dead – and insisting that it will demonstrate to the reader a third way; not a midpoint but something different to rising/falling shadows, a third state beside life and death. This attitude toward confounding binaries taken by the poem, through the supposition of a previously unarticulated ‘third option’ form a useful basis when examining its attitude towards that other binary: gender.

When we turn this assumption - that *The Waste Land* represents a space in which the third way is raised in opposition to binaries - to the gender of the speaker in the poem, something remarkable occurs. In ‘The Burial of the Dead’, the speaking voice begins in the feminine identification, with the statement “They called me the Hyacinth Girl”[[141]](#footnote-141) in the second stanza. This stanza is then interrupted by a dash, which Calvin Bedient says “rescinds (recuts) the protagonist’s tie with the Hyacinth girl. A mark of pure alienation, a sudden straightening, it divides the two inexorably.”[[142]](#footnote-142) We are now, it is generally assumed, looking out through the eyes of the Hyacinth Girl’s partner as they address her, which is generally assumed to be masculine as in Bedient’s own analysis. However, more recent Eliot criticism has noted that this assumption may be too hasty, not because the Hyacinth Girl’s partner is female but because they may not be male. At no point in the stanza does the speaker give any indication that they are male (other than that they are paired with a woman, the reasoning behind which should be both obvious and unworthy of explanation). In fact, Cyrena Pondrom notes in ‘The Performativity of Gender in The Waste Land’ that this refusal of the narrator to fall into gendered categories extends throughout the entire poem, and that “only once… is the sex of the narrator stipulated – notably during the scene in ‘The Fire Sermon’ in which the narrator seems to blend with his avatar Tiresias, expressly described as having lived as both male and female.”[[143]](#footnote-143) To sustain this lack of gendered pronoun usage for so long in regard to the narrator is not unusual in a poem; many of Shakespeare’s sonnets, for example, do not give the gender of the speaker.[[144]](#footnote-144) So, in order to determine whether this linguistic ambiguity is intentional, we will have to look elsewhere in Eliot’s writing.

If we compare the version of ‘The Burial of the Dead’ that made publication with one of the earlier drafts of the same poem, we begin to find evidence of the intention behind the ambiguity. Take for example the original opening passage of the section:

First we had a couple of feelers down at Tom’s Place,

There was old Tom, boiled to the eyes, blind,

(Don’t you remember that time after a dance, top hats and all, we and Silk Hat Harry

And old Tom took us behind, brought out a bottle of fizz

With old Jane, Tom’s wife; and we got Joe to sing.[[145]](#footnote-145)

One can note immediately that the narrator does not shy away from gendering the characters around himself, both through the use of unambiguously gendered names (‘Tom, Jane, Harry’), gendered clothing (‘top hats’) and roles (‘Tom’s wife’). Similarly, the reader’s suspicion that the narrator who speaks to them is male is quickly confirmed by line 21, when the owner of the Buckingham club says to him that “I’m not in business here for guys like you.”[[146]](#footnote-146) This whole stanza, some 54 lines, receives an unceremonious scribble to delete it,[[147]](#footnote-147) such that the poem begins at the far more familiar “April is the cruellest month”[[148]](#footnote-148) – an opening which leaves the speaker’s gender far more ambiguous; an ambiguity which the poet has clearly taken steps to foster.

This ambiguity is mirrored in another discrepancy found towards the end of the early draft of ‘The Burial of the Dead’. When the speaker is in conversation with Madame Sosotris as she gives her predictions, the speaker says in an aside “(I John saw these things and heard them)”.[[149]](#footnote-149) This sentence structure should be familiar, as it is mimicked in the final draft by the speaker’s pronouncement “I Tiresias have foresuffered all/ Enacted on this same divan or bed”,[[150]](#footnote-150) this time in the later section ‘The Fire Sermon’. John, in the original draft, seems to borrow not only Tiresias’s sentence structure but also his powers of prophecy; seeing and hearing those same prophecies as Sosotris. And so, just as the speaker’s gender becomes clouded through the excision of gendered pronouns and roles, the prophetic ‘I John’ becomes Tiresias in the later drafts, adding in another layer of ambiguity via the mythical figure who expressly lives as man and woman at different points in his life.[[151]](#footnote-151) With this in mind, we can safely conclude that the poet consciously strove for ambiguity with regard to the gender of the poetic voice in *The Waste Land*, and we as readers are left to wonder as to the cause.

This quandary over the ambiguously gendered language in the poem is deepened later in the text by the introduction of bodily ambiguity/intersex characteristics. Just as ‘The Fire Sermon’ delivers the first clue as to the sex-gender of the narrator, it also contains one of the few bodily descriptions of any of the main characters (save of course for Lil’s rotten teeth in ‘A Game of Chess’).[[152]](#footnote-152) But, just as with the identification of the narrator’s gender, the body of Tiresias is presented as markedly androgynous, a fraught admixture of male and female traits. As the narrator becomes Tiresias, he describes/identifies himself as an “old man with wrinkled female breasts.”[[153]](#footnote-153) This bodily intersexuality is not present in the source material for the myth, which Eliot presents in Ovid’s Latin in the notes – Ovid sees Tiresias transforming directly from a male body to a female one and back again, with no interstitial overlap.[[154]](#footnote-154) Grover Smith posits that the unwary reader might imagine:

that Eliot imported [Tiresias] from Apollinaire, in whose *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (1918) the bisexual prophet is both Tiresias and Therese, and so has the female breasts approximate to a hermaphrodite [sic.] but not to someone who has been sexually morphosed, as in Ovid.[[155]](#footnote-155)

Smith quickly concludes that this borrowing from the surrealist stage would be too simple, pointing out the Tiresian nature of the blind Edward Fitzgerald figure in *Gerontion*.[[156]](#footnote-156) I offer the supposition that Eliot ‘added in’ Tiresias’s apparent intersexuality in order to allow the ‘two sexes to meet in him’, in order for him to become the presiding consciousness of *The Waste Land* by virtue of his united form. Here, like Havelock Ellis, Eliot couples a mental androgyny with bodily intersexual characteristics – Tiresias sits, torn between two sexes and two minds.[[157]](#footnote-157)

Furthermore, this is an androgyny specifically linked to a breakdown/failure – the breakdown of a male body as it reaches the extremes of old age, and the pectorals begin to sag and more closely resemble breasts. There is an androgyny afforded to the human body by the extremes of age – both youth, before sexual differentiation sets in at puberty; and old age, after the reasons for sexual differentiation have run their course. Of course, because of *The Waste Land’s* associations with sterility, there are no children present after ‘The Burial of the Dead’, although we can see the androgyny of the child in the modernist consciousness later, in the character of Robin Vote in *Nightwood*. However, we can see the breakdown of age again in ‘What the Thunder Said’, when Tiresias/the narrator assumes the role of the Fisher King, whose infertility is linked to age (male fertility taking a sharp decline after the age of forty). Tiresias also mirrors his earlier description of himself slightly later in ‘The Fire Sermon’ with the line “Tired old man with wrinkled female dugs”[[158]](#footnote-158) – ‘dug’ being an archaic term for a breast, but one more readily associated with those of animals than people. Thus, Tiresias’ androgyny is a sign not only of his loss of youth but also a loss of his humanity – directly anticipating the pre/sub-humanity of Robin Vote that we will explore in the *Nightwood* analysis. Again, typically of the male modernist attitude toward gender non-conformity, a direct link is created between Tiresias’ failure to be ‘fully male’ and his failure to be, in his own mind at least, fully human.

This failure of the sexed-body is echoed once again towards the end of the poem in ‘What the Thunder Said’. The narrator, who has once again detached themself from their Tiresian avatar, asks of an unknown listener who the third is that walks beside the two, “gliding, wrapt in a brown mantle,/ I know not whether man or woman.”[[159]](#footnote-159) The allusions present in this section are twofold – in the note at the beginning of the section, Eliot cites the vision of Christ on the road to Emmaus, and later Shackleton’s account of his Antarctic expedition, in which the party seemed to believe that there was always “one more member than could actually be counted” amongst them.[[160]](#footnote-160) It should be noted that in neither of these source materials is it said that the illusory figure is ambiguous in terms of their sex. Thus, we find another case of Eliot taking up his source materials and altering them in order to introduce a greater degree of sex/gender ambiguity, leaving us to question why he might do so. What the narrator is attempting here is known today as ‘reading’; the attempt, upon meeting another person, to gather from their gender presentation (clothes, hair, stance) and apparent sexual signifiers (facial shape, hair, build) the sex/gender of the other. However, ‘the third’ does not give enough information in order to be identified in this fashion; their outfit is of mixed/unfixed code, and the physical distance between the travellers on the road eliminates the signifiers of their build. This leads the narrator into a sense of frustration, repeating their original question “But who is that on the other side of you,”[[161]](#footnote-161) immediately after failing to identify the sex of the third. So, we can safely posit that Eliot has added in the confusion of the gender-reading in order to enhance the theme of failure in the poem – a failure to identify, and to identify with, the ungendered/unknown other, a trope which we will see repeated throughout the other texts in this analysis.

The presence of the mantle/hood here is also of particular significance – the hood serves to obscure the character’s hair when seen from behind. Within the context of *The Waste Land*, hair is used as a key signifier of femininity and femaleness. Hair is mentioned four times in the rest of the poem: when the narrator first detaches from and looks to the rain-soaked Hyacinth Girl;[[162]](#footnote-162) the hair spread in “fiery points”[[163]](#footnote-163) in ‘A Game of Chess’; the hair “smoothed with automatic hand”[[164]](#footnote-164) by the typist; and a woman drawing back her hair in ‘What the Thunder Said’.[[165]](#footnote-165) Every section concerns hair, save ‘Death by Water’ (which, tellingly, also contains no women), and it is always women’s hair that draws the gaze of the narrator. Thus, the fact that it cannot be seen because of the third’s hood functions as a powerful obstacle in the way of identifying their sex-gender. Of course, the narrator’s frustration over their failure to identify the third serves to emphasize the fact that the reader is unable to identify the gender of the narrator themselves, as I explored in the previous section. Narrative theorist Susan Lanser holds that “the sex of the narrator is at least as significant as the narrator’s grammatical person, the presence or absence of direct address to the reader, or narrative temporality.”[[166]](#footnote-166) If so, then our failure to identify the sex-gender of the narrator can be read as one of the greatest instances of failure within the text, one whose conspicuous absence is highlighted by the narrator’s questions about the third on the road – questions which might just as well be directed at themselves.

Quite apart from his obvious gender instability (hence his importance within the context of this essay), criticism of *The Waste Land* also frequently forefronts Tiresias because of the note that Eliot placed in relation to the character in the footnotes – “what he sees is in fact the substance of the poem.”[[167]](#footnote-167) This lends an extra weight to the vision that Tiresias receives; the visit of a young man to a female typist, and their passionless sexual intercourse. Whilst she is described as “bored and tired”, the young man:

Endeavours to engage her in caresses,

Which are still unreproved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once,

Exploring hands encounter no defence,

His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference.[[168]](#footnote-168)

Here, male (hetero)sexuality is met with female apathy and sheer indifference; every action is negated – ‘no response’, ‘undesired’, ‘unrebuked’. If the sex act which Tiresias sees is not rape,[[169]](#footnote-169) it is certainly brutish, nasty and short. What Tiresias sees is a failure of sexuality, more specifically a failure of heterosexuality. The scene is so typical a negative reading of male/female sex pairings (coercion of a passive/lustless woman by an active/lustful man) as to be almost parodic, were it not so banal/sterile. Tiresias’ middling position between the poles of the sexes allows him an empathy towards the typist; he too “awaited the expected guest”,[[170]](#footnote-170) and “foresuffered all,/ Enacted on this same divan or bed”.[[171]](#footnote-171) [[172]](#footnote-172) Here, we see a fleeting echo of the original Tiresias myth in the poem; he was called up to Olympus by Zeus-Jupiter and Hera-Juno in order to settle a dispute concerning whether or not women took the greater pleasure from sex. For siding with Zeus in saying that a woman gained more pleasure, he was struck blind, but was also granted prophetic powers for his trouble.[[173]](#footnote-173) In *The Waste Land*, and with cruel irony, these powers grant Tiresias a vision in which it is clear that man takes the greater pleasure from sex, which Tiresias is forced to suffer alongside the typist.

This image of dispassionate heterosexuality is also mirrored and refracted throughout the rest of the poem; in fact, the first (potentially) male/female pairing in ‘The Burial of the Dead’, the Hyacinth Girl and her lover, seems almost identical save for its gender reversal. First, the Hyacinth Girl describes being given flowers by her lover, before the viewpoint flips[[174]](#footnote-174) and we look out of the lover’s eyes at the Hyacinth Girl. The lover is struck by a profound negation; “I could not/ Speak, and my eyes failed…/ and I knew nothing.”[[175]](#footnote-175) This inability to feel anything, especially with regard to one’s partner, is similar to the typist’s response to the clerk, though of course here it is the woman’s counterpart who feels nothing. This pairing, and all heterosexualized pairings within *The Waste Land*, is an image of romance with no feeling of love; the characters merely perform intimacy, acting from a heterosexual script which is violent in its imposition upon all meetings within the text.

This image of heterosexual sterility again finds a counterpart in ‘What the Thunder Said’, when the narrator describes themself sitting on the shore, fishing, “with the arid plains behind me”, asking “shall I put my lands in order?”[[176]](#footnote-176) This comes after another fishing character (possibly identical) in ‘The Fire Sermon’ sits at the side of the “dull canal”,[[177]](#footnote-177) “Musing upon the King my brother’s wreck/ And upon the King my father’s death before him”.[[178]](#footnote-178) The notes tell us that this latter is a reference to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*,[[179]](#footnote-179) whereas the former draws upon the Fisher King from Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance*,[[180]](#footnote-180) an anthropological explication of the grail legends. The Fisher King sits on a bank, waiting for the Grail Knight; his kingdom is in ruins because of his sexual impotence, his failure to fulfil the heterosexual script of intercourse and reproduction. If, as I am sure the text invites us to, we read these two fishing figures as contiguous, then the lament in section III about the death of the father and the brother becomes also a lament about the end of the family line, which terminates with the impotent speaker. Gilbert and Gubar link Eliot’s Fisher King to the emotional fallout of World War I and the emasculating effects of PTSD:

The gloomily bruised anti-heroes churned out by the war suffer specifically sexual wounds, as if having travelled through no-man’s land, literally or figuratively, all have become not just no-men, no-bodies, but not-men, un-bodies.[[181]](#footnote-181)

Thus, a link is forged back to the androgynous failure of the protagonist that we saw earlier – the King is too impotent (read, feminine) to produce a male heir and set his lands in order. The androgyny of the narrator is not a positive state, but rather one that is traumatic and the product of trauma, leaving them hopelessly torn and thus static. For the narrator-as-Fisher-King, heterosexuality is not only undesirable, as with the other character, but unreachable/impossible.

Our final image of heterosexual apathy comes in the form of Lil and her husband Albert, from ‘A Game of Chess’. Albert has at some point in the recent past been demobbed from the army, and Lil’s friend warns her that he will want to know what she did with the money she was given to buy a new set of teeth. The reader finds, after some back and forth, that Lil blames “them pills I took to bring it off”,[[182]](#footnote-182) referring to abortifacient drugs taken to terminate her sixth pregnancy, the fifth having been near-fatal. Because of her ruined appearance, her friend/the speaker warns that Albert has “been in the army four years, he wants a good time,/ And if you don’t give it to him, there’s others will”,[[183]](#footnote-183) after reminding her that “He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you.”[[184]](#footnote-184) Here, we see another similarly lustful male/ lustless female pairing as we saw with the typist and the clerk, but a newer and more complex play on the theme of sterility. Lil’s heterosexuality, her fertility, have proved near-fatal, and her choice to terminate her pregnancy - and thus cease to fulfil her heterosexual script - has proven her downfall. Thus, with hindsight, Lil’s choice can be phrased as ‘give birth and die’ or ‘abort and wither’, which really is no choice at all. All the while, Albert is represented by the speaker as more interested in sex-for-satisfaction, unreproductive sex, than his ties to Lil (and, presumably, their five children). Thus, throughout *The Waste Land* it seems that women tolerate, rather than love, men, and that men are interested in women merely as hollow sexual objects.

We are left to ask why the prevailing attitude of *The Waste Land* is so unfailingly bleak, why failure forms such a central theme of the poem, and why this failure is so closely tied to gender and sexuality. In answer, I would like to draw upon John Peter’s controversial essay ‘A New Interpretation of The Waste Land’, which offers the following explanation of the poem, such as might be inserted as a ‘stage direction’ ahead of the main text of the poem:

At some previous point/time the speaker has fallen completely – perhaps the right word is irretrievably – in love. The object of this love was a young man who soon afterwards met his death, it would seem by drowning. Enough time has now elapsed since his death for the speaker to have realised that the focus for affection that he once provided is irreplaceable.[[185]](#footnote-185)

If, as I do, we find this reading convincing, then it is not just heterosexuality which is failing to provide a ‘real’ love in the poem, but homosexuality as well (provided that we take it that the speaker is predominantly male at most points). However, unlike the heterosexuality within the poem – which is portrayed as grubby, base and passionless – homosexual desire (at least where it is directed towards the drowned sailor) has been idealised. Homosexuality’s failure within the poem is not from passionlessness, but a lack of expression of that passion before death took the speaker’s beloved from them. In fact, if we examine the positioning of the references to sailors and drowning in relation to the ‘heterosexual passages’ examined earlier, they seem almost always to follow in quick succession forming a counterpoint, a punctuation mark underscoring the speaker’s distaste for male/female sex pairings. Take for example the first (probably) male/ female pairing within the first section, the Hyacinth Girl and her lover, which we examined earlier. The lover sees that the Girl’s hair is wet, his eyes fail, he is drawn into a lament, and the stanza finishes “*Oed’ und leer das Meer*.”[[186]](#footnote-186) This quotation from *Tristan and Isolde* translates as ‘empty and desolate the sea’, tying the lover’s feelings of hopelessness and inability to relate the Hyacinth Girl to the ocean. We see this thread continued in Madame Sosotris’ warning to “Fear death by water”[[187]](#footnote-187); in the “sea-wood”[[188]](#footnote-188) that distracts the speaker’s gaze from the Belladonna in ‘A Game of Chess’; and the immediate pickup into ‘The Fire Sermon’ on the line “The river’s tent is broken”,[[189]](#footnote-189) after the encounter with Lil and her unkind friend. Similarly, Tiresias’ vision of the typist and the clerk bleeds immediately into a meditation on music by the water, and a public bar “Where fishmen lounge at noon”,[[190]](#footnote-190) meaning fisherman/sailors in other words. So, each heterosexualized encounter – the Hyacinth Girl, the Belladonna, Lil, and the typist – each encounter with a living woman, rather, is tinged with a salt air that distracts the speaker, a call back to/memory of a traumatic event on the ocean – which fits neatly into Peter’s reading. But, just as heterosexuality in the poem is in crisis, so is homosexual love. In her book *Deviant Modernism*, Colleen Lamos advances the claim that “homoeroticism in Eliot’s poetry invariably takes the form of necrophilia”,[[191]](#footnote-191) reading various scenes of drowning (not just in *The Waste Land* but across Eliot’s work) as a method of distinguishing ‘sanctioned’ homoeroticism from degraded homosexuality. *The Waste Land’s* homosexuality is in crisis because of its timidity, its unwillingness to appear as such, at least before it is too late.

The most obvious appearance of the drowned male love is in the shortest section, ‘Death by Water’. This section is given weight by its relative compression; only 10 lines, compared to ‘What the Thunder Said’s’ 111.[[192]](#footnote-192) It also lacks many of the hallmarks and tropes which dominate the rest of the poem; it is free of conversation, direct quotations or allusions and snatches in other languages. Instead, we are presented with a brief tableau: a frozen scene depicting a young man, Phlebas, “a fortnight dead”[[193]](#footnote-193) upon the waves, and the sea-change that has been wrought upon his body. The sea “Picked his bones in whispers”[[194]](#footnote-194) according to the speaker – a curiously tender description for an otherwise visceral happening. At the end of the section, the reader is transformed by the speaker into another sailor (“you who turn the wheel and look to windward”[[195]](#footnote-195)) in order to hear the warning “Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as/ you.”[[196]](#footnote-196) First, it should be noted that this is the first and only time when any of the characters in the poem are described as ‘handsome’, or indeed as having a positive trait to their appearance in any way, whether male or female. That is, save for the transformed reader, who seems to have caught the eye of the speaker also, who implores us not to meet the same fate as the drowned Phlebas. It would be an ungenerous reading which did not grant that it is the male Phlebas who, if not the main focus of sexual/romantic desire (far from disproven in its own right), is at least the main focus of affection in the poem. If the speaker is taken as male, then we see crystallised the idealised, sanitised, elegiac, even necrophilic form taken by homosexual desire in *The Waste Land.*

However, this is not the only homosexualized encounter within the poem. In ‘The Fire Sermon’, in the stanza immediately before the narrator asserts his identity as Tiresias, the speaker is propositioned by another man. The lines run:

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant,

Unshaven, with a pocketful of currants…

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.[[197]](#footnote-197)

The Metropole would have been known to contemporary readers – at least, those in the know - as a popular spot for male/male hook-ups, lending this seemingly-innocent proposition a seedier (for the time) edge. In sharp contrast to the idealised Phlebas, Eugenides is presented as coarse and unappealing – his face is unshaven, his appearance slovenly and his speech common. Similarly, Grover Smith suggests that the currants in his pocket suggest infertility and unreproductive homosexuality because of their nature as withered fruit and their proximity to the groin.[[198]](#footnote-198) All of which slides in all-too-easily with our earlier reading *– The Waste Land* treats living homosexuality as repulsive and the love of the dead male as ideal – utterly safe, if nauseatingly neurasthenic. However, this glib reading is complicated by Eliot’s own notes – in the footnote to the Tiresias section, he states offhand that “the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples.”[[199]](#footnote-199) This one note draws together the repulsive Eugenides, the handsome Phlebas and the impotent Fisher King, last of his line, into one shifting character. Thus, as with so many things, *The Waste Land* seems torn – both drawn to and repulsed by the love of the male, and ultimately troubled by its sterility, just as it was repulsed by the reproductive abundance of Lil’s heterosexual intercourse.

The history of the ‘New Interpretation’ of *The Waste Land* was fraught - when it was first published in 1952, Eliot’s solicitor immediately ordered that the essay be retracted, and that all extant copies of the journal in which it was printed be gathered up and destroyed. Seventeen years on, when the essay was finally republished, Peters added a postscript in order to clarify his motivations, to make it clear that he was mortified to have caused offence to the poet. He also sought to re-affirm his earlier reading of the character of Phlebas as being equitable to the Hyacinth Girl, because of the “poet’s own note to line 126, where the reader is brusquely referred back to lines 37 and 48.”[[200]](#footnote-200) This reading has gained weight since after the publication of the drafts of *The Waste Land*, and the speculations of G. Wilson Knight in the *Denver Quarterly*.[[201]](#footnote-201) On the one hand, I believe that this clue from the notes may have been misused – line 126 reads “Are you alive or not? Is there nothing in your head?”,[[202]](#footnote-202) which seems to speak more to the feelings of the Hyacinth Girl’s lover (particularly lines 40-41 “and I know nothing”,[[203]](#footnote-203) bearing obvious similarities to line 126) than to the identity of the Hyacinth Girl herself, rather than line 127’s reference to “those are pearls that were his eyes”.[[204]](#footnote-204) However, we do receive a far more likely reason to conflate the two characters in the form of the draft lines “I remember/ The hyacinth garden. Those are pearls that were his eyes, yes!”,[[205]](#footnote-205) which Knight uses to draw an equivalence between the Hyacinth Girl and the drowned sailor. Thus, the assumed-heterosexual pairing of the Hyacinth Girl and her lover takes on a homoerotic undertone, where the protagonist undergoes a gender transformation at the level of the language of the text in order to heterosexualize (read sanitise) their attraction towards another man – a trope which we will find repeated in *Orlando*, and later *Ulysses.*

Of course, the second association between the Hyacinth ‘Girl’ and male-male homoeroticism has less to do with the drafts, and more to do with the literary heritage and mythological significance of the hyacinth flower. In Greek mythology, Hyacinthus was the young male lover of the god Apollo – when the two were throwing discus together, Hyacinthus ran to catch the projectile but was hit on the head and died. Rather than letting him be taken to Hades, Apollo transformed the youth into a flower, and his tears stained its petals, giving them their colouring. The myth is a favourite of Uranian artists, with Wilde, Lord Douglas and Charles Kains-Jackson all creating their own treatments.[[206]](#footnote-206) Even more fitting, another version of the myth sees Hyacinthus also admired by the jealous spirit of the West wind, Zephyros, who blows the discus off course in order to deny Apollo his love. This bears obvious similarities to the fate of the drowned sailor, another victim of the fickle winds (made explicit in the draft lines “For an unfamiliar gust/ Laid us down”[[207]](#footnote-207)). Thus, the figure of the Hyacinth Girl sees transfigured a dead, fatal, homoeroticism into a living, breathing, if unfulfilling vision of heterosexuality.

Finally, any exploration of gender variance and transformation within *The Waste Land* would be remiss not to include a popular piece of speculation introduced in the postscript of Peter’s ‘New Interpretation’ – that the real-life identity of the drowned Phoenician is Eliot’s sometime friend, Jean Verdenal. Certainly, it is true that the two shared a close relationship which the poet called ‘love’ – as in the dedication of *Prufrock* “For Jean Verdenal, 1889-1915/ Mort aux Dardanelles” and the four lines from *Purgatorio XXI*, which translate as “the measure of love which warms me to you.”[[208]](#footnote-208) Similarly, Peters points to part of an editorial commentary of *The Criterion* in which Eliot speaks of “the memory of a friend coming across the Luxemburg gardens in the late afternoon, waving a bunch of lilacs, a friend who was later (as far as I could find out) to be mixed with the mud of Gallipoli.”[[209]](#footnote-209) This leads Peters to point out “the poet’s fondness for using lilac as a symbol of the enticement of love”,[[210]](#footnote-210) which is fair, as well as the far more reaching conclusion that Verdenal evidently “drowned in mud”[[211]](#footnote-211) to connect him with the Phoenician. Similarly, connections have been highlighted between *The Waste Land* and the correspondence of Eliot and Verdenal – James E. Miller points out in *T.S. Eliot – The Making of an American Poet* that Verdenal uses the phrase “and here it is our wishes must be prudent” in his final letter, which bears more than passing similarity to “Which an age of prudence could never retract”, with its odd choice of phrasing.[[212]](#footnote-212) Whilst Peters seems upset that he may have caused offence to Eliot, Miller rather trips over himself to speculate on the “evil”[[213]](#footnote-213) the two may have wished to avoid. This all becomes rather uncomfortable from a queer perspective – speculation on people’s sexuality, contrary to their wishes, is mawkish and invasive, and should be avoided. Certainly, there is a modernist tradition of transforming same-sex loved ones into other sexes in their texts – as will become apparent in the later examinations of Rene Vivien becoming the androgynous A.D. in the writings of Natalie Barney (one of Eliot’s benefactors), and the more well-known treatment of Vita Sackville-West as Orlando, examined later in this chapter. Of passing note as well is the fact that ‘Marie’, the name ascribed to the female speaker who later becomes the Hyacinth Girl, becomes a name given to French men when paired with ‘Jean’ (as in Verdenal) in the fashion ‘Jean-Marie’. Ultimately, however, it does not matter whether or not Eliot had romantic feelings for men, or whether the texts transforms Jean Verdenal into the Girl and the Sailor, because the text itself has clear homoerotic and gender-transgressive elements even without the biographical details.

Eliot treats the femininity which is to be found within the apparently-male as a thing to be feared, rather than the opposing attitude taken by some of the later female modernists, (like Woolf in *Orlando*). A pattern begins to emerge, which will be repeated across the modernist period; the consciousness of the individual character is broken down into male and female ‘aspects’, wherein the male’s love is directed towards the female and vice/versa, such that these non-binary attitudes to writing gender become a kind of smokescreen for talking about a bisexual (in the modern sense) attraction. However, Eliot also complicates this trope through the use of a nascent homoeroticism scattered throughout the text, where the attentions of the speaker are constantly distracted by thoughts of the sea, and the drowned lover. Thus, whilst the surface valences of the poem are always heterosexualised, the undercurrent flows ever towards the homoerotic. This accounts in part for the palpably dismal air of the poem – Eliot repeats the assimilation of the desires of his characters into a heterosexual paradigm; the male aspects shun living homoerotic passion in favour of a sterile, loveless heterosexuality, even whilst being drawn towards the drowned sailor, the figure of the dead Hyacinthus behind the Hyacinth Girl.

By contrast, Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* has understandably received a far greater deal of attention than *The Waste Land* concerning its positive themes of queer gender and sexuality. As such, the two writers make an unpopular and somewhat uneasy pairing for a dyadic comparison like this chapter. In fact, the first book-length example of such a comparison, Gabrielle McIntire’s *Modernism, Memory and Desire,* goes so far as to say that “Eliot’s conservativism and (late) religiosity have seemed to make his corpus incompatible with a feminist, atheist and avowedly leftist writer like Virginia Woolf.”[[214]](#footnote-214) In spite of this seeming opposition in their outlooks, however, the two shared a fruitful working relationship and a longstanding, if somewhat-frosty, friendship – Ackroyd’s biography of Eliot holds that Woolf’s diary entries for 1919 show that “she also suspected him of abusing her behind her back on some occasions, and elaborately praising her on others.”[[215]](#footnote-215) In spite of this, the Woolf’s Hogarth Press published both Eliot’s quatrains and *The Waste Land* itself, the latter being set by Virginia’s own hand; she also aided him financially in both a personal and professional capacity, lending him £50 on one occasion,[[216]](#footnote-216) and helping to establish the Eliot Fellowship Fund, to save him from working at a bank.[[217]](#footnote-217) When Eliot first read *The Waste Land* to Woolf, after dinner at her home in 1922, she wrote in her diary that “He sang it & chanted it rhymed it. It has great beauty & force of phrase: symmetry; & tensity. What connects it together, I’m not so sure […] One was left, however, with some strong emotion.”[[218]](#footnote-218) Clearly, then, Woolf saw literary value in *The Waste Land.* Erwin Steinberg even suggests in ‘*Mrs. Dalloway* and T.S. Eliot’s Personal Waste Land’ that the poem served as the inspiration for Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway.* He points out that the character of Septimus Smith was, like Eliot, both a bank clerk and a poet, who suddenly married a woman after the death of a male loved-one during a World War (building upon the arguments made by James Miller in ‘T.S. Eliot’s Personal Waste Land’).[[219]](#footnote-219)

However, it is not *Mrs. Dalloway,* or Septimus, or any of Woolf’s other war-ravaged men that I want to compare to *The Waste Land,* but rather *Orlando,* a pseudo-biography of a seemingly-immortal English noble who magically changes sex from male to female halfway through the narrative. I hope to show that, much as Steinberg saw the life of Septimus as imitating that of Eliot, *Orlando* genders its protagonist in a similar way to Eliot’s Tiresias. In the final chapter of the novel, the narrator attempts to summarise the title character as having “a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, for a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many as a thousand.”[[220]](#footnote-220)  Further than this, she goes on to enumerate some of these cohabiting personae, such as “the boy who sat on the hill”, “the gypsy”, “the hermit”, and “the girl in love with life”.[[221]](#footnote-221) Despite Orlando’s crossing from one sex to the other, she has retained and internalised facets of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ to be called upon at will, maintaining a fluid attitude to her own gender. This passage does a lot to summarise the attitude of the novel to the nature of personhood – first, that it is roughly performative; Orlando derives his/her personae from their occupations (‘gypsy’, ‘traveller’). Second, that it is by its nature divided and multifaceted`; and thirdly, that these many selves are capable of holding different gendered identities (‘boy’, ‘girl’) simultaneously. It is this last which is the most important for the purposes of this investigation, as it creates a picture of an individual who breaks down the male/female dichotomy in the sense that she contests the assumption that a character/person is simply one or the other. What I hope to tease out here is the relationship between Orlando’s transgressive attitudes to gender and what this means for her sexuality, which I believe may ultimately be as conservative as those found in *The Waste Land.*

Pamela Caughie states in ‘The Temporality of Modernist Life-Writing in the Era of Transsexualism’that “Transnarratives cross genres – for example, medical, psychological, judicial, journalistic, anthropological […] - as in the case of *Orlando* with its generic mix of biography and fantasy, philosophy and literary history”.[[222]](#footnote-222) By blending the real life and fantasy, biography and novel, Woolf creates a text which is at one level *about the hybridity of gender*, and at another, deeper level, *about hybridity itself* – much as we saw reflected in the hybrid language of *The Waste Land. Orlando* has the feeling of pseudo-biography because Woolf based the character loosely upon her lover, Vita Sackville-West, who like Orlando was of noble birth, had a contested claim to an extensive stately home, and often wore male-coded clothing, operating under the assumed name of ‘Julian’.  Woolf wrote to West in a letter “Suppose Orlando turns out to be Vita… there’s a kind of shimmer of reality which sometimes attaches itself to my people, as the luster on an oyster shell… suppose, I say, that Sibyl next October says ‘There’s Virginia gone and written a book about Vita’… shall you mind?”,[[223]](#footnote-223) both declaring her intentions and asking the permission of the intended object of the novel. Indeed, Vita’s son Nigel Nicholson declared the novel to be “the longest and most charming love letter in literature”,[[224]](#footnote-224) for like the attachment of Woolf to Sackville-West, the affection of the narrator for Orlando is both clear and palpable on the page. In the first chapter, we receive a description of various tints of light striking “the shapely legs, the handsome body and the well-set shoulders” of Orlando, although his face “was illuminated solely by the sun itself”.[[225]](#footnote-225) Commentators have remarked upon the striking resemblance of the figure in this passage to Vita herself, despite the character’s (current, temporary) masculinity – Woolf wrote on several occasions of Vita’s legs being her ‘real claim to consideration’. Karyn Sproles notes in *Desiring Women,* her book on Vita and Woolf’s relationship, that:

Like the mode of Orlando’s substitution of writing for erotic practice, however, the book itself can be seen to operate as a mechanism for the repression of desire. Sackville-West noted Woolf’s tendency to redirect libido into intellectual contact; when she accuses Woolf of turning human relationships to copy (*Letters 51),* she implies that Woolf defends against intimacy by intellectual sublimation.[[226]](#footnote-226)

Thus, just as Orlando him/herself undergoes a bodily transformation from male to female, Vita is imaginatively transformed, at least temporarily, from a real woman to a fictive man – just as we saw Verdenal transformed into the Hyacinth Girl by Eliot within the confines of *The Waste Land*. In much the same way, real-life lost homoerotic passion (after Vita began to leave Woolf for Mary Campbell) is sublimated through writing into something more platonic, more intellectual, more straight.

This gender-crossing is mirrored by Woolf’s positioning of herself as a male biographer, as she demonstrates in the occasional comments upon the biographer’s role: “the biographer […] must confine himself to the single statement.”[[227]](#footnote-227) Thus, the female/female relationship of Woolf and Sackville-West becomes the homoerotic, lingering eye of the biographer in the male/male relationship on the page. However, just as Vita became Julian for many of her liaisons with women, so this tantalizing nod towards homosexuality is undone by the transformation of Orlando into a woman, ‘straightening’ the gaze of the narrator (whilst inversely queering that of Woolf as writer). This being said, the narrator makes an interesting move toward the end of the novel, after Orlando’s change. When she is in the company of Nell and her other female friends, the question of what exactly they spoke about is sidestepped with the disclaimer that “that is not a question that can engage the attention of a sensible man, let us, who enjoy the immunity of all biographers and historians to any sex whatsoever, pass it over.”[[228]](#footnote-228) The narrator’s claim here, that both he (as the narrator addresses himself on multiple occasions) and the reader are removed from sex is both a play upon the biographer’s (false) claims to neutrality, and a more attractive move to a repositioning of both reader and fictive writer within a queer space: a disembodied gaze directed towards an androgynous subject. What exactly we make of the use of male pronouns then is up for grabs, though I lean towards categorising this as deliberate satire of the grammatical convention of using the ‘he’ pronoun for things which we consider ‘immune from sex’ or neutral. Another parallel to *The Waste Land* arises from the narrator’s claims to immunity from sex – by positioning himself outside of the binary of embodied sex, he becomes a Tiresian figure much like Eliot’s; a passive onlooker rendered impartial precisely because of his position outside of a sexed binary.

A final link between the parodic/biographical Orlando and the real Vita is their claim to vast stately homes. In Vita’s case, this house is Knowle, and its counterpart features prominently at several points during the novel. When Orlando becomes disillusioned with his writing patron, he retreats to his house’s grounds, climbing to a “high mound whence on fine days half of England, with a slice of Wales and Scotland can be seen.”[[229]](#footnote-229) Of course, this view is in reality impossible, but such an unlikely panorama becomes something of a motif where Orlando’s sight is concerned. A similar view occurs when he sees “the fretted cross at Charing; there the dome of St. Paul’s; there the massy square of the Tower buildings”,[[230]](#footnote-230) which the notes explain is an anachronism, as the dome of the cathedral burned down in the great fire some 100 years prior to the events of the novel. We as readers are left for some time to wonder why Orlando possesses such a totalising eye, and what this might mean. An explanation comes after Orlando’s transformation as, when crossing Turkey:

she beheld far off, across the sea of Marmara, the plains of Greece, and made out (her eyes were admirable) the Acropolis, with a white streak or two which must, she thought, be the Parthenon, her soul expanded with her eyeballs, and she prayed that she might share the majesty of the hills, know the serenity of the plains etc. etc., as all such believers do.[[231]](#footnote-231)

This last image, of her soul expanding with her eyeballs, is the most crucial and the most telling; Orlando’s views, which cross both space and time, are made retroactively into a camp metaphor for the size of the character’s soul. Just as their nature contains a multitude of male and female facets, so their views come to include multiple countries and times into one seamless whole. As Jessica Berman puts it, “reading the transnational situation as also intrinsically transgender disrupts the determinative power of the sexed body and its ‘home’ geography, […] and the seeming solidity of categories of gender identity once Orlando arrives back on English soil.”[[232]](#footnote-232) Orlando’s internalisation of both East and West is directly related to their nature as both male and female – both situations challenge binaristic hierarchies, and both find themselves displaced by those same hierarchies.

It is interesting also to note that this transformation from a male to a female embodiment, Orlando’s crossing of the sex binary, takes place during the episode of the narrative set in Constantinople- where Europe transforms into Asia, the Occident into the Orient, West into East. Constantinople, and Turkey more generally, is figured as the meeting point of East and West, a non-binary site in and of itself, such that, when coupled with Orlando’s bodily transformations, we are confronted with a liminal space in which one thing is always becoming another. The novel has of course already established an association between East-West and Male-Female liminalities, in the form of Marousha’s Russian trousers disguising her sex. However, this is taken to its extreme, in the scene immediately preceding Orlando’s transformation; his coronation as Duke of the British Empire. The narrator makes a great play of setting the scene, describing his digging through fire-scarred accounts of the incident, settling of writings of John Fenner Brigge (an English Naval officer) and supplementing those of Miss Penelope Hartopp (the daughter of a general) – notably resulting in a blending of male and female perspectives upon the scene. Brigge describes sitting in a tree outside of Orlando’s embassy, observing gathered below him “the demeanour of the natives… I came to the conclusion that this demonstration of our skills in the art of pyrotechny was valuable, if only because it impressed upon them… the superiority of the British.”[[233]](#footnote-233)By contrast, Hartopp describes a scene of refinement within, lingering upon the figures of British nobility and high society, including a Mr Peregrine, Lady Betty, Lady Bonham, as well as “jellies made to represent His Majesty’s ships… swans made to represent water lillies… birds in golden cages”.[[234]](#footnote-234) Thus we are presented with contrasting scenes - without, “people of all nationalities… packing like herrings in a barrel”[[235]](#footnote-235) and within, a scene of elegant, and distinctly British, Imperial refinement. This separation is violated immediately after Orlando is crowned with a circlet of strawberry leaves when:

Bells began ringing; the harsh cries of the prophets were heard above the shouts of the people; many Turks fell flat to the ground and touched the earth with their foreheads. A door burst open. The natives pressed into the banqueting rooms. Women shrieked.[[236]](#footnote-236)

Here, we see the previous binaries set up by Brigge and Hartopp suddenly crumble - the natives rush in from outside, into the more British scene, interrupting it with shouts and harsh cries. Immediately afterward, not two paragraphs later, Duke Orlando falls into his trance (having quickly married Rosina Pepita, “a dancer, father unknown, but reputed gypsy”,[[237]](#footnote-237) thus marrying high and low status, another binary crossed) and awakens embodied as a woman. Woolf uses, in a highly stylised, symbolic fashion, the trope of the mysterious East, a place where anything might happen (at least, in the mind of the British Empire), to stage her character’s magical transformation, binding together non-binary gender and nationality as twin sites of fantastic happenings. It is interesting to note, also, that a similar marrying of East-West and male-female binaries takes place in The Waste Land, when the notably intersexed Tiresias speaks “Burning burning burning burning / O Lord Thou pluckest me out”.[[238]](#footnote-238) In the notes, Eliot points that the former line draws from the Buddhas’ *Fire Sermon* and the latter from St Augustine’s *Confessions*. Of this unlikely pairing, Eliot states, somewhat enigmatically, that “The collocation of these two representatives of Eastern and Western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident.”[[239]](#footnote-239)

It has often been remarked upon that, for a narrative that focuses so heavily on Orlando’s transformation from a male to a female body, markedly little attention is paid by the narrator to the transformation itself. For example, Gilbert frames the scene thus:

In fact, as if to emphasise that costume, not anatomy, is destiny, Woolf comically eschews specific descriptions of the bodily alterations that mark Orlando’s gender metamorphosis […] Her transsexual, she argues, is no more than a transvestite, for though Orlando has outwardly become a woman “in every other respect (she) remains precisely as he had been”, and this is not because sexually defining costumes are false and selves are true, but because costumes are selves and thus easily, fluidly interchangeable.[[240]](#footnote-240)

Whilst all of this is, to an extent, true, I also feel that it misses the point somewhat. Orlando does change from one sex to another; this change does have a real impact upon their life: “Truth! We have no choice but to confess – he was a woman”.[[241]](#footnote-241) Woolf chooses to do more than merely show that clothing constitutes identity (though this does form an important theme within the novel), and this can be seen in her use of pronouns within the above quotation. Having engineered a situation in which she can write ‘he was a woman’ (a pronoun usage which the narrator later abandons for ‘convention’s sake’), Woolf demonstrates the attitude taken to sex in general in the novel; that it is something which is divorced from the essence of an individual, that there is capable of being a male (‘he’) inside of a woman’s body. In fact, the narrator/Woolf seems to later satirise the position of the individual who tries desperately to place the character within either binary sex/gender category:

Many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove (1) that Orlando has always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man. Let the biologists and psychologists determine.[[242]](#footnote-242)

This situation is almost laughably familiar to the modern (trans) reader – rival camps at war over whether Orlando’s identity might be claimed to be male or female, and a recourse to biological determinism or the diagnosis of a psychiatrist. Of course, this is all framed in a humorous light – Orlando goes on being who they are regardless of the law, the biologist or the psychologist, because the fact of their existence transcends these concerns, and it is this transcendence which is presented to the reader.

As might be expected of a novel with makes so much of both gender and cross-dressing, the act of sexing an individual upon first meeting them is frequently satirised within the text. This is particularly important in a trans context, in which passing as one’s gender of choice relies upon being read as this gender, as opposed to one’s sex-assigned-at-birth. In this regard, *Orlando* performs two useful offices; drawing attention to the practice and ubiquity of reading-on-sight, which often goes unnoticed, and also highlighting the nuances that it misses. Take, as an early example, the Queen, “who knew a man when she saw one, though not, it is said, in the usual way”,[[243]](#footnote-243) gazing at Orlando’s legs. Madelyn Detloff states that the “narrator’s many references to Orlando’s shapely legs flirt with this form of hyperbole”,[[244]](#footnote-244) and calls these moments “hyperbolic spoofs of normative gender performance”.[[245]](#footnote-245) The previous example is certainly played for comic effect, a pun on ‘knowing’ in the mundane sense and the biblical sense, immediately setting up the reading-practice as comical, whilst layering on the fact that (as the reader later finds out) Orlando isn’t *truly* a man at all. Likewise, Orlando later struggles to read Marousha, noting that “Legs, hands, carriage, were a boy’s, but no boy had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts”.[[246]](#footnote-246) Here we see subversion of the practice of blazoning; the subject is broken down into their constituent parts, usually in order to praise them, but here in order to throw doubt upon their gender assignation.

This effect becomes ever stronger and more farcical as we go on through the text: when Orlando later sees Harriet striding towards him, they are described as “no shadow, he soon saw, but the figure of a very tall lady in riding hood and mantle crossing the quadrangle on which his room looked out.”[[247]](#footnote-247) What is known to the narrator at this point, and the reader much later, is that Harriet is in fact the archduke Harry in a dress, and therefore that Orlando is quite mistaken in his assumptions at this point – that these assumptions stem entirely from Harriet’s presentation, rather than anything which is true about the individual. This bears striking similarity to the presentation of ‘the third’ in *The Waste Land,* who also wore a mantle, which disrupted the reading of their sex, although in Orlando a mistaken assumption is made, for comic effect. This situation is brought to a head after Orlando’s transformation - whilst she is dressed up as a man, she meets a young woman who “looked up at him (for he was a man to her)”.[[248]](#footnote-248) Unlike with Harry/iet, both narrator and reader at this point know that Orlando is cross-dressed, and also that her gender is more complicated than ‘merely’ female. However, the narrator chooses to use the ‘he’ pronoun, as if we the reader are gazing vicariously through the eyes of Nell, simultaneously reading incorrectly and seeing the folly of attempting to read an individual at all.

On top of this apparent questioning of the assignation of sex/genders on sight, the novel also seems, in my opinion, to contain an argument for where the individual’s gender ‘really’ lies. For this, we can look to Orlando’s circumstances immediately after their transformation, when they return to their stately home. With regard to their changed circumstances, the text states that:

No one showed an instant's suspicion that Orlando was not the Orlando they had known. If any doubt there was in the human mind the action of the deer and the dogs would have been enough to dispel it, for the dumb creatures, as is well known, are far better judges both of identity and character than we are. Moreover, […] said Mrs Grimsditch, becoming confidential, she had always had her suspicions (here she nodded her head very mysteriously), which it was no surprise to her (here she nodded her head very knowingly), and for her part, a very great comfort; for what with the towels wanting mending and the curtains in the chaplain's parlour being moth-eaten round the fringes, it was time they had a Mistress among them.[[249]](#footnote-249)

Now, there are several important things to unpack here. First is that the reader is shown that the perception of Orlando as being changed because of their sexual circumstances is a product of human/societal concerns, as the a-societal animals fail to recognise a difference. Second, this core, this identity, is independent of Orlando’s sex, a distinction which feels very close to a modern model. And, almost incidentally, a clue that the transformation may not be entirely accidental, as Mrs Grimsditch intimates that she ‘had her suspicions’; phrasing reminiscent of gossip which might be more readily applied to sexuality, although here used in the context of Orlando’s trans status.

However, the novel seems to broaden its scope slowly from saying that Orlando themselves is at their core both male and female, to saying that *everybody* is, in their essence, ungendered. At one point, the biographer muses upon this apparently heterogeneous construction, stating “Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite”.[[250]](#footnote-250) This fictional musing of Woolf’s character acts very much as a vehicle for her own thought, as we can see similar musings in *A Room of One’s Own:*

But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man’s brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman’s brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her.[[251]](#footnote-251)

In short, we might propose that Woolf sees the human individual as necessarily a combination of male and female facets, which merely (because of the apparent binary of the sexes) give the appearance of being homogenously male or female. *Orlando* even answers the question of the transmission of this false binary, placing the blame at the feet of society and socialization, as in the final interaction of Orlando and Harry, describing how “they acted the parts of man and woman for ten minutes with great vigour and then fell into natural discourse.”[[252]](#footnote-252) Note particularly that maleness and femaleness are performed, not lived, and how their abandonment, the abandonment of the conventions of polite society, is the ‘natural’ state.

As Orlando’s body changes, so does her costume, though the correlation between the two is not always direct, but rather fractured and complicated at all turns. Because her life spans just over five hundred years of history, as well as crossing between two sexes, she becomes something of a clothes-horse in order to showcase the societal construction of gender through the use of clothing. The narrator explains this view of clothing: “Vain trifles though they may seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world, and the world’s view of us.”[[253]](#footnote-253) This statement neatly summarises the interaction that takes place between Orlando and the sea captain at the beginning of chapter IV, where Orlando had not given her (female) sex a thought “until she felt the coil of skirts around her legs and the captain offered, with the greatest politeness, to have an awning spread for her on deck.”[[254]](#footnote-254) Here, the captain (and Orlando herself) are reacting not to the materiality of her sex, but rather to the ‘sex’ of the materials adorning her. As Sandra Gilbert puts it in ‘Costumes of the Mind’, the female modernists:

not only regard all clothing as costume, they also define all costume as false. Yet they do not oppose false costume to ‘true’ nakedness, for to most of these writers that fundamental sexual self for which, say, Yeats uses nakedness as a metaphor is itself merely another costume.[[255]](#footnote-255)

This view is reinforced by the narrator telling us that Orlando has been completely unconscious of her sex up until that point, as “the Turkish trousers she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts”.[[256]](#footnote-256) This takes a distinctly performative view of gender with regard to presentation; Orlando had not yet thought of her new female sex because she was not performing it – her trousers had become the signifier of her sex not just to onlookers, but to Orlando herself.

If our clothing changes our view of the world, and vice versa, what is the reader to make of the frequent appearance of characters in androgynous fashions? The very first line of the book reads that Orlando is obviously male, “though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it”,[[257]](#footnote-257) immediately setting up androgynous presentation as a theme of the text. After this initial instance, the reader is presented with a swarm of examples, including the young princess whose “loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex”.[[258]](#footnote-258) Although, whilst the sex is disguised, we still see that the costume is allied closely to Marousha’s personality; she is described as having a “courage (that) made nothing of adventure”, expressly whilst being “booted like a man”[[259]](#footnote-259). Here, the androgyny of the princess’ presentation acts as both a legitimising power behind and a shaping power of her personality, contrasted sharply with the restrictiveness of the 18th century feminine corsetry that Orlando notes later in the novel. Woolf opens up a space for a positive androgyny, a condition of high praise in the text. For example, the Archduke Harry describes Orlando as ever being “the pink, the pearl, the perfection of her sex”[[260]](#footnote-260) after falling in love with him as a man and her subsequent transformation into a woman. The implication here is that perfection is something which transcends sex, in being identical for both sexes, and is thus non-binary itself in the strictest sense of the word.

Subsequently, in the early 18th century, Orlando continues her period of dissatisfaction with the compulsory womanhood assigned to her by her anatomy, and continues her habit of cross-dressing. She is described as having “no difficulty sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive [...] For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats, and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally.”[[261]](#footnote-261) Again, what appears at first to be a truly same-sex desire is in fact an equation of gender fluidity with bisexual desire; in order to love women, Orlando changes both her costume and her (inner) sex to that of a man in order to reflect the correct (read heterosexual) love object. This reading is finally concretised as we reach the end of the 18th century and enter the 19th. Orlando is out walking one day when she suddenly “becomes conscious that she (is) wearing black breeches”[[262]](#footnote-262), and hurries home to change. Here, Orlando's gender becomes fixed (coercively, it must be said, by the constraints of the spirit of the age) to the feminine mode; indeed, at the end of the novel she must physically call her own name in order to re-summon the masculine parts of herself, where before it took only a change of costume. From this point on, her love objects, too, become fixed, this time to the masculine, and she desperately pursues a husband in order to soothe the phantom itch on her finger.

It is after this fixing that Orlando's final partner is introduced. Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine is another figure of desirable androgyny in the novel; a passionate and emotive character with whom Orlando falls instantly in love. As soon as she confesses this:

An awful suspicion rushed into both their heads simultaneously.

“You're a woman, Shel!” she cried.

“You're a man, Orlando!”[[263]](#footnote-263)

This exchange echoes the earlier scene where Orlando despairs that the Russian princess will not be his because he believes her to be a man, and also reverses his/her earlier lack of recognition of Harry/iet's masculinity. George Piggford analyses the exchange by stating that “Orlando and Shel are more than just Freudian narcissists; the complicated notion of gender articulated in Woolf’s text overdetermines the Freudian model by radically disconnecting sex and gender.”[[264]](#footnote-264) However, I believe that the situation may be more fraught than a complete disconnection of sex and gender in Orlando and Shel’s relationship. At this moment, the valence (i.e. orientation, direction) of each character's sexuality is tied in a complex, comical knot; Orlando appears to be a woman loving a man (and vice versa for Shelmerdine), where in fact it is the maleness of Orlando to which Shelmerdine is attracted (and vice versa for Orlando). What we are left with is an outward appearance of heterosexuality, and beneath this, a heterosexual desire running in the opposite direction; Orlando's maleness towards Shel's femaleness. The androgyny of both characters has resulted in a two-fold straightness, and woman’s proper object is man in both cases, much as we saw the fragmented consciousness of Tiresias in *The Waste Land* continually conjuring male/female pairings whilst looking askance to queer sexuality.

However, whilst we are presented with an image of androgyny as perfection, the interaction of this idea with sexuality in the novel is a strange one. Immediately after her transformation, Orlando is distressed to realise that all her loves “had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt to convention, though she was herself a woman, it was still a woman she loved.”[[265]](#footnote-265) Though this appears to be a concrete, unambiguous reference to same-sex desire, which is itself revolutionary in a time when Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* was on trial for obscenity (in which Woolf herself gave evidence on Hall’s side), the valences of sexual desire here are not so simple. Piggford identifies that “though her sex has changed, her gender identification remains the same – she becomes an anaclitic male in a female’s body”,[[266]](#footnote-266) that is, a trans man. Whilst it is merely the (societal) 'convention' that the love of woman belongs to man, Orlando is at this point in a flux between male and female; it is the residual maleness within her which desires the woman, rather than her newfound womanhood. This is later challenged, but ultimately reinforced, at several points in the text. For example, when Orlando dresses as a man and meets a young woman (Nell) in the park, she “looked up at him (for a man he was to her) appealing, hoping, trembling, fearing”.[[267]](#footnote-267) Orlando walks the woman home and escorts her upstairs, presumably for a sexual encounter, until he/she can no longer stand the show which the woman is clearly putting on, and reveals herself a woman also. At this, Nell “burst into such a roar of laughter that it might be heard from across the way”[[268]](#footnote-268), and Orlando is immediately recast from a potential sexual partner into a social being, a figure of friendship for Nell, whom she promptly begins to relate her life story to.

This dismissal of the text as reproducing a somewhat-complicated heterosexuality may, however, be a little too quick.In order to avoid the same censure as the far more realist *Well of Loneliness* received, *Orlando* always hides its instances of same-sex desire behind layers of satire, wit and humour – as when our hero plays guessing games over whether it is *acceptable* for him to be attracted to the Russian princess (even when he believed her a boy, his attraction was never in doubt). Nevertheless, it should be argued, these references to same sex-desire are still present. Early on, passing mention is made to the fact that “He became the adored of many women and some men”[[269]](#footnote-269)- fleeting enough to be permissible, and no moral value is ascribed to these encounters. Likewise, after the transformation, “she fled with a certain lady to the Low Countries where the lady's husband followed”,[[270]](#footnote-270) a concrete same-sex happening which is made palatable by its brief, off-focus description, its presentation as malicious rumour. Our finest example, however, comes again in the interaction between the (currently male) Orlando and the disguised Harriet. The two have fallen to talking, when Orlando notices that he is becoming aroused by the sight of her/him: “Perhaps something in the way she fastened the ankle buckle… or the natural sympathy which is between the sexes.”[[271]](#footnote-271) Of course, the reader knows that Harriet is male, and so ‘the natural sympathy between the sexes’ takes on new meaning; Woolf has performed enough of a linguistic circumlocution to describe a sexual encounter between two men as a natural circumstance, and bypass the censors all in one swoop, and it’s all alright because it’s *silly. Orlando* gets away with a great deal of queerness because it is silly, whereas a serious text like *The Well of Loneliness* got away with nothing.

As the reader might expect of a novel which plays so freely with themes of sex, gender and the mellifluous expression of the self, *Orlando* makes frequent and deliberate show of the failure of language to communicate accurately or perfectly, particularly with regards to both the gender of our hero(ine), and expressions of beauty in general. As an example, we might look to the moment when Orlando exclaims “‘How good to eat!’ (The gypsies have no word for ‘beautiful’. This is the nearest.)”,[[272]](#footnote-272) or their encounter with Sasha, when “ransack the language as he might, words failed him […] English was too frank, too candid, too honeyed a speech”,[[273]](#footnote-273) both of which neatly portray the failure of language(s) to adequately capture encounters with great beauty. However, this theme becomes centralised when the voice of the biographer/narrator attempts to assign pronouns to the newly transformed Orlando – “His memory — but in future we must, for convention’s sake, say ‘her’ for ‘his,’ and ‘she’ for ‘he’— her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle.”[[274]](#footnote-274) Even for the modern reader, this hesitation, this reticence in the speech surrounding the trans person as ‘other’ will be highly familiar. The problem is summarised in Don Kulick’s *Transgender and Language* thus:

One of the many things that transgenderism “does” in social and cultural life is affirm the permeability of gendered boundaries. By doing so, it highlights the contrived, contingent, and contextualized nature of ‘male’ and ‘female.’ […] The transgression of limits is language’s inescapable nature.[[275]](#footnote-275)

That Woolf hit upon this failure of language when faced with the fact of transgender (and more particularly, non-binary) personhood so many years before the current debates surrounding its use rose to the fore is only one of the remarkable things about this novel. But, rather than lament this limitation, the novel seems to exult in the individual’s capability to identify with another, beyond language. When Orlando and Marmaduke shout each other’s names, the words are pictured “dashing and circling like wild hawks together among the belfries and higher and higher, further and further, faster and faster they circled, till they crashed and fell in a shower of fragments to the ground; and she went in.”[[276]](#footnote-276) The message here seems to be a positive one – queer-gendered characters are capable of existing, are capable of loving, even among the fragments of a language which is not adequate to do them justice.

Beyond stating this failure of language in the face of the trans individual, the text also makes some ground into suggesting *why* language as it stands would fail in this way. A particularly exemplary line states that “love — as the male novelists define it — and who, after all, speak with greater authority? — has nothing whatever to do with kindness, fidelity, generosity, or poetry.”[[277]](#footnote-277) The important emphasis here, I believe, must be placed on the perceived *maleness* and *authority* of the figure of the language maker – it is the biased construction of language(s) by a cis/hetero/patriarchy which excludes women and trans individuals from full participation within the language. This entrenchment of the male language-maker is fully laid bare in the passages surrounding the legal proceedings of Orlando’s change from male to female. We are told that, legally speaking, Orlando existed in a:

highly ambiguous condition, uncertain whether she was alive or dead, man or woman, Duke or nonentity, that she posted down to her country seat, where, pending the legal judgment, she had the Law’s permission to reside in a state of incognito or incognita, as the case might turn out to be.[[278]](#footnote-278)

In modern parlance, this control over the gender identification of the individual exerted by the state would be termed ‘gatekeeping’, another way in which the text is ahead of its time. Jessica Berman states that “the trans subject, because outside the gender binary presumed by most states, also often moves beyond the jurisdictional bounds of justice, and the possibility of claiming standing as a full citizen”,[[279]](#footnote-279) highlighting the fact that Orlando is placed outside of full statehood by their trans nature. As before, the attitude of the novel is firmly on the side of the trans subject; the reader is shown Orlando’s self-identity (in all of its complexity), and is left to laugh at the ‘culpable laggardry’ (to use the text’s phrasing) of the law in keeping up with it.

Whilst this analysis may lead the reader to think that language is seen as breaking down irreparably within the novel, Woolf also offers us a manner of salvation. This salvation comes, somewhat predictably, in the form of the poet – the narrator states that the poet’s “words reach where others fall short. A silly song of Shakespeare’s has done more for the poor and the wicked than all the preachers and philanthropists in the world.”[[280]](#footnote-280) This is particularly interesting when read in the light of *where* language is seen to ‘fall short’ in the novel; both in cases of great beauty (as Sasha and the gypsies), and in confrontation with gender variance, as with Orlando themselves. Thus we come to a tentative suggestion – that poetic language is somehow more capable of accurately capturing Orlando/Sasha/Marmaduke’s nature than mundane/legalistic language. The narrator summarises this position thus - “For it has come about, by the wise economy of nature, that our modern spirit can almost dispense with language; […] the most poetic is precisely that which cannot be written down.”[[281]](#footnote-281) Orlando, whose dual nature defies writing, in this case within the context of the law, typifies this modern spirit, which grows ‘beyond language’. In fact, Orlando and their queer-coded partner, Marmaduke, go so far as to form a type of coded language between them, in order to facilitate a faster, more idiosyncratic discourse between themselves:

 ‘My God Shel’, she wired; ‘life literature Greene toady —’ here she dropped into a cypher language which they had invented between them so that a whole spiritual state of the utmost complexity might be conveyed in a word or two without the telegraph clerk being any wiser, and added the words ‘Rattigan Glumphoboo’, which summed it up precisely.[[282]](#footnote-282)

Now, this bears two interesting comparisons with regard to the history of queer utterances. The first is to Polari, the slang dialect used by theatrical performers and secret gay subcultures in the early 1900s, which consisted of a collection of loanwords from Romany, Cockney and thieves’ cant, designed to confound the casual listener (in this case, our telegraph clerk).[[283]](#footnote-283) The other, more recent comparison which might be drawn is the rise of the neopronoun, and accompanying LGBT lexis, which have gained prominence in the public eye in the last decade or two. Here, specific terminologies are developed between LGBT individuals not to confound a listener, but to facilitate easier communication between queer peoples, much in the same way as Orlando and Marmaduke do, though in perhaps a slightly different circumstance.

Despite their obvious differences in tone and style, despite even their attitudes to their queer subject matter, *Orlando* and *The Waste Land* share a great deal. Both treat the personae of their focal characters as being made up of many facets, both male and female, and thus present the reader with a character who should properly be considered as possessing a non-binary gender. Both also contain instances wherein a character becomes frustrated in the act of trying to read an other of ambiguous sex/gender presentation. In both, we see a queer affection for a same-sex loved one of the author sublimated, through writing, into a character of the opposite sex, in the form of Orlando and the Hyacinth Girl. This effect, this sanitization, this straightening of the gaze is mirrored on the level of the text itself, where the maleness of the focal characters directs his erotic energy to women, and vice versa for the femaleness, resulting in a kind of twofold heterosexuality. The pessimist in me wants to say that these tantalising prototypical non-binary characters are a modernist play upon the theme of bisexuality, a kind of complex, extended metaphor. However, *Orlando* and *The Waste Land* do have their moments of loving homoeroticism: moments which seem like a playful wink, a ‘you know what I’m talking about’ in the former; moments which seem always in danger of slipping under the weight of the water and their own sadness in the latter. Perhaps, instead, it is a sign of the stifling repression of queerness in the early 20th century that such intricate workarounds and false flags would have to be used in order to talk about queer genders and sexualities at all, for fear of facing the same censure as *The Well of Loneliness.* In either case, this first chapter has provided a rich lexicon of tropes and signs of the non-binary, which I can move on to apply to the more troubling examples of *Ulysses* and *Nightwood* in the next stage of my argument.

# Chapter 2 – *Ulysses* and *Nightwood*

On August 15th 1921, during a sitting of the House of Lords, it was proposed that the following amendment be made to British law surrounding homosexuality: “Any act of gross indecency between female persons shall be a misdemeanour, and punishable in the same manner as any such act committed by male persons”.[[284]](#footnote-284) The amendment was rejected by the Earl of Desart, who stated that “we all know the sort of romantic, almost *hysterical*, friendships that are made between young women”,[[285]](#footnote-285) and asked of the amendment “Is there any necessity for it? How many people does one suppose really are so vile, so *unbalanced,* so *neurotic* as to do this?” (emphasis mine).[[286]](#footnote-286) Likewise, in the field of sexology, Havelock Ellis said of his Eonist[[287]](#footnote-287) that “It is normal for a man to identify himself with the woman he loves. The Eonist carries that identification too far, stimulated by a *sensitive* and feminine element within himself which is associated with a rather defective virile sexuality on what may be a *neurotic* basis” (emphasis mine).[[288]](#footnote-288) All of this is meant to establish that the normative view in early 20th culture was that there was a clear link between the ‘invert’ (whether transgender or homosexual) and mental illness, more specifically neurosis. Although the term is no longer widely used in psychological diagnoses, ‘neurosis’ is used to function as a kind of catch-all for “anxiety, sadness or depression, anger, irritability, mental confusion, low sense of self-worth […] cognitive problems such as unpleasant or disturbing thoughts, repetition of thoughts and obsession, habitual fantasising, negativity and cynicism etc.”[[289]](#footnote-289) In short, the invert of the early 20th century could also be expected to be anxious, depressed, and lost in their own thoughts; very much like the archetypical ‘gloomily bruised’ modernist hero.

Over the course of this chapter, I will examine two novels which centre on characters who appear to exhibit the traits of non-binary gender, and who are characterised by their authors as deeply neurotic. The first such protagonist is Leopold Bloom in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Joyce scholars have already demonstrated themselves open to the possibilities of Bloom’s femininity, and increasing numbers are giving readings which embrace the positive aspects of the “new womanly man”.[[290]](#footnote-290) I will therefore devote my contribution not just to reaffirming this reading of Bloom in a non-binary light, but also to highlighting the hidden and pervasive valences which equate androgyny of the mind and bisexual orientation. I will focus mainly on the ‘Circe’ episode of the narrative, as it is the chapter which is most heavily saturated with gender-transgressive imagery in the novel, as well as being where these transgressions are most clearly connected to Bloom’s neuroses. It is in this chapter that Bloom and his companion Stephen reach Nighttown, the red-light district of Dublin, and fall into a series of drink-addled hallucinations. These hallucinations take the form of psychodramatic plays on the character’s deepest fears about their own personalities and selfhoods, allowing the reader to slip into the inner-workings of Bloom’s mind. What we uncover, Joseph Boone argues, is Joyce’s “harsh critique of Dublin’s male dominated ethos, but also his awareness of the process by which internalization of its values precipitates the revolt of the psyche”.[[291]](#footnote-291) In short, we watch as Bloom is torn between the conservative values he has internalised from his society and the nascent identity within himself.

The second half of the chapter will contrast *Ulysses* with Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood,* which of all the texts analysed in this thesis concerns itself most intimately with characters which a modern reader would recognise as trans. Even whilst Orlando undergoes a physical transformation from one sexed-body to another as tracked in the previous chapter, they had none of the desire to be read as a woman that is familiar to the transfeminine reader. Similarly, their transformation was magical, functioning more as a plot device for highlighting the differing treatment of the binary genders – Orlando’s change was involuntary. In sharp contrast, Dr. Matthew O’Connor – the roving, unlicensed gynaecologist who serves as *Nightwood*’s surrogate narrator – gives every indication of being a binary trans woman. Of note is the fact that the very first (still experimental) male-to-female gender-reassignment surgeries had taken place only five years prior to the novel’s publication, in the clinic of Dr Magnus Hirschfeld in 1931, across the continent in Germany. Like Bloom, like Tiresias, O’Connor’s gender variance is displayed as something from which the reader is intended to recoil – he is “the wolf in bed”[[292]](#footnote-292) as the narrator puts it, which may be symptomatic of the attitude of the times. However we as readers are intended to view O’Connor does not, however, alter the fact that he is a representation of a trans woman. I will also argue that *Nightwood* goes further than this in the form of the character of Robin Vote, who gives us pressing cause to read her as a non-binary individual. Like Bloom, Robin also appears plagued with neurosis – her gender variance, her queer sexuality and her crumbling mental state are presented as being intertwined. This chapter will examine what it means for a character’s queerness and their mental health to be linked so directly, and whether such representations of prototypical non-binary genders can still possibly be considered useful in a modern context, which seeks to depathologise queer sexualities and genders.

It is from the hallucinatory context of Nighttown that we gain a feeling of the depths of Bloom’s anxieties surrounding his womanly feelings, and his internalization of the message that a man must be a ‘manly man’ in his society. Early on in the episode, he encounters the First and Second Watch – police-like figures who serve to unnerve Bloom and question his actions and motivations. In response, he introduces himself as “a respectable married man, without a stain on my character. I live in Eccles Street. My wife, I am the daughter of a most distinguished commander […] one of Britain’s fighting men who helped win our battles.”[[293]](#footnote-293) At this point, Bloom’s speech is hesitant, contradicting itself and thus exposing his obvious lies. However, it is the form that these circumlocutions take that is of particular interest – Bloom first asserts that he is a married man, begins to talk about his wife, then seems to cut himself short in order to instead assert that he is the daughter of a British general. The reader might dismiss these obvious untruths as buffoonery on Bloom’s part, but they betray a deeper vein of anxiety concerning the pressures on his identity – a pull towards male and female, coloniser and colonised. At one point, he imagines being put on trial by his peers for his perceived femininity (Marion’s “Femininium”[[294]](#footnote-294) accusation), as well as for several sexual deviances including a spanking fetish (“I meant only the spanking idea”) and submissiveness in a sadomasochistic context (“He implored [Mrs. Talboys] […] to chastise him as he richly deserves”,[[295]](#footnote-295) whilst the same Talboys later says of Bloom “I’ll dig my spurs in him up to the rowel. He is a wellknown cuckold.”[[296]](#footnote-296)). This construction is later mirrored when Doctor Dixon states that “many have found (Bloom) a dear man, a dear person.”[[297]](#footnote-297) Of particular note here is the linguistic turn from framing Bloom as a ‘man’ to the ungendered ‘person’, as Bloom’s own imagination creates a space for him to conceptualise himself as not-a-man. Bloom is clearly drawn towards this side of himself, but also fears the reactions of his contemporaries – in the same skit, Mrs. Bellingham requests that the court “geld him”,[[298]](#footnote-298) revealing a degree of castration anxiety, and the Recorder pronounces that his crimes are grave enough to warrant being “hanged by the neck until he is dead”.[[299]](#footnote-299) If Bloom fears the gender mixing within himself, it is because he fears what his society has done to him, will do to him, should his nature be revealed.[[300]](#footnote-300)

Within this same trial scene, we also learn that a lot of Bloom’s anxieties seem to centre around his apparent embodied sex, particularly his genitals. Here, doctors are called forth as expert witnesses – one proclaims Bloom to be “bisexually abnormal”[[301]](#footnote-301) (a phrase used in the same context that Freud used the term, to mean ‘intersexed’), and goes on to state that he has performed a “pervaginal examination”[[302]](#footnote-302) upon Bloom, and that an acid test has revealed him to be “*virgo intacta*”,[[303]](#footnote-303) suggesting at least some degree of Bloom’s having intersexed characteristics (at least in his imaginings). This echoes the Citizen’s earlier proclamation that Bloom is “one of those mixed middlings”,[[304]](#footnote-304) whilst a second doctor declares him to be “a finished example of the new womanly man”.[[305]](#footnote-305) Intersexuality is not non-binary gender, and should not be conflated as such, but it would be glib to assume that the doctor and the citizen are speaking literally. Given that this accusation originates in Bloom’s own mind, and he knows the status of his own genitals (later described as “Off side. Curiously they are on the right. […] One in a million, my tailor, Mesias, says”,[[306]](#footnote-306) and thus presumably male-assigned), one must assume that this is instead a somewhat farcical dramatization of Bloom’s mixed feelings regarding his psychic, rather than physical, self. Of particular interest here is the appeal towards the medical professional as final arbiter of Bloom’s sex-gender – here positioned not so much as the gatekeeper figure familiar to a modern trans reader, but rather aligned with a particular kind of fear that the doctor will confirm that the modern man may not truly be a man at all.

Whilst tormented by these anxieties surrounding his own (imaginatively) ambivalent embodied sex, Bloom is also apparently tormented by a love of/attraction towards wearing female-coded clothing. Transformed into her male aspect as Bello, the whoremistress Bella Cohen threatens Bloom with women’s clothing – pointing to his whores, s/he states:

As they are now, so will you be, wigged, singed, perfumesprayed, ricepowdered, with smoothshaven armpits. Tape measurements will be taken next your skin. You will be laced with cruel force into vicelike corsets of soft dove coutille, with whalebone busk, to the diamond trimmed pelvis, the absolute outside edge, while your figure, plumper than when at large, will be restrained in nettight frocks, pretty two ounce petticoats and fringes and things stamped, of course, with my houseflag, creations of lovely lingerie for Alice and nice scent for Alice.[[307]](#footnote-307)

Here we see the ambivalence of desire necessary in BDSM interactions – a thing which is desired because it is undesired; in this case restrictive, humiliating female clothing. More specifically, it is the paradigm example of performatively feminine clothing of the sex worker with which Bloom is threatened, drawing a definite connection between women’s clothing and women’s sexual subordination within the text. Furthermore, on the very next page, Bloom begins to reticently admit that he desires this change of costume, admitting that he had “tried [Molly’s] things on only twice, a small prank, in Holles street”,[[308]](#footnote-308) before going on to confess that it “was Gerald converted me to be a true corsetlover when I was female impersonator in the high school play *Vice Versa.”[[309]](#footnote-309) [[310]](#footnote-310)* Here, the link is extended from women’s clothes, through women’s subordination, to a latent male-male homosexual desire (‘it was *Gerald* converted me’) – an equation not only of gay male desire to a kind of psychic femininity, but also to female fragility and powerlessness. Gilbert and Gubar state that “Bloom’s female costume is clearly a sign that he has wrongfully succumbed to ‘petticoat government’, and thus that he has become weak and womanish himself; his clothing tells, accordingly, not of his large androgynous soul, but of his complete degradation.”[[311]](#footnote-311) To Gilbert and Gubar (and in this case I am inclined to agree) it appears that Bloom-as-new-womanly-man is utterly unlike the ‘new woman’ for which he appears to be named – politically empowered, self-possessed, trousered – but rather a throwback figure linked to a much more Victorian ideal of woman.

It is whilst he is tormented/titillated by these thoughts of himself in corsets that Bloom is visited by visions of his fellow Dubliners openly flaunting mixed-coded outfits, and in various states of transvestite presentation. These include, but are by no means limited to, Mrs Breen “in man’s frieze overcoat with loose bellows pockets”,[[312]](#footnote-312) Richie Goulding “with three ladies’ hats pinned to his head”,[[313]](#footnote-313) and Molly/Marion in Turkish costume of “trousers and jacket” paired with “a wide yellow cummerbund”.[[314]](#footnote-314) Note that these outfits are not full ensembles of mono-gendered clothing, but rather use one or two articles in order to create a mixed coding which is partially masculine, partially feminine. This demonstrates a preoccupation in Bloom’s thought with a manner of gender expression which takes a non-binary form, expressions which would mark a Dubliner as a figure of extreme ostracization, expressions which can thus manifest themselves solely (and recurrently) in Bloom’s mind. Perhaps even more spectacularly, Ellen Bloom (Leopold’s mother), appears in “pantomime dame’s stringed mob cap, crinoline and bustle, widow Twankey’s blouse with muttonleg sleeves”.[[315]](#footnote-315) The attitude to gender expression shown here is unusually complex for its time – the specification that the already over-the-top feminine costume is that of a ‘dame’ (i.e. a man performing a parodic femininity), even whilst worn by the female Ellen Bloom, portrays an attitude to gender remarkably similar to the theories Judith Butler set forth in *Bodies That Matter*. She holds that “drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality”,[[316]](#footnote-316) or, more simply, that all gender is performative, and that drag functions to expose this performativity. In the same way, Bloom sees a vision in which a woman appears before him performing her femininity in the same way a man might, as a man like himself might merely perform masculinity whilst being drawn towards femaleness.

As well as being aligned with women’s clothing, Bloom also seems to be closely aligned to women’s bodies at key points in the novel. Throughout the text, Leopold Bloom is closely associated with menstruation, to both positive and negative ends. We might interpret this sympathy as being a product of Bloom’s nature occupying a boundary point between maleness and femaleness, allowing him to act as a mediator between the ‘two’ sex/genders. This bears distinct similarities to the theories of Edward Carpenter, more particularly when he states that the androgynous individual is granted “through their double nature, command of life in all its phases, and a certain freemasonry of the secrets of the two sexes which may favour their function as reconcilers and interpreters”.[[317]](#footnote-317) In this way, Bloom intuits that Edy Boardman is “near her monthlies, I expect. Makes them feel ticklish.”[[318]](#footnote-318) This is followed by his immediately stating that “I have such a headache today”[[319]](#footnote-319), demonstrating that he feels his sympathy on the level of both the emotions and the body. Likewise, in ‘Circe’, Bloom states that he is a “bit light in the head. Monthly or effect of the other. Brainfogfag. That tired feeling.”[[320]](#footnote-320) It is notable here that there is no woman present – Bloom describes his own cramping pain as a ‘monthly’, a period, without a woman to act as the initiator/sympathetic focus of his pain. In other words, Bloom believes that he has taken a particularly female pain fully into himself. Joyce at times plays this for laughs; the other (male) Dubliners deride Bloom for his monthly pains, displaying a traditional model of unfeeling masculinity. However, it is undeniable that there are positives to Bloom's intuitions – Molly realises that she is attracted to him initially because “he understood or felt what a woman is”.[[321]](#footnote-321) [[322]](#footnote-322) Again, he 'understood' mentally and 'felt' physically – Bloom's androgyny is so closely tied to his being that it manifests itself as a phantom (feminine, menstrual) pain; this can be likened to a transgender experience, one of close connection to a body and a mind-set which only *appears* ‘other’.

As with menstruation, Bloom also comes to be closely associated with pregnancy and childbirth over the course of the novel. R. Barrie Walkley interprets this effect, quite convincingly, as a kind of structural/symbolic *couvade*, which he follows E.B. Taylor in defining as “a group of customs associated with childbirth […wherein] the father of the child simulates the confinement of the wife, often behaving as if he were actually giving birth.”[[323]](#footnote-323) For example, when Mrs Purefroy is struggling with her labour, Bloom thinks:

Three days imagine groaning on a bed with a vinegared handkerchief around her forehead, her belly swollen out! Phew! Dreadful simply! Child’s head too big: forceps. Doubled up inside her trying to butt its way out blindly, groping for a way out. Kill me that would.[[324]](#footnote-324)

Walkley notes that although the above section occurs in ‘The Oxen of the Sun’, a passage which (for all that it is set on a maternity ward) contains markedly little mention of Mrs. Purefroy or her condition, and thus I would argue that Bloom’s remarks are a product of his particular sympathy. This sympathy is carried to its logical extreme in Nighttown, when a doctor states that “he is about to have a baby”, Bloom replies “I so want to be a mother” and instantly “bears eight male yellow and white children”.[[325]](#footnote-325) Again, the context of the ‘Circe’ section is hallucinatory, and this illusory parenthood is soon abandoned, but it is noteworthy that it is once again the case that Bloom longs for his body to perform a function, childbirth, which is regarded as quintessentially un-male. To state this at its simplest, Bloom’s longing at this point is transgendered.

In amongst these thoughts of ambiguous presentation and feminine feelings, there is a much starker example of sex/gender transgression on Bloom’s part. Upon encountering the Nighttown whoremistress, Bella Cohen, Bloom is engulfed by a hallucination is which she is transformed into the dominating male ‘Bello’, and he into a submissive woman. Gilbert and Gubar identify this passage as being heavily influenced by a type of Victorian pornography described by Vern Bullough in this way:

Closely allied to (erotic histories of) spanking and whipping were the underground Victorian epics about bondage that usually recount how recalcitrant and unmanageable boys were put into tight corsets and educated to be docile and feminine and lived more or less happily ever after as women.[[326]](#footnote-326)

Gilbert and Gubar go on to muse upon whether we might decide that “the grotesque androgyny Joyce imagines for Bloom in Nighttown […] hints at the possibility of a nobler and more vital androgyny?”, but conclude that this is a mistake, because “Bloom’s female costume is a clear sign that he has wrongly succumbed to ‘Petticoat Government’ and thus that he has become weak and womanish himself”.[[327]](#footnote-327) However, I believe that this reading does not pay adequate attention to the nuances of the situation; the scene is not a depiction of Bloom’s musings on a ‘true’ womanhood, but rather it occurs in a sadomasochistic context in an imagined interaction with a sex worker. As such, it might be better understood as an overstated/farcical/parodic example of a mode of consensual, performative sexual expression to which Bloom is himself attracted. We could instead think of this section in the manner that many BDSM practitioners position it; a parody of the construction of gender through clothing and social hierarchy, which – rather than reinforcing the dominant paradigm – seeks instead to subvert it *through the act of highlighting its constructedness,* as we saw in the section on drag presentation earlier*.*

It might be most useful to observe the attitude taken by the narrating voice towards Bloom and his transformation, a transformation which does not run straight from male to female (or vice-versa in the case of Bella/o), but which becomes caught and mired in an interstitial space. Bloom is referred to by the narrator with male and female pronouns interchangeably and at different stages; for example, take “BLOOM: (*Her eyes upturned in a sign of admiration, closing*)”[[328]](#footnote-328), and alternatively “(*He lifts his arms. His* *bangle bracelets fall*[[329]](#footnote-329))” (emphasis mine). Similarly, Bloom refers to Bello as “Master! Mistress! Mantamer!”,[[330]](#footnote-330) creating a linguistic space where Bella/o can be both man and woman, master and mistress simultaneously. Bloom is the man ‘tamed’ in this instance, despite Bello “*bar(ing) his arm and plung(ing) it elbowdeep into Bloom’s vulva*”[[331]](#footnote-331) in the very next exchange. This implies that Bloom is capable of conceptualising himself as bodily transformed into a woman whilst still calling himself a man. The entire scene is one sustained image of psychic flux in which male/female anatomy, male/female gender and active/passive sexualities become unmoored from one another and take on new, hybrid forms. From this, we might think of the BDSM context of the Nighttown episode as creating an implicitly permissive space in which gender can be explored and challenged freely, without the judgement that such explorations would draw in the vanilla[[332]](#footnote-332) world of the Dublin presented in Ulysses.

What is perhaps more worrying than Bloom’s perceived misogyny in his sexual role-playing is his immediate association of his ‘unmanning’ and a homoerotic desire. Quite apart from his desire for the masculinity within Bella/o her/himself, Bloom immediately imagines (via Bella/o’s accusations) an episode in which he was “A nice looking Miriam when (he) clipped off (his) backgate hairs and lay swooning in the thing across the bed as Mrs Dandrale, about to be violated by Mr Smythe-Smythe, Mr Phillip Augustus Blockwell, M.P., Signor Laci Daremo”[[333]](#footnote-333) etc. Here, Bloom conflates his femininity with passivity (‘lay swooning’), and also with being the sexual object of a particularly brutish male attention (as evidenced by the group of men about to ‘violate’ him). What we see here is a denial of the potential for queer attraction in the sequence; when Bloom imagines himself as a potential partner of a man/men, it is as a woman, not a man himself.[[334]](#footnote-334)

These thoughts occur to him only a few passages before The Sins of the Past run him through a laundry list of his sexual exploits, this time with women:

Unspeakable messages he telephoned mentally to Miss Dunn at an address in d’Oliver Street while he presented himself indecently to the instrument in the callbox. By word and deed he encouraged a nocturnal strumpet to deposit faecal matter in an unsanitary outhouse attached to empty premises. In five public conveniences he wrote pencilled messages offering his nuptial partner to all strongmembered males.[[335]](#footnote-335)

Now, there is a lot to unpack here, but note that Bloom is once again referred to as ‘he’ and not ‘she’, and that the objects of his desire are once again female. This establishes a firm link between a Bloom who sees himself as a female lover of men and a male lover of women. It confirms that these two things are (after a moment of flux with Bello/a) kept quite distinct within his thinking – a repetition of the trope which we saw evidenced in *The Waste Land* and *Orlando* in chapter one. So invested is he within the script of the virile heterosexual male that he has (imaginatively or in reality) offered his wife to men that he sees as more able to fulfil this role than he is. Bloom seems to envy Boylan his virility, as Bello taunts him that “I wouldn’t hurt your feelings for the world, but there’s a man of brawn in possession there […] He is something like a fullgrown outdoor man.”[[336]](#footnote-336) Bloom envies the easy ‘fullgrown’ masculinity of Boylan (at least partially because of his own impotence), but also, as we saw earlier, the soft/sensuous femininity which he associates with the prostitutes. It appears that this is because he does not see himself as easily fulfilling either script; both masculine virility and seductive femininity, both child-getting and child-bearing are tantalisingly out of reach to him, and so Bloom remains mired in an interstitial space between the two binary genders.

Within the confines of his mind, as projected onto the psychodramatic backdrop of Nighttown, Bloom seems to be at once feminine and masculine, suffering the anxieties of being drawn towards androgynous modes of personhood and presentation in a society which brooks little deviation from binary norms. Perhaps more than any of the other texts which this thesis will examine, *Ulysses* gives the reader access to its primary character’s interiority, such that we have not only the actions of his “firm full masculine feminine passive active hand”[[337]](#footnote-337) from which to draw our conclusions, but also Bloom’s fantasies about those actions. These thoughts, which seem to place Bloom uncomfortably between the binary genders, are our most important evidence in articulating a reading of Bloom as genderqueer within a discourse that places such great weight upon self-identification. However, whilst *Ulysses* takes a non-binary attitude to gender, it also repeats the pattern we saw in *Orlando* and *The Waste Land*, as aspects of each gender within the individual find their ‘proper’ (read heterosexual) counterpart in the love object. This displays something of a typical attitude of the modernist writer, in so far as it has succeeded in uncoupling sex from gender but failed to unhook gender from sexuality. However, this fault line does not appear to run right the way through all of modernist literature – Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* goes some way towards confounding this complex of attitudes. Whilst I argue that its focal character, Robin Vote, displays the hallmarks of a prototypical non-binary character, and that she does indeed have relationships with both men and women, I will argue that she is not performing the former as a woman, or the latter as a man. Indeed, Robin appears to be something wholly other than the bigendered characters whom I have previously examined in chapter one. Unlike Bloom in *Ulysses*, however, we are given very little access to Robin’s interiority, and her thoughts and actions are interpreted for us by the other characters – most importantly Matthew O’Connor, who serves as a type of a Freudian psychoanalyst, a gynaecologist, and a narrator.

Unlike Orlando, whose passage to identifying as a woman is marked by supernatural bodily change and remarkably little hardship, the character of Matthew O’Connor seems marked by a much more real sense of gender dysphoria, making him (sic.) perhaps the first recognisably trans woman in the Western literary canon. The most important part of this reading of O’Connor as having a trans identity is the fact that he, at multiple points within the text, identifies himself as a woman – naming himself “the other woman that god forgot”,[[338]](#footnote-338) “the old woman who lives in the closet”,[[339]](#footnote-339) and “a lady in no need of insults.”[[340]](#footnote-340) Further than this self-identification, O’Connor also shows signs of gender dysphoria, defined as a “marked incongruence between one’s expressed/experienced gender and one’s assigned gender”, including “a strong desire to be treated as the other gender [and] a stong conviction that one has the typical feelings and reactions of the other gender”.[[341]](#footnote-341) Within the highly medicalised history of transgender discourse, dysphoria was once viewed as ‘the’ signifier of transness, and whilst this criterion is being somewhat left behind, its presence in *Nightwood* is still notable. In O’Connor’s case, this takes the form of a disconnect from his male body, as when he runs “a thick warm finger around his throat, where, in spite of its customs, his hair surprised him”[[342]](#footnote-342) – the hair of his beard surprises him because it is a signifier of maleness, which, in his mind, he should not have. Likewise, in a somewhat stereotypical depiction of transness, he believes his existence in a male body is an error, as evidenced when he says “Personally I call (God) ‘she’ because of the way she made me; it somehow balances the *mistake*.”[[343]](#footnote-343) (emphasis mine) All of this is combined with the fact the O’Connor imagines himself as being, mistakes aside, a woman, with this taking the form of what he terms a kind of past life as a cis woman:

‘In the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor, and perhaps it’s the memory that haunts me. The wise men say that remembrance of things past is all we have for a future, and am I to blame if I’ve turned up this time as I shouldn’t have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as a king’s kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fishing schooner?’[[344]](#footnote-344)

In a fashion which is typical for O’Connor, the cisness and femaleness he ascribes to his past is hyperbolic, larger than life. We see a repetition of the familiar trope of a character ascribing their love of the same sex to the fact that they have another persona which is the opposite sex, as in the previous three texts, but here it seems potentially less problematic. O’Connor appears to be neither bisexual (all of his flirtations are with men) nor in any way middle gendered (he is a woman, rather than some interstitial identity), and thus – whether or not Barnes intended to write him as such – O’Connor is simply the text’s lone straight woman, even if he looks like a man. Likewise, the cisness of the previous female life is exaggerated – the womb is huge, the hair extraordinarily long, the breasts massive. This leads Martins, in *Gender Trouble and Lesbian Desire* to characterise the situation in this way:

What O’Connor wants is not a female body but the signifiers of femaleness. His exaggerated metaphors suggest that his apparent acceptance of traditional gender categories is in fact an acknowledgement of their discursive origins. What he wants is to be seen as a particular gender, to escape the nonexistence to which he has been assigned.[[345]](#footnote-345)

I would question here what exactly the difference between a (cis)female body and the signifiers of a (cis)female body are, when those signifiers include a womb. It seems as though O’Connor does indeed desire a female body, as this is the lone signifier of femaleness that he lacks, and it is by the achievement of this body that O’Connor would escape the ‘nonexistence to which he has been assigned’, where that is synonymous with being read as female.

It is interesting to note that, in every example given in the paragraph quoted, wherever O’Connor identifies himself as a woman, it is inextricably tied to his role as the intermediary between the other characters. He asks “Why is it that you want to talk to me? Because I’m the other woman that god forgot.”[[346]](#footnote-346) He states “I’m a lady in no need of insults […] I know”[[347]](#footnote-347) and Nora replies “You know what none of us know until we have died. You were dead in the beginning.”[[348]](#footnote-348) He asks “Do you not think that I, the old woman who lives in the closet, do not know that every child, no matter what its day, is born prehistorically and that even the wrong thought has caused the human mind incredible effort?”[[349]](#footnote-349) In each of these instances, O’Connor weaves together the fact that he is – contrary to appearances – a woman, with the fact that he has access to an almost preternatural understanding of the other characters around him. Nora recognises this also, stating that he was ‘dead in the beginning’, echoing his assertion that in a previous life he had lived as a woman. Coincidentally, whilst Gilbert and Gubar identify O’Connor as a male transvestite (with which my misgivings should by now be clear), they also align his character with the “witch doctors, shamans and *berdaches* (sic.) of primitive (sic.) cultures who have traditionally used women’s garb, women’s medicinal crafts, and even self-castration as a sign of their dedication to female powers.”[[350]](#footnote-350) There are several things to note here, not least that the majority of Native American communities consider the term ‘*berdache’* a slur because of its pejorative, non-native origins. More than this, it is a slur referring to a two-spirit individual, a Native American third gender/non-binary social role which also fulfils a ceremonial function, as was explored briefly in the introductory chapter. Therefore, in trying to argue that O’Connor is merely a transvestite, Gilbert and Gubar appear to have suggested that he does indeed appear transgendered, if only inadvertently. In fact, there is little to suggest anything of a non-European air about him, save maybe his passing references to reincarnation. It may make more sense, instead, to align his character with the middle-gendered mediators of Edward Carpenter; a facilitator of communication between the distanced genders. In O’Connor’s case, we might even characterise his role as a mediator between the cis and trans-gendered individuals of the novel, explaining at length the nature of something which looks very much like a trans existence. In one of his later tirades, he says that the “the last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy and the boy who should have been a girl! The love of the last doll was foreshadowed in that love of the first.”[[351]](#footnote-351) Here, O’Connor fulfils his role as mediator by explaining to Nora Robin’s strange actions, because he sees her as his counterpart, a girl who should have been a boy. It is never resolved in most cases whether O’Connor’s ‘insights’ are just that, or merely the deluded ramblings of an individual who enjoys the sound of his own voice too much, but in this case I believe that he is wrong, and that Robin is something else entirely than a ‘girl who should have been a boy’, and thus Nora’s desperate seeking of advice from O’Connor is merely another amongst many examples of delusion within the novel.

Matthew O’Connor occupies a unique position halfway between character and narrator, with some of his pronouncements taking up whole pages of the novel at a time. One of the things which makes *Nightwood* stand out so distinctly as a proto-trans text is the content of these speeches – O’Connor resists cisnormative language in a way which mirrors his own bodily resistance of ascribed gender-states. Take for example his assertion “try to get any lovesick girl – male or female – to do that today.”[[352]](#footnote-352) Not only does this open up the space for a ‘girl’ to be ‘male or female’, it does so flippantly, unremarkably. However, I believe that this flippancy is a mark in favour of a positive reading of O’Connor’s transness – he makes a ‘male girl’ seem unremarkable, normal, unworthy of more than passing mention. This same flippancy takes a more camp form when O’Connor, in conversation with Felix, says what a man is looking for:

‘You know what a man really desires […] One of two things: to find someone who is so stupid that he can lie to her, or to love someone so much that she can lie to him.’

 ‘I was not thinking of women at all,’ the Baronin said, and he tried to stand up.

‘Neither was I,’ said the doctor, ‘sit down.’[[353]](#footnote-353)

Again, O’Connor’s speaking around gender is somewhat glib, an almost-Wildean quip in which he seems to say that a man desires a partner, whom he refers to as ‘she’, only to say that he wasn’t thinking of women at all – not only a coded reference to his own queer sexuality, but also a casual assertion that a ‘not a woman’ (a man?) might be referred to as ‘she’. Likewise, O’Connor seems surprised that Felix would not be capable of thinking of a ‘non-female-she’; we as readers know that this surprise is feigned, as at other points O’Connor seems deeply affected by his going unrecognised as a ‘she’, but this mock-shock again serves to normalise transness within the novel, at least on O’Connor’s part.

We see moments later in the novel, when Nora stumbles in on O’Connor in women’s dress, where his statements on gender variance seem more genuine, if no less loquacious. In trying to get to the root of Nora’s love for Robin, O’Connor (typically) makes a more general pronouncement upon the nature of the love of the invert (i.e. same-sex attraction). He finds that the root of this type of attraction is found in ‘primers’, storybooks given to children, asking:

‘The girl lost, what is she but the prince found? The prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince princess in point lace – neither one and half the other, the painting on the fan. We love them for that reason. We were impaled in our childhood upon them, as they rode through our primers, the sweetest lie of all, now come to be in boy or girl, for in the girl it is the prince, and in the boy it is the girl that makes a prince a prince – and not a man.’[[354]](#footnote-354)

Again, we see the same linguistic space open up within O’Connor’s speech, wherein a girl is capable of being (and in fact, may always appear to be) a prince, and a boy a princess. However, this pronouncement is far less flippant than those we found earlier, carrying a weight of something which might be anger, or else melancholy. O’Connor here seems to believe that inversion, both same-sex-desire and transness, stems from some element of a child’s nurture, which seems to contradict his earlier arguments in favour of this state being part of his nature, i.e. that he was in some past life a woman. As Susana Martins puts it, “O’Connor’s insistence on the indefinable alchemy of human beings contradicts what seems to be, at first glance, the text’s suggestion that identity is essential, biologically determined.”[[355]](#footnote-355) However, whilst O’Connor’s position seems to contradict itself, this contradiction seems perfectly in line with his thinking – a man is capable of being at once a man and a woman, just as the state of being both a man and a woman arises simultaneously from nature and nurture. This use of paradox is, at its heart, the very essence of camp, “not a woman but a ‘woman’”,[[356]](#footnote-356) though here the technique is divorced from its epigrammatic, Wildean roots to make an uncharacteristically serious point.

We also see repeated in *Nightwood* something similar to one of the linguistic devices which we first encountered in *The Waste Land:* the language of the novel simultaneously setting up and confounding its own binaries. However, where in Eliot’s text this took the form of an insistence that there is a third option after setting up a binary (‘I will show you something different to either’), *Nightwood* instead states its seeming-paradoxes as if the reader should never have believed them paradoxical in the first place. Take for example Robin’s clothes of “heavy silks that made her seem newly ancient”[[357]](#footnote-357) – a thing cannot be new and ancient, but the text takes this to be the case. Likewise, Robin is also described as “gracious, yet fading, like an old statue in a garden […] Because of this, Felix found her presence painful, yet a happiness.”[[358]](#footnote-358) The inclusion of the ‘yet’ acknowledges the paradox as something which might occur, but nevertheless insists that it is the case. A level of complexity seems to be the norm within the novel – things are tainted by their own opposites, to the extent that the language of the text becomes mixed and hybridised in much the same way as the genders of its characters are. It might be best to view this effect as a by-product of the camp nature of the novel – as Sontag states, camp is “the love of the exaggerated, the "off," of *things-being-what-they-are-not*”[[359]](#footnote-359)(emphasis mine); on the one hand, ‘being what they are not’ implies masquerade, disguise, but on the other hand, it builds into a camp definition a tolerance for the paradoxical. We see this link most clearly when Felix marvels at Robin’s taste, which “turning from an appreciation of the most beautiful, would also include the cheaper and the debased, with an emotion as real.”[[360]](#footnote-360) The camp, which exults the androgyne, like Robin, also includes (and treats as similar) things which are otherwise opposite or disconnected – the beautiful and the debased.

We now move on from the binary presentation of transness in O’Connor’s character to the more enigmatic Robin Vote. As we saw in his ‘final doll’ speech, O’Connor expands his own category outwards by naming Robin as “the last doll, given to age, the girl who should have been a boy”.[[361]](#footnote-361) Essentially, the doctor recognises something of himself in Robin; she functions as a funhouse mirror-image of him. She too is given to same-sex relationships, with Nora and Jenny, as well as appearing frequently in transvestite apparel. When we first encounter her, she is passed out in a chair, “her legs, in white flannel trousers […] spread as if in dance”,[[362]](#footnote-362) and likewise when we last see her, she is “in her boy’s trousers".[[363]](#footnote-363) However, unlike the doctor, she is presented as holding an almost supernatural allure in relation to the other characters, who follow her across Paris in order to be near her. Certainly, she experiences a horror which could be considered dysphoria at her body’s production of an infant son, reacting “like a child who has walked in on the commencement of a horror”,[[364]](#footnote-364) remarking that she “didn’t want him”,[[365]](#footnote-365) and seeming at one point to be about to dash him on the floor. Still, however, O’Connor’s diagnosis, that Robin is essentially a trans man, does not seem to quite fit – the novel does not allow Robin much interiority, but it does not seem to be Robin’s apparent femininity which disquiets her, but the fact of her being itself.

When the reader, together with Felix and the doctor, first encounters Robin, she is passed out in men’s clothing, and the description given of her tells us something of her oppositional position to humanity: “The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of dampness and is yet dry […] Her flesh was the texture of plant life.”[[366]](#footnote-366) This first description allies her more closely with her jungle of a hotel room than her humanity; she comes to us out of pre-history as an “infected carrier of the past.”[[367]](#footnote-367) Gilbert and Gubar posit that Robin “seems to signal her aspiration to full humanity at least in part by dressing like a man”,[[368]](#footnote-368) although this is complicated by the fact that, even when seen in female costume, Robin’s clothes are described as being “of a period that (Felix) could not quite place,”[[369]](#footnote-369) showing that Robin’s gender presentation is closely tied to her primeval nature. O’Connor appears to have been closer to the mark when he said that Robin was “outside the ‘human type’ – a wild thing caught in a woman’s skin”,[[370]](#footnote-370) and elsewhere a “beast turning human”.[[371]](#footnote-371) What we receive is the idea of an individual who is neither man nor woman because her essence predates such concepts, at least as we know them. Robin is no more a man than the stamen of a flower, no more a woman than an animal – a destiny which she realises in the novel’s maddeningly ambiguous conclusion when she goes down on all fours in order to play with Nora’s dog.

Following the thinking of Havelock Ellis, that the body of the homosexual might in some ways resemble the ‘opposite’ sex, Robin’s body is frequently perceived by the other characters to be androgynous. The doctor goes so far at one point as to call her the “third sex”,[[372]](#footnote-372) though at the time this may have meant ‘homosexual’ or ‘binary transsexual’, as well as a ‘non-binary transgender’ – intriguing and hopeful in itself, but I cannot build too much of my argument upon it. Described as “a tall girl with the body of a boy”,[[373]](#footnote-373) who walks with a “hipless […] gait”,[[374]](#footnote-374) we might be given to think that she looks to some degree masculine. However, it is a ‘boy’s’ body that she has, rather than a ‘man’s’, and Nora later says that she “saw her always as a tall child who had grown up the length of an infant’s gown.”[[375]](#footnote-375) Like her inner nature, Robin’s bodily androgyny is inextricably linked to her existence in a state that is perpetually prior to sexual differentiation. And so, Robin is a beast, Robin is an eternal child – both innocents in some way aligned with nature, opposed to culture, opposed to society and all the coercive gender-structures that it entails.

In each of the other texts examined thus far, we have seen that the dual-gendered nature of the characters leads to a kind of two-fold heterosexuality, where the male within loves the female without, and vice-versa. *Nightwood*, however, goes some way towards not only displaying a knowledge of this trope, but also to dismantling it. Nora Flood, in conversation with the doctor, says that she, “who want(s) power, chose a girl who resembles a boy.”[[376]](#footnote-376) Likewise, when O’Connor speculates that “in the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the docks with a sailor.”[[377]](#footnote-377) These suit our familiar model in different ways; Nora, being a woman, is attracted to the manliness within Robin, and O’Connor, being actually a woman, is attracted to men. However, it is within Robin’s character that we finally see the trope defied. First, there is the question of whether she can be considered as a lover of men, whether her rejection of Felix is a rejection of all male sexuality – this is a question that we can never answer fully, although certainly she is only ever encountered as a romantic partner of women after that point. This alone marks her character out in comparison with Bloom, Tiresias and Orlando – her queer sexuality is not only open, but it forms a key theme of the novel, although the text denies Robin interiority, making it difficult to tell exactly what attracts her to her potential partners. However, we learn in a rare glimpse into her thought that, when her spirit is divided, it is torn between “love and anonymity”,[[378]](#footnote-378) rather than male and female, as in our previous examples. Robin is divided between her human nature, which loved Nora, and her nameless, bestial self, which turns its head from humanity, “as if in mortal shame”.[[379]](#footnote-379) This anonymity is part of her primitivistic nature – she precedes naming, she precedes society and the gendered structures that come along with it, being allied throughout the text with nature, with animals and plant life, always fleeing from civilisation.[[380]](#footnote-380)

Robin is not the only character in the text who appears in some way non-binary in their gendered characterisation, however. Frau Mann is another female-assigned character who does not fit entirely neatly within the categorization of female. First and foremost, her name reads as a kind of crude pun suggesting a sex-ambiguity – ‘Frau Mann’ becoming ‘Mrs. Man’ (a pun which is itself bilingual, liminal, straddling two languages), alongside her title ‘Duchess of Broadback’[[381]](#footnote-381) – denoting female aristocracy whilst also subtly calling to mind a certain masculinity of build i.e. ‘broad back’. In a similar way to Robin, Mann is frequently likened to children and dolls. Take for example the following description:

Her trade – the trapeze – seemed to have preserved her. She seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, red and yellow […] – one somehow felt they ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies, and the bulge in the groin where she took the bar, one foot caught in the flex of the calf, was as solid, specialized and polished as oak. The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. The needle that had made one property of the child made the other the property of no man.[[382]](#footnote-382)

As we saw with Robin, Mann is rendered ‘unsexed’ in that she appears to be in some way ‘pre-sexed’, the property of the child. As Robin is to plant life and fungi, Mann is ‘solid and specialized as oak’. Her profession seems to have subsumed her identity, ‘sustaining her’, running though her, to the extent that she takes on the clothing as her true identity, to the extent that she has taken on a form of the new-ancient paradox that defines Robin. This also echoes an attitude we saw in *Orlando* – clothing and occupation are treated as ‘truer’ determiners of identity than sex. Like many other concepts which are set up at the beginning of the novel, we are later brought full circle when O’Connor echoes the narrator’s earlier descriptions of Robin and Mann as doll-like by using the terms himself, in his long soliloquy on the nature of the invert:

The last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy, and the boy who should have been a girl! The love of the last doll was foreshadowed in the love of the first. The doll and the immature have something right about them, the doll because it resembles but does not contain life, and the third sex, because it contains life but resembles the doll.[[383]](#footnote-383)

Here, as our guide through the queer underworld of Paris, and *Nightwood* itself, O’Connor neatly ties together the recurring images of the doll, the non-binary individual and the child. From his despairing perspective, he sees each one as being in some way like and unlike the other – resembling that which-it–is-not, to put it in camp terms. The bodies which O’Connor and the narrator see for these characters - the smooth, unsexed bodies which lack sexual differentiation - are not real; they are doll-like, inhuman. However, we know that they are not truly the bodies of the characters – Robin gives birth, Mann takes off her clothes. Thus, the figure of the doll stands as a symbol – an imaginative ‘third *sex’* which is provided as a touchstone image to represent a more real ‘third *gender’* in a novel where the ideas of sexed-body and gender are not fully disconnected.

In both *Nightwood* and *Ulysses*, the reader is presented with a focal character who seems to fall outside of a binary gender typing, whilst also being neurotic, anxious, and almost constantly on the edge of breakdown. In *Ulysses*, the ‘Circe’ section allows us immediate and unmediated access to Bloom’s interiority, displaying his queerness as being tied to his anxiety by way of fear – he fears persecution and alienation from his fellow Dubliners; he fears The Trial. This, at least, is fairly in line with a modern liberatory perspective, insofar as it claims that queerness and mental illness do not go hand-in-hand, but are rather pushed together by a hostile society. By contrast, it is much more difficult to draw such a line beneath Robin’s melancholy, just as it is difficult to make any concrete statement about her gender or sexuality. Much as when Barnes famously stated that “I’m not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma”,[[384]](#footnote-384) Robin carries within herself her own contradictions, which never become resolved. All of Robin’s contemporaries seem to adore her, and she built around herself an unfailingly supportive clique of worshippers, presenting quite the opposite picture to that found of Bloom in *Ulysses*. In spite of this, her strange actions, so curiously devoid of meaning to the cisgendered onlookers she has gathered about her, are constantly in need of interpretation and mediation by the openly trans O’Connor. Barnes presents Robin as an unresolved paradox - newly ancient, plant and animal, male and female - who does not produce meaning unless, like O’Connor, the reader can bear the camp assertion that an unresolved paradox can simply exist, that a binary might be undone. In this way, we find a contrast to the characters of Tiresias and Orlando – both of whom contain multitudes, distinct aspects male and female – in the forms of Bloom and Robin, whose gender is singular, unified, and yet still resolutely outside of a male or female type.

# Chapter 3 – *The One Who is Legion* and *The Undaunted*

In the final chapter of this thesis, I will move away from the discussion of mainstay modernist texts like *Orlando* and *Ulysses*, to focus instead on two texts from outside of the canon – Natalie Clifford Barney’s *The One Who is Legion[[385]](#footnote-385)* and Alan L. Hart’s *The Undaunted.* This project began as an attempt to recognize the hidden and ignored themes of non-binary gender in otherwise familiar modernist texts; to shed new light upon old favourites, as it were. However, over the course of my studies it became increasingly apparent that, as well as these texts which were central to the canon, there existed others which were perhaps not as well known or widely read, but which displayed the themes found in my earlier analyses to even greater degrees. The first of these texts which I will examine, Barney’s *Legion*, comes to us as the only English-language novel from an author more famous for her French-language poetry, and perhaps even more famous for the life she lived. As will become clear over the course of the coming section, *Legion* epitomizes nearly all of the tropes which my other texts set outand also goes one step further, as it includes a main character, A.D., who appears to have undergone gender affirming surgeries at some point in their past. The final section of my thesis will focus on author Dr. Alan L. Hart, and his little-known (outside the U.S., especially) novel, *The Undaunted.* This text was published in 1936, towards the end of my period of study, and takes the form of an early example of medical genre-fiction, in contrast with the high modernist experiments in poetry and prose which I have so far examined. However, I feel that it is important to include both Hart and *The Undaunted* for the simple reason that, thus far, I have written on the works of (apparently) cis-gendered authors writing on trans themes, whilst Hart is the earliest documented recipient of female-to-male gender-affirming surgery in America, as well as being an accomplished novelist. Thus, whilst his work is not as formally experimental as the previous works examined, it still sheds important light upon the thoughts and feelings of characters experiencing their gender and sexuality in a queer manner from a place of authenticity, which I feel is reason enough for its inclusion.

Before moving on to our examination of *Legion* proper, it would be useful first to lay out some background information on the author’s life, much of which will inform the reading of the novel*.* Barney is perhaps less well known than Woolf, Joyce and other modernist writers, although she enjoyed a degree of notoriety during her own time. The daughter of wealthy middle class parents, Barney was born in Ohio in 1876, but emigrated to Paris in her early twenties.[[386]](#footnote-386) She professed to have known from an early age that she was a lesbian, and resolved to "live openly, without hiding anything",[[387]](#footnote-387) notably becoming the mistress of famed French courtesan Liane de Pougy at age twenty-three, and was well known as the inspiration for one of the characters in her *roman à clef*, the *Idylle Saphique.[[388]](#footnote-388)*  Barney hosted literary salons in Paris, learned Ancient Greek so that she could read Sappho in the original, and enjoyed romances with many prominent female artists and writers of the time, including painter Romaine Brooks (who illustrated Legion), poet Renée Vivien, Djuna Barnes (who lampooned her in *The Ladies’ Almanac),* Duchess Élisabeth de Gramont, and Dolly Wilde, the niece of Oscar Wilde.[[389]](#footnote-389) Though she produced many works of poetry, theatre and collections of epigrams during her life, Barney is today remembered more as a personality than a writer, and she only ever produced one published novel, *The One Who is Legion.* The plot of *Legion* is sometimes difficult to discern, and the publishers recommended that readers familiarize themselves with the author’s description of the text first:

A.D., a being having committed suicide, is replaced by a sponsor, who carries on the broken life, with all the human feelings assumed with the flesh, until, having endured to the end in A.D.’s stead, the composite or legion is disbanded by the One, who remains supreme.[[390]](#footnote-390)

The title character (A.D.) is known by no other name, and is of indeterminate sex and gender. The book opens on their suicide by pistol, in a graveyard, and is narrated by a legion of spirits who reanimate their lifeless body. These spirits, the legion, refer to themselves by the plural ‘we’, and try to piece together a knowledge of A.D.’s life by reading her poetry, found in a fictional book within the novel, named ‘The Love-Lives of A.D.*’.* From the beginning of the novel the legion, as A.D., pursues a beautiful woman known as the Glow Woman, who is often accompanied by two curiously hollow characters: a current lover – the ‘child-husband’ – and a jealous former lover named Duthiers, who acts as her driver. Towards the end of the novel, the legion becomes disillusioned by both the glow woman and their own plural existence, seeming to dissolve themselves down to a singular One at the novel’s climax. The prose style is highly lyrical, befitting an author who clearly favored poetry, and the plot is often frustratingly unclear, but I believe that *Legion* deserves more modern attention because of its almost prophetic depictions of characters outside of binaries of sex, gender and sexuality.

In chapter one, I identified some of the ways in which T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* might be considered a ‘hybrid’ text – namely that it made frequent use of allusions to other literary and non-literary sources, and utilised a lexis of hybridity. Barney’s *The One Who Is Legion* repeats all of these tropes, perhaps placing even more emphasis on allusion and form-defying changes in the presentation of the text on the page. First of all, it is important to note that, whilst the text takes the form of a novel, there are frequent intrusions and slips between prose, poetry and prose-poetry. The main character’s former self, A.D., appears to have once been a poet – thus, when the spirits inhabiting their body look into the journal (‘The Love-Lives of A.D*.’)* they find poetry, which is presented to the reader:

Love, take me back to you and make me whole,

Who am divided and in unbelief,

An infidel in thought and word and grief,

A double heart and a promiscuous soul. [[391]](#footnote-391)

This highly formal poetry is the only way in which the reader is ever presented directly with A.D.’s (as opposed to the possessing spirits’) thoughts and feelings, and these feelings are only ever to do with love and grief. However, the spirits also appear to think and feel in poetry, albeit of a more modern, anarchic sort – whilst the whole novel is written with a lyrical/descriptive style, we are occasionally presented with snatches of so-called ‘chains of sensibility’ from the spirits, such as:

Double sex not together. Wasteful.

Angels are hermaphrodites, self-sufficient. No marrying in heaven.

On Earth they often appear with a woman’s body and a man’s desire, or vice versa.

Two needed – no-one entirely a woman or a man?

Infinite variety of couples and couplings.[[392]](#footnote-392)

Note here that A.D., a single being, writes in a ‘purer’ poetry, whereas the multifarious spirits write in a hybridised, prose-poetic mode – the lines of staccato prose musings separated as if lines in a poem, or one of Barney’s books of epigrams. The subject of these slips into poetry is also of significance – A.D. writes on the ability of their (queer) love to unify them, and the spirits muse on their doubts that a being might be wholly woman or man. Thus, the text highlights the need for hybrid forms of expression in order to correctly convey a hybrid/queer consciousness, queering the mode of the novel itself into a strange new form which straddles multiple genres.

Likewise, *Legion* also makes frequent epigrammatic allusions to other works of literature, creating a hybrid between the ‘self’ of the novel and ‘past selves’ of the novel. The narrator appears highly conscious of this effect, thinking to themselves at one point:

What books produced you? might be asked as conclusively as – Who are your parents? [...] Are we not each a circulating library spreading ideas, dreams, precepts, social and scientific prejudices – the first-hand work of some writer? That writer the writer of another; most inspiration merely unconscious plagiarism, the writing in general a moment of arrested development; for what is opinion but a full stop in our comprehension to be passed on through print without end.[[393]](#footnote-393)

In this way, the text appears to couch any given work of literature as a composite of the works which gave rise to it – but more than this, to the spirits’ minds, people are also composite works of literature, Frankenstein hybrids of the works which inspired them. Given the importance that the narrator places on allusion and inspiration, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Legion* wears its literary genealogy upon its sleeve. Whilst we see again the “*mon semblable, mon frère*!”[[394]](#footnote-394) of Baudelaire (as seen also in *The Waste Land,* which Barney helped finance), and *‘peau de chagrin’[[395]](#footnote-395)* casually mentioned with regard to the breast-bound-book[[396]](#footnote-396), perhaps the most interesting allusion runs:

A double being needs no other mate –

So Seraphita-Seraphitus lives:

Self-wedded angel, armed with self-delight,

Hermaphrodite of heaven, looking down

On the defeat of our divided love.[[397]](#footnote-397)

The reference here is to Balzac’s *Seraphita*, which Gilbert and Gubar interpret in *No Man’s Land* as a “spiritualising of the cross-dresser as ‘Hermaphrodite of Heaven’”[[398]](#footnote-398) – somewhat mystifyingly, given that the narrator never mentions their own mode of dress, and the single “mannishly dressed woman”[[399]](#footnote-399) in this book walked by the legion on the street some fifty pages ago. More fruitfully, Elliott and Wallace suggest in *Women Artists and Writers* that “the figure of the ‘hermaphrodite’ was central to fin-de siècle theorizing about sexuality and sexual orientation”,[[400]](#footnote-400) and that Barney’s text is characteristically decadent in its use of allusion, even though it was written some thirty years after the death of decadence and the trial of Oscar Wilde. In this way, the book, much like its fictitious central character, becomes a kind of resurrection, a hangover from an earlier literary age, a hybrid of modernism and the *fin-de-siècle* that came before it.

*Legion* also appears to incorporate hybridity into the very language from which it is constituted. If we ignore for a moment the direct references to hybrid genders, hybrid natures of other kinds still appear as a central theme throughout the text. For example, the narrator describes becoming “enchanted by the dual being – the centaur – part man and part beast; the siren – half woman and half wave; the sphinx, rising from the animal into the human mystery”.[[401]](#footnote-401) Note particularly the centaur, a favoured figure of the 19th century prose-poet Maurice Guérin, linking hybridity of bodily form to hybridity of poetic form once again. Likewise, the narrator favours descriptions of individuals and occurrences that highlight their multiple natures. The spirits appear to describe a woodland scene as “complicity of adulterous earth, wood, leaf, flesh, bone and stone, and all blended forms of corruption and dissolution of nature, body and mind”.[[402]](#footnote-402) This style is characteristically verbose for *Legion*, but even so, there is no pressing need to describe a woodland as a hybrid scene. However, the narrator chooses such words to describe it: ‘complicity’, an agreement between two or more people; ‘adulterous’, an affair with three or more people; ‘blended forms’, an assertion that most things that appear to be one are in fact mixtures and multiples. Likewise, one of the glow-woman’s male followers is described as having “no full face to speak of, but rather two slices of a profile joined together by a crooked smile that had slipped in the joining”.[[403]](#footnote-403) This description is somewhat obtuse, but might be rephrased as ‘two halves of a face joined together to make a face’, that is, a normal face with a crooked smile. Thus, the narrator’s eye has read hybridity *onto* the companion’s face, just as it placed hybridity onto the woodland scene. In this way, we might consider the lens through which we receive the scenes of *Legion* a lonely one, in so far as this hybrid character is always looking out for, and bringing out latent hybridity in, those subjects upon which their gaze rests.

Unlike the rest of the texts examined over the course of this thesis, the principal character of *The One Who is Legion,* A.D., appears to be the possessor of what we today would recognise as a body which has undergone a form of gender affirming surgery. Whilst this is not necessarily synonymous with the ‘trans body’ per se, it is still useful to look into the descriptions and revelations within this text as part of the process of reading for its trans-ness. First and foremost, before they (the text provides no pronouns) commit suicide in the first chapter, A.D. appears to be immediately recognisable as a gender non-conformist. The legion of spirits, upon seeing them fall to their own gunshot, comments that “the fallen rider whom a nightmare had thrown seemed neither a man nor a woman.”[[404]](#footnote-404) Now, this may be due to the nature of A.D.’s appearance – described as a “thin linen shirt” and “short light hair”,[[405]](#footnote-405) which evoke masculinity without confirming it. However, the legion gradually introduces the reader to the idea that A.D.’s body itself is the true source of this ambiguity. Soon after, the legion finds ‘The Love-Lives of A.D*.’*, a book of poetry which appears to be an example of anthropodermic bibliopegy:

In search of oppositions between A.D. and ourselves, we observed the book, the binding which had pleased our touch. What once living parchment had been stretched into service? Our eyes examined the grain, discovered that the smoothness of either side-cover, when bent back to leave a hollow between them, had once been a human breast.[[406]](#footnote-406)

This immediately evokes in the legion a sense of revulsion, coupled with a keen fellow-feeling toward the unknown amputee. Indeed, the narrator terms the existence of the piece “the tragedy of individual flesh”,[[407]](#footnote-407) and laments that through the strength of their own reaction, they “missed what this being had suffered”.[[408]](#footnote-408) Of particular note here is the narrator’s apparent refusal to gender the body; even when confronted with a literal severed secondary-sex characteristic, the legion refers to the person from whom it was cut as ‘being’ rather than ‘woman’, demonstrating the novel’s trans-attitude to gender in action. It is not long after the finding of the book that the legion, who has thus far only been wearing the flesh of A.D. for a few hours, takes off their clothing before a mirror to reveal the fact that it is A.D. themself who appears to have undergone the mastectomy:

As we threw off the wet clothes, the distinct mirrors gave us our shining double… revealed two blade-smooth scars across the chest… The *peau de chagrin* binding had been taken from our own flesh.[[409]](#footnote-409)

A few things are worth noting here – first, the description of the scars as ‘blade-smooth’ implies that the breasts have been removed with care, potentially surgically, rather than crudely. Second, this is the reader’s first (and only) confirmation of the assigned sex of A.D. i.e. female; a confirmation which importantly comes *after we have been introduced to their variance,* again displaying the text’s trans sympathies. The reader is never given a true explanation as to why A.D. underwent these surgeries, as they are in effect dead, but this still appears to be the first character to have undergone such surgeries in this thesis investigation.

This trans attitude taken by *Legion* to the construction of character is continued on in its attitude to the relationship between body and soul, or spirit. At the beginning of the novel, before the legion comes across the deceased body of A.D. in the graveyard, they muse that:

All those who are out of body must find again a body.
Not to belong to a human make-up, not to become incorporated, not to lead or be led by a shape, is the worst thing that can befall a shadow.[[410]](#footnote-410)

Here, the legion lays out a model for the relationship between body and soul, wherein the body is a kind of vehicle which the spirit inhabits. Notably, at this stage, the legion describes the body as potentially ‘leading’, or being led by, the shadow (spirit), apparently creating a hierarchy between body and soul wherein the body can possibly be highest. However, only a few pages later, when the legion finds A.D.’s body, it describes it as laying “complexly still as interrupted music”, and asks whether “the instrument might serve again?”[[411]](#footnote-411) Now, the earlier hierarchy is reversed – the body ‘serves the soul’, which guides it as the musician plays the ‘instrument’. This same sharp division between body and soul, and arrangement of the body-soul hierarchy, is continued throughout the rest of the text, such as when the legion describes itself as being “clothed in A.D.’s wrapper”[[412]](#footnote-412) (where the body seems almost disposable to the spirit), and when the legion sees a group of bathers exercising, remarking “These ascetics, ardent to save not their souls but their figures – with which they find so little to do!”[[413]](#footnote-413) Although this dualism lines up perfectly well with Cartesian, Christian and Neoplatonic philosophies, the modern reader might also recognise that it also bears close resemblance to trans discourse – wherein the gender of the mind (our stand-in here for soul, a modern sensibility) is seen as separate from (and can exist at odds with) the sex of the body. *Legion’s* alignment with this particular form of dualism, as opposed to the others (Cartesian, etc.), is best illustrated when the spirits ask “What matter the traveller’s appearance? For here was delivered up the inner resemblance.”[[414]](#footnote-414) This comes as the legion first reads through ‘The Love-Lives Of A.D.’,[[415]](#footnote-415) the fictional book-within-the-book written by A.D. before their suicide. They compare the (un)usefulness of a physical description “medium mouth, nose, eyes, chin”[[416]](#footnote-416) on a passport with the (far preferable) ‘inner resemblance’ revealed by A.D.s’ personal writing. This attitude might be rephrased as: the shape of the body, its features, tell us nothing useful about a person compared to their own descriptions of the way they experience the world. This is the very essence of the modern trans attitude, where bodily sex is unimportant when compared to an individual’s sense of their own self. Furthermore, the attitude of the novel aligns with modern trans discourse in that it is self-identification – the individual’s expression of this sense of self – that is most important to the legion; a self-identification which here takes the form of confessional poetic outpourings.

At the end of the novel, the eponymous ‘One’ begins to assert itself as separate from the legion, no longer seeking to orchestrate but divest itself of its many voices. Much like the ending of *Orlando,*these many selves are projected outwards and enumerated according to their function, being variously termed ‘The Sensualist’, ‘The Senses’, ‘The Heart’, ‘The Intelligence’, ‘The Poet’, ‘The Philosopher’, ‘The Passions’, ‘The Lover’, ‘Health’, ‘Insight’, ‘the Conqueror’ and ‘Discrimination’.[[417]](#footnote-417) In the Author’s Note at the end of the book, Barney describes her motivations for writing thus:

For years I have been haunted by the idea that I should orchestrate those inner voices which sometimes speak to us in unison, and so compose a novel, not so much with the people about us, as those within ourselves, for have we not several selves and cannot a story arise from their conflicts and harmonies?[[418]](#footnote-418)

Again, we hear the echoes of Woolf, even *A Room of One’s Own,* in so far as Barney talks about the soul being divided into sections which can be in harmony or conflict.[[419]](#footnote-419) Like *Orlando, Legion* genders several of its spirit-selves, who end the text in a highly stylised debate with one another. The Poet contends that:

The inspired intelligence, the feminine intelligence of the poet, the intelligence of intuition, of receptivity, may prove more valuable and prophetic than the philosopher’s dogmatic ally, the protégé of wisdom.[[420]](#footnote-420)

The Poet here clearly sees herself as female, or at least feminine, and claims the stereotypically feminine domains of art, receptivity and intuition. This is contrasted sharply by the argumentative Philosopher persona, which claims that its “intelligence is a free agent, independent, capable of abstract conclusions – highly mathematical.”[[421]](#footnote-421) This echoes the characterisation of previous men in the book, including Duthiers – a man so extraordinarily logical that he appears almost like clockwork, and “indeed, only at his best when coupled to a machine.”[[422]](#footnote-422) Thus, we find by the ending of the text that our narrator has all along been an admixture of male and female, masculine and feminine spirits, an extraordinary dramatization of a psyche which might be best termed ‘bigendered’ i.e. consisting of two genders, in modern parlance. More than this, the Poet replies to the Philosopher’s claims to mathematics with a rejoinder:

Here we meet and are blended. The higher mathematics become, *in extremis*, metaphysical…  is therefore of divine essence.

‘Art is a message from another world.’[[423]](#footnote-423)

The Poet asserts here that art is the blending of the male and female intelligences, seeing the mathematical at its highest take on more abstract, metaphysical forms. This fits well with the reader’s knowledge of A.D. as a writer, here characterised as a blending of masculinity and femininity, their mixed interiority mirroring their ungendered physicality – echoing also the early 20th century conception of the artist as an androgynous, mixed personality.

As we saw stated most plainly in the theories of Edward Carpenter, and later in Woolf’s writings on the androgynous consciousness in *A Room of One’s Own,* it appeared to be believed in the late 19th century and early 20th century that ‘third-sexed’ individuals were particularly sensitive to others around them, and that they could function as go-betweens and reconcilers for the polarised binary genders. This belief is reflected at several points within *Legion*, in the way in which the legion – itself a conglomeration of many selves – appears to be able to take on the feelings of others:

Down along a river a boy from a canal boat rode a rope-raw limping mule. Did he not feel the raw spot and the limp? It hurts. It hurts us, the old woman’s sore eyes. That man carrying too heavy a load weighing on our shoulders! Is not existence a capacity for becoming all that one senses?[[424]](#footnote-424)

Note particularly the way in which the passage alternates between binary genders – ‘boy’, ‘woman’, ‘man’, and also that the legion seems most receptive to the pains and struggles of others, like the woman’s ‘sore eyes’. The boy (note, binary gender) appears not to share this sensitivity, riding the mule raw, much to the legion’s dismay – leading us towards a reading of the legion’s sensitivity as stemming from their non-binary nature. This attitude is echoed at several other points throughout the same chapter, particularly when the legion describes themselves as “No longer separate but mingled with a variety of being, surpassing self for the greater gain: to be all.”[[425]](#footnote-425) and again, slightly later:

What of the unlived side? The unchosen course.

Go both ways: choose all.

A depopulation of self – a falling off of our retainers?[[426]](#footnote-426)

This chapter occurs only shortly after the legion has formed and joined with A.D., when it seems at its most at home in its plural state. It speaks positively of ‘choosing all’, the motivation to live as many ‘varieties of being’, as possible, of the magnificent experiences which come from ‘going both ways’, the ‘unlived side’. In other words, the legion specifically seeks to surpass binaries, and thus to live a fuller life – it presents androgyny not only as an acceptable but a desirable mode of living.

This sensibility towards the feelings of other characters also takes another form, a ‘seeing-past’ the body*.* Light and darkness are frequent motifs within *Legion –* the narrator first describes itself as a ‘shadow’, and sees its love object as a ‘glow-woman’. When it first finds A.D.’s body, “a hand of light and a hand of dark opened the cape”,[[427]](#footnote-427) and likewise at the very end of the novel, after the legion has been cast out, the speaking voice seems distressed because “In the half light half dark, we doubted our consistency”, asking “what had become of the flesh?”[[428]](#footnote-428) In these examples, it seems that light and shadow are tied to the realm of the spiritual – the spirits’ hands are shades before they are embodied, the legion sees its former flesh obscured by the half light half dark. The x-ray also appears as a metaphor for the seeing of the unseen within the text of *Legion,* once fairly unobtrusively in the phrase “a nightgown, through which her body appeared as if X-rayed”,[[429]](#footnote-429) and earlier (and more notably) in*:*

Caught in collective emotion, everyone took off his hat. As the coachman urged the black team uphill, our inner sight X-rayed through the coffin the ceremonious clothes, the bruised decomposition of the flesh, to the architectural sexless skeleton.[[430]](#footnote-430)

Here, the ‘x-ray’ is a more concrete simile for the nebulous ‘inner sight’ possessed by the legion, allowing it to see past the accoutrements of death to the skeleton of the figure in the coffin (much like a real x-ray does). Notably, this skeleton is described as ‘sexless’ – capable of being read as ‘without sexual identifiers’ (which is untrue of a real skeleton, as the breadth of the pelvis can be used to identify sex), or else as ‘lacking genitalia’ (true of all skeletons, and thus tautological, not to mention odd). However, the use of ‘architectural’ as the second identifier suggests a malleability, a constructed plasticity of the body which seems more in line with the attitude of a novel whose main character asserted mastery over their own body. Thus, we can read the legion’s x-ray inner sight as allowing them to see past the outer body to an ungendered core within – a feature which we will later see again in *Undaunted*, with greater force behind it.

The sensitivity which is possessed by the legion, which is likewise possessed by Sandy in *The Undaunted,* Orlando in *Orlando,* even Bloom in *Ulysses* and Tiresias in *The Waste Land,* seems to be the special talent of these characters alone within their respective texts because of their queer natures, which set them apart from the world around them, singling them out as ‘other’. However, *Legion* portrays another form of sensitivity/receptivity, which also seems to be possessed by couples – even straight couples ­­– within the text. The legion, in its narration, seems to take the attitude that members of a couple take on the features of one another when they enter into a relationship: they describe a sailor “with a heavy male-saturated girl in one arm”,[[431]](#footnote-431) and at one point term the glow-woman a “man-inhabited woman” because of her relationships with her child-husband and Duthiers, the driver. In these phrases, women who couple with men become ‘inhabited’, become ‘saturated’ with them, absorbing maleness as though they were sponges. Likewise, when the glow-woman is first introduced, she “glowed as though she contained a *chapelle ardente*; [Duthiers and the husband] seemed to have no interior radiance of their own but rather to borrow it from the woman”,[[432]](#footnote-432) echoed later on when the narrator muses that “Men have skin but women have flesh – flesh that takes and gives light.”[[433]](#footnote-433) Here, it is the women whose interiority is broadcast, the men who find themselves absorbing it and taking it into themselves. Further than this, the shadow who later becomes part of the legion at the beginning of the novel asks “Had I not already shadowed a master-mistress, a couple so united that I never could cut one out from the other in separate silhouettes?”[[434]](#footnote-434) This appears similar to the effect where couples take on one another’s traits, taken to its extreme – the couple has become a single entity in which the two members are inseparable from one another. The fact that this makes them into a ‘master-mistress’,[[435]](#footnote-435) an ambiguously gendered entity, brings us full circle – such that, within the world of the novel, third gendered characters are especially sensitive, and sensitivity/receptivity is creative of third-gendered characters.

Just as Virginia Woolf transformed Vita Sackville West into Orlando, and T.S. Eliot wrote Jean Verdenal as the Hyacinth Girl, so too *Legion* appears – at least to some extent – to include some details related closely to Barney’s own life. First, Barney appears to have written in the one copy, in her own hand, the following dedication: “To my angel Romaine, illustrated by two pictures of her, which more clearly than my words, define this (and our) double being.”[[436]](#footnote-436) Here, Barney references a novel on androgyny, *L'Être Double*,[[437]](#footnote-437) which she wrote under the pseudonym ‘Pauline Tarn’ with Paule Riversdale (a pseudonym of Hélène van Zuylen, a former lover of Renée Vivien), and characterizes *Legion* as an attempt to understand her own life, and more specifically her relationship with another woman, a ‘double-being’ which takes on metaphorical life as the legion of spirits inhabiting A.D. Further than this though, A.D.’s origin as a suicide suggests another possible influence from Barney’s life, in the form of her former long-term partner, the poet Renée Vivien. Chase Dimmock argues that:

 The suicided poet A.D. bears resemblance to one of Barney’s greatest loves, the poet Renée Vivien, whose self-destructive behavior, anorexia and drug and alcohol abuse caused her early death in 1909. Informed by this tragedy, Barney’s novel reads as a meditation on grieving the loss of a lover whose voice and presence remained fixed in her psyche twenty years later.[[438]](#footnote-438)

According to a neighbor, novelist Colette, Vivien habitually misused alcohol and drugs, particularly the sedative chloral hydrate, and underate severely[[439]](#footnote-439) – according to Barney herself, Vivien “could not be saved. Her life was a long suicide. Everything turned to dust and ashes in her hands.”[[440]](#footnote-440) Just one year after van Zulyen left Vivien for another woman, Vivien attempted suicide by laudanum overdose, but survived, only to die a year later of choral hydrate misuse. It is thus easy to suppose that the one figure of the poet-suicide informed the other, which leads to a reading of the novel in a similar light to *The Waste Land –* a poeticized meditation on the loss of a loved one. However, unlike *The Waste Land,* whose speaking character/s ruminated on a profound sense of loss – playing the role of the grieving lover – Barney writes her novel centered on the reanimated loved one, though never quite going as far as speaking with their voice. This leads Dimock to the following reading:

Barney’s novel re-imagines melancholia as an erotic experience through which death does not diminish the memory of the lost love, but in fact amplifies the impact of its presence as it echoes in her unconscious and comes to inform and guide her desires.[[441]](#footnote-441)

Thus, the legion’s haunting of A.D., and their re-animated body, become a metaphor for the memory of Barney’s lost loved one, made stronger by death, whilst also (almost paradoxically) becoming a method for working-through Barney’s living relationship with Romaine Brooks. Love, and particularly a queer love, becomes a force which can drive one to death – much as A.D.’s fixation on the glow-woman drove her to suicide, as did Viviene’s loss of van Zulyen - whilst simultaneously being a force stronger than death, capable of bringing back to mind one who has been lost, of conjuring the specter of Vivien behind the novel.

Thus, *Legion* continues many of the tropes which have been identified in this thesis as the hallmarks of the non-binary novel. We see again the character of unusually heightened sensitivity in the form of the legion, who appears to be able to connect with the feelings of the characters and creatures around them within moments of seeing them. Likewise, the novel focuses upon a multiplicity of both language and writing styles – combining a heightened prose with metered poems and short epigrams presented apart from the rest of the text. As we saw in both *Orlando* and *The Waste Land*, the gender-variance of the focal character is dramatized as a multiplicity of personalities in conversation with one another, who possess their own drives, personalities and genders. However, where *Legion* goes further than any of these other texts, and why I believe it is particularly deserving of renewed critical attention in a world which is more welcoming to trans existences, is the fact that it appears to focus on a character who has undergone what we would now recognise as a gender affirmative surgery, in the form of A.D.s’ mastectomy – the two ‘blade-smooth scars’ on their chest.  Although A.D. is presented as a suicide, the novel seems uncommonly positive in its thinking towards a third-gendered existence – A.D. becomes in the end an angel, which the book characterises as a ‘self-wedded’ creature; one complete in itself, who no longer needs to take on aspects of a lover’s existence. With *Legion*, Barney seems to look forward to an age in which human practices of gender are considered mutable, in which we draw our knowledge of another individual from within, rather than without – a tone which she set from the very beginning, with an epigraph from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*:

For spirits, when they please,

Can either sex assume, or both; so soft

And uncompounded is their essence pure.[[442]](#footnote-442)

Finally, for this thesis, we come to Alan Hart’s *The Undaunted –* a novel in sharp contrast to the bold experimentation and formal play of *Legion,* which subverts or denies many of the tropes listed above*.* First, some background on Hart’s life is needed in order to understand his significance. Assigned female at birth in 1890, Hart presented as male from an early age and throughout much of his early childhood – indeed, his maternal grandparents’ obituaries (1921 and 1924) both list him as a ‘grandson’, indicating a degree of acceptance of this gender identity within the family.[[443]](#footnote-443) A retrospective piece in his school newspaper commented that "Young Hart was different, even then. Boys' clothes just felt natural. [Alan] always regarded herself (sic) as a boy and begged her family to cut her hair and let her wear trousers. [Alan] disliked dolls but enjoyed playing doctor.”[[444]](#footnote-444) Attending Albany, Oregon and Stanford universities in order to receive his full medical degree, Hart was displeased that the document was issued under his female name (though it should be noted that the record of his graduation was indexed by Stanford staff with the note ‘Aka. Robert L. M.D’, a pseudonym used by Hart at the time). He went on to become a pioneer in the early diagnosis of tuberculosis, a little-understood disease in the early 1900s, using a state-wide x-ray screening process.[[445]](#footnote-445)

In the winter of 1917-18, Hart received a combined hysterectomy-gonadectomy in order to partially eliminate the production of female hormones in his body, along with the possibility of pregnancy. This was performed under the auspices of one Dr. Joshua Gilbert, to whom Hart first had to demonstrate that he was of sound mind, and that he experienced himself fully as a man – Gilbert wrote in the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders* that "from a sociological and psychological standpoint H is a man".[[446]](#footnote-446) Hart is known to have been very private about all aspects of his life, not just his gender, having ordered his body and papers burned upon death, and his identity as the ‘H’ in Gilbert’s notes was only rediscovered much later by gay and lesbian scholar Ned Katz. Katz lists Hart’s identity as ‘lesbian’ (because of his assumed womanhood and exclusive attraction towards women), holding up his life as an example of the lengths to which women-loving-women had to go to live their lives.[[447]](#footnote-447) This instigated something of a row among queer scholars, with theorists such as Jillian Todd Weiss claiming that the assertion that Hart was a lesbian is a blatant disregard of trans identities.[[448]](#footnote-448) On balance, Hart’s presentation as male from a pre-sexual age, coupled with the extreme lengths of his transition, should show that his identity was indeed ‘male’, and Katz has since stated that, were he still writing today, he would not have made the claims he did regarding Hart’s identity.[[449]](#footnote-449) With this in mind, this essay will work upon the assumption that Hart was a man, assigned-female-at-birth, and that his identity would therefore be described most succinctly today as ‘trans man’.

Within the novel, there is one character who bears a number of striking similarities to Hart himself. Sandy Farquhar is a small, slight man who works as an x-ray technician, and makes developments in state-wide screening programs for tuberculosis, much as Hart did. However, unlike Hart, Sandy is gay, and spends much of the novel moving from institution to institution when his secret is found out. The author plays up this ‘hunted’ aspect of Sandy’s character, writing that “He had been driven from place to place, from job to job for fifteen years because of something he could not alter any more than he could change the color of his eyes.”[[450]](#footnote-450) This bears distinct similarities to Hart’s own life, as he had to leave the hospital in Portland at which he worked as a man in 1917, the year of his transition, after being recognized by a former Stanford classmate who knew him when he presented as a woman – a pattern of events which would repeat itself throughout Hart’s life.[[451]](#footnote-451) This phenomenon bears interesting comparison to the previous novels and poems which have been analyzed – I have argued that the authors used non-binary forms of gender and gender expression as a metaphor for bisexual desire, whereby the male within loved the female without and vice versa. However, Hart metaphorises his own life through the character of Sandy, where Sandy’s queer sexuality stands in for Hart’s own gender identity, thus inverting the trope set up by the cis authors in the previous readings.

Much as we have noted within the previous texts (particularly *Orlando* and *Ulysses*), and in accordance with the theories of Edward Carpenter regarding the empathic powers of queer individuals, Sandy’s position as a gay man seems to give him unique powers of empathy and intuition. Throughout the novel, Sandy appears to intuit the discovery of his sexuality by his unsavoury colleagues, showing periods of heightened nervousness beforehand, and ultimately fleeing for fear of reprisal. This can be seen when one of his superiors, whom Sandy hadn’t yet met, returns from holiday and “between the two instantaneous dislike flared up”,[[452]](#footnote-452) and similarly when “some weeks before (the present day), Sandy had hinted that he might be leaving Seaforth soon”.[[453]](#footnote-453) Similarly, Sandy develops and enjoys a markedly deep friendship with Richard Cameron, the novel’s primary protagonist, very quickly – after Sandy’s death, Cameron discusses the fact of Sandy’s sexuality, revealing that “he knew I understood, although we never talked about it.”[[454]](#footnote-454) Sandy’s position in a repressed and repressive society seems to render him at once walled-off (he is described as having a “’No Admittance’ sign over his private life”)[[455]](#footnote-455) and utterly vulnerable, capable of knowing others intimately, but equally capable of being known easily, and thus being outed. This comes to a head on the day of his suicide – Sandy thinks to himself that: “Everyone had a past, of course – a past he carried everywhere, like a pack on his back[…] But everyone had his pack; by looking carefully Sandy could see them just as he could make out on x-ray films the vague shadows of disease.”[[456]](#footnote-456) Sandy’s heavy burden is his queerness, but it is this very burden which figuratively grants him his perceptive powers, allowing him to empathise with the burdens of others, to see the ‘vague shadows of their disease’. Sandy is cursed with seeing the pain of others, which resonates with his own, but ultimately being able to do nothing about it because of his powerless position. Powerless, that is, in every way apart from his use of the piercing x-ray.

In addition to Sandy’s heightened intuitions, it is also important to note that he can quite literally ‘see’ what others cannot, in his role as an x-ray technician. This is, of course, a close parallel to Hart’s own work as a roentgenologist, and it would be beneficial to know the author’s thoughts on the use of the x-ray in real life, in order to better understand its use in the novel. Fortunately, Hart’s final published work, *These Mysterious Rays,* is a non-fiction guide to the x-ray for a lay audience, which sets out much of his thinking on the uses and potentials of the technology. In one particularly interesting passage, Hart suggests that a surgeon might leave a note on procedures performed on a patient using inks which are only visible under an x-ray:

I suggested […] that the surgeon, after closing his incision, should leave behind, indelibly inserted into the skin, the date and description of what he has done. It would be hard for a patient to alter his past history to suit himself when confronted under the fluoroscopic screen with some such inscription as this … ’10-14-’42. Uterus removed. Ovaries and tubes normal, left intact. W.S.D., M.D.’[[457]](#footnote-457)

Here, Hart’s hypothetical hysterectomy is being performed upon an individual referred to by exclusively male pronouns (‘suit *himself’, ‘his* own skin’), and thus presumably a trans man. It is, in fact, identical to the procedure performed as part of Hart’s transition twenty-nine years earlier in 1917. Emile Devereaux analyses this passage in ‘Doctor Alan Hart: X-Ray Vision in the Archive’ by stating that:

Just as the interpretation of x-ray data required the experience of ‘cutting into bodies’ in order to lend understanding to the marks that manifest on the x-ray film, the recognition of the medical procedures and trans bodies is a matter of familiarity and knowing how to read what is present in front of one’s own eyes. […] This vision that automatically questions social roles, names and appearances and the presentation of bodies is a technologically informed transembodied gaze.[[458]](#footnote-458)

This is to say that Hart, a deeply private man who was forced to uproot his life when outed as trans several times, recognised the power of the x-ray enhanced gaze to see not only inside his body, but also through its history – the x-ray had the power to expose his queerness by rendering the inner workings of his body plainly visible, to know him and make him known.

It is this perceived power of the x-ray that we should bear in mind when we read that when Dr. Cameron (and thus the reader) first meets Sandy, he is locked in an argument with the bullish antagonist, Dr. Steinberg, about a series of x-ray reports. Steinberg alleges that the reports are ‘cockeyed’, making it look like he has set a patient’s bone poorly, opening him up for malpractice suits, whereas Sandy claims that –

“There is nothing in any of my reports that isn’t true.”

“True!” snorted Steinberg. “What’s that got to do with it? Say, you little, shrivelled-up, Scotch snipe, if you were only half a man, I’d…”[[459]](#footnote-459)

There are several points that are useful to our argument here, which could benefit from unpacking. The first is that the text treats the x-ray as a means of accessing a ‘truth’; that is, an *internal* truth, an *interior* truth, and *externalising* it. The second is that Sandy is fiercely loyal to this internal truth, even in the face of physical threat from a much larger man, to the extent that – for him – it trumps the external truth (in this case, that the leg looks straight). Finally, there is the fact that – to Steinberg – Sandy’s access to these internal truths is directly linked to his being ‘small’, ‘shrivelled up’ (read ‘impotent’) and ‘half a man’ – all of which are bywords for *less/other-than male.* Maleness – that is, a particular kind of cis-maleness – is figured as an attention purely to the surface-level meanings of the body, which Sandy (through the power of the x-ray machine) transgresses, much as we saw with the use of the x-ray within *Legion*. From here, it is easy to perceive a trans undercurrent – Sandy uses the x-ray much as Hart speculates in *The Mysterious Rays*, to access an internal truth, one which is linked in the novel directly to his precarious position as a queer man in a straight world, and the reader’s displaced avatar for a trans cause.

But Sandy is no mere casual user of the x-ray machine: he is its master, and he spends the largest part of the novel refining and advancing the understanding of its uses for the scientific community at large. This mirrors again the events of Hart’s own life as an important researcher into the application of x-rays on the diagnosis of tuberculosis. Likewise, the high point of Sandy’s character arc within the novel occurs when he undertakes a series of innovative experiments, apparently based on Hart’s own medical research, in order to prove that the contemporary medical thinking surrounding tuberculosis was erroneous. The novel describes the growing conviction in Sandy that “most of the round white spots he had been taught to regard as deposits of calcium in the lungs were really nothing but blood vessels lying in such a plane as to be seen in cross section in the films.”[[460]](#footnote-460) In order to test his theories, he x-rays the state’s children, the lungs of the dead, and a series of rolls of paraffin “buried in chunks of meat”.[[461]](#footnote-461) When he finally comes to present his findings before a conference of his peers, Cameron observes that “Sandy had his illustrative x-ray films and, as he seemed to warm to the subject, he seemed to forget himself and change […] into a cool, collected scientist who had something to demonstrate to his colleagues.”[[462]](#footnote-462) Of importance here is the fact that, in possession of his insights into the interiority of the human being, Sandy is capable of forgetting *him*self, to become the unconscious scientist. Note the linguistic turn from the gendered ‘himself’ to the ungendered ‘scientist’, mirroring the similar turn from ‘man’ to ‘person’ examined in the *Ulysses* section of chapter one. Sandy, through the sensitivity which was associated with queer individuals throughout the texts in this thesis, figured here as the x-ray machine, is capable of seeing past the bodies of his patients to access an internal truth, which in turn allows him to move past the consciousness of his own ‘defective body’ and (for one of the few moments in the novel) to live his life free of inhibition and doubt.

Apart from their shared mastery of the x-ray, Sandy also parallels Hart in another, more distressing way. Sandy frequently contends with immense depression, much as Hart did, and is prone to outbursts wherein he criticizes man’s inhumanity to man, complaining that “If you want to read different books or live differently than they do, then you’re dangerous or abnormal. You’re a Bolshevik, a degenerate, and must be suppressed”.[[463]](#footnote-463) At the climax of the narrative, Sandy concludes that he will never find acceptance as a gay man, and resolves, successfully, to end his life. At this point, he reflects upon a diary entry that he made in his twenties, which reads:

My body is an incubus and my fears are born of it. But it is possible for the possessor of a defective body to remain unbroken by the disasters that overcome it because he has it always in his power to escape his servitude, his subjection, to his body. And I think it is his right. What a horror life would be – all life! - if there was no end to it.[[464]](#footnote-464)

What I find most illuminating here is that Sandy roots his sexuality as a function of his ‘defective’ body, which he views as a demonic incubus with which he constantly contends. This bears comparison to eugenic arguments which Hart made to Joshua Gilbert when he was seeking referral for hysterectomy, as revealed in the following extract from Gilbert’s notes:

Suicide had been repeatedly considered as an avenue of escape from her (sic.) dilemma. Preliminary to the adoption of male attire she came to me with the request that I remove her uterus with two definite ends in view, viz: (I) to relieve her of the dysmenorrhea and the inconvenience of dealing with the [menstrual] flow in male attire, and (2) to sterilize her. […] She realized and urged the advisability of sterilization of herself as well as of any individual, afflicted as she was.[[465]](#footnote-465)

Sandy’s assertion that he feels trapped inside his own body bears obvious parallels to the trans experience (although many trans narratives now reject this particular formulation), perhaps even more so than it does to that of a repressed homosexual, thus providing us with a glimpse of the novel’s subtext temporarily coming to the fore. It is also important to note that the novel is at all points sympathetic to Sandy’s situation, and provides several clear indications that it sides strongly against society’s prevalent homophobic attitude. For example, the very stereotypically straight Richard Cameron remarks that “we are all of us slaves to biology. And we can’t help it.”[[466]](#footnote-466) Cameron’s lament that his sexuality is both innate and out of his control mirrors that of Sandy, and therefore confirms that Sandy’s feelings are not aberrant, but rather that fault lies with the society around their two forms of desire.

Cameron also provides a mirror for Sandy in another, less obvious way. In the previous point, we saw how Sandy rooted his homosexuality in a ‘defective’ body, and the novel also pointedly frames his sexuality as a physical problem, describing him as “a *handicapped* animal in a world of foes”[[467]](#footnote-467) (emphasis mine), and another character, Dr. Penfield, remarks that “his personality is something of a *handicap,* I’m afraid.”[[468]](#footnote-468) (emphasis mine) Over the course of the novel, Cameron comes to mirror this framing in a much more literal way, as he gradually loses the use of his leg to osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone picked up in World War 1. The function that this performs, I would argue, is that it provides a culturally acceptable proxy for Sandy’s repressed sexuality – whilst Cameron spends his time assiduously ignoring his worsening infection until “the dull ache he had had for weeks in his ankle turned into waves of hot sickening pain that rolled up toward his knee whenever he put his foot on the floor”,[[469]](#footnote-469) Sandy is just as incapable of everyday life whilst living with his ignored ‘handicap’. Eventually, Cameron has to make the choice between having his leg painfully reset and rebuilt, or having it amputated and learning to live whilst facing his disability, ultimately choosing the latter as the better course. Whilst looking at his friend with his new wooden leg:

Sandy saw that it was impossible to be sorry for a man who took his life in his stride and took what would be a catastrophe for someone else and turned it into a mere inconvenience to be overcome and then forgotten. Richard Cameron with a foot gone would still be unbeaten and undismayed.[[470]](#footnote-470)

Metaphorically, we see here the consequences of an impossible choice which the society of the novel prevents Sandy from ever making, played out with Cameron as proxy. The painful re-building of the leg into an almost-adequate but aesthetically pleasing imitation of itself becomes Sandy’s continuation of his closeted imitation of a straight man, the life free of the useless leg metaphorising his life as an openly queer individual. Sandy’s joy at seeing his friend overcome his ‘obstacles’ by living openly with them is mirrored by his dismay that he will never be allowed to make the same choice in his own life, and his suicide comes soon afterward.

Cameron acts in many ways as the acceptable (read, straight/ white/ male) face of a novel which is otherwise deeply sympathetic towards a queer position. Hart includes Cameron as a device, a lens which allows the reader to look upon Sandy with sympathetic eyes. In these terms, it is crucial that we first encounter Sandy through Cameron as a brave man, standing up to Steinberg (“a man bigger than Steinberg”[[471]](#footnote-471)), then as a close friend and confidant, and only after his suicide as a queer man. Cameron demonstrates the possibility that one can maintain the credentials of straight/ masculine/ male whilst also showing solidarity for the queer individual. The one and only point at which this is called into question is when a secondary antagonist, Dr. Ascot “fumed and sputtered that there was ‘something funny’ about Cameron’s liking for Sandy Farquhar, concerning whom Oscar Steinberg was busily gossiping.”[[472]](#footnote-472) However, this opinion is fed to the reader by proxy, coming from the mouths of Steinberg and Ascot, whom the reader has been trained to hate via their detestable, bullish personalities, and is thus clearly treated as an odious, ridiculous thing to think. From a queer/trans standpoint, Cameron demonstrates a particular mode of being which is uplifting – his solidarity is never conditional; Sandy does not have to first convince his friend of his personhood and instead receives his friendship and support without question.

The other way in which Cameron produces a useful effect is through his relationship to his own particular brand of stereotypical heterosexuality. Within the first few pages of the novel, he meets and seduces the attractive young Miriam Brooks into a brief fling. By the end of the text, he has met and married the confident, level-headed Judith, forming a stable relationship. However, even this seemingly effortless attainment of an extremely ‘picturesque’ model of heterosexuality is somewhat fraught for Cameron. At one point, the narrator says of Cameron that “in the concessions he made to his body there was no longer any sentiment: he considered certain indulgences preferable to constant preoccupation with sexual desire.”[[473]](#footnote-473) It is important to note here once again the linguistic distinction between not only Cameron and his body, but also the *desires of his body.* Faced with a discourse that does not allow space for queer existence, Hart makes a biological essentialist argument which figures sexuality as innate; in showing that it is inescapable for this straight character, he thus implicitly suggests that it is unjust that the queer character should be vilified for his inescapable, embodied sexuality. In a similar vein, at the denouement of the narrative (after marrying Judith) Cameron asks himself:

“Must human beings […] always be slaves to their emotions, unable to control their lives? Must the hunger of the body always drive men to choose between seeking gratification from women whose persons were for hire and satisfying their desire with the women they loved and whom their love condemned to this?”[[474]](#footnote-474)

The argument here is clear – Sandy died only a few pages ago, because he could not escape his desire (and should not have had to try), meanwhile Cameron - our acceptable face of straightness - muses on his own inability to transcend his desires. However, Cameron has achieved success, a wife and a house; in short, happiness and fulfilment. The only salient difference between the two characters is their sexuality, which is shown to lead to two unjustly distinct outcomes, and the reader is left to realise this on their own.

Whilst the novel does not contain a single character who is identified as transgender, or even one who strays particularly far from the accepted mold of maleness or femaleness, the narrative takes a trans attitude to, a trans aesthetic of, gender. The characters seem to take the view that the gendered essence of a person is divorced from the sexed body as default, as with Cameron’s ‘concessions to his body’ examined above, much as is the case in modern gender theory. To expand upon this, we might take for example Cameron’s question to his girlfriend Judith, asking “will you always remember that I love all of you? Not just your body, but the woman who lives in it.”[[475]](#footnote-475) The sentiment is fairly mundane but the wording gives clear indications of the trans sympathies of the novel; the woman, the gendered essence, is seen as a distinct entity within the body, regardless of that body’s assigned-female, cisgender status. This same effect is repeated throughout the novel, particularly in Cameron’s thoughts, as in his musing on Sandy that “in the Scotsman’s slight body there lived a man bigger than Steinberg”[[476]](#footnote-476) – again, note the implied belief that ‘man’ and male body are two distinct objects. In effect, what we see here is an example of the process which transfeminist theorist Julia Serrano calls ‘ungendering’. This is the name given to the tendency of both artists and theorists to attempt to demonstrate the ‘falsehood’ of gender by focusing on the expressions of trans individual, a phenomenon:

where gender variant people are used as a device to bring conventional notions about maleness and femaleness into question. In theory any person can be ungendered (simply by dwelling on the aspects of their gendered appearance, expressions and identity that differ from the norm), but this practice seems to most often focus on trans and intersex people.[[477]](#footnote-477)

In essence, the fact that texts questioning the nature of gender choose to focus upon trans individuals, rather than cis individuals even where cis examples would prove a stronger point, results in a kind of covert attack upon the expression of the trans individual. By obliquely referencing the divide between the sex and gender of cisgender characters, Hart (as a transgender writer) displays and thus normalises a very modern view of the sex/gender distinction, without resorting to the ‘easy’ attack upon a trans subject.

*The Undaunted* also makes heavy use of clothing as a means of both disguise and gender expression, just as we saw in the previous novels. However, clothing in this text is used more to emphasize gender assignation, rather than to subvert it. In the case of Sandy, we read that “his thin shoulders were hidden under the padded outlines of his coat”,[[478]](#footnote-478) and later that:

Farquhar had on a new double breasted suit, neatly polished black shoes, and a fashionable red and blue striped tie. He had also had his hair cut recently. Richard grinned as he took notice of these efforts to minimize a defective physique.[[479]](#footnote-479)

Whilst it may at first glance seem that nothing particularly remarkable or subversive is taking place here, I believe that this is not quite the case. The previous novels subvert gender expectations by displaying characters wearing the clothing of the ‘opposite’ sex, but *The Undaunted* subverts by drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that all clothing is an act of performance. Sandy wears his padded shoulders in order to emphasize a particular masculine physical characteristic that he is lacking, despite the fact that he is (presumably) male bodied. This again reflects Judith Butler’s ideas about all gender being essentially drag, as I have discussed earlier in this same thesis, but in what is potentially a more sensitive and useful way than Joyce’s cartoonish cross-dressers (or Orlando, or Tiresias) given that it avoids the pitfall of ungendering his characters. Thus, Hart’s focus on the gender performance of cis individuals performs a useful didactic function, demonstrating that all gender is performance, without the problematic assumption that the performance of the trans individual is in some way ‘more’ performative – a sensitivity which may well stem from Hart’s own trans status.

Aside from the characters of Sandy and Cameron, the transgender aesthetics of the novel extend to touch several other individuals and situations. Perhaps the most unlikely is the character of Samuel Ascot, an odious little man who functions as the novel’s first (though ultimately unimportant) antagonist. Ascot possesses a deep envy that comes of comparing himself to others, and envy towards the bodies, towards the clothes, and towards the positions of people around him. This is particularly obvious when Ascot encounters Cameron, whom he perceives as “a man built after the physical pattern he most admired, and dressed as he would never be allowed to dress”.[[480]](#footnote-480) Likewise, the two encounter each other again at the novel’s denouement:

When he looked at Cameron’s loose-fitting brown tweed with its dashes of red and bronze and his heavy tan brogues with bronze-clocked socks, and saw his tie of Cameron plaid and the smart white tips of the handkerchief in his breast pocket, Ascot was enraged.[[481]](#footnote-481)

What is particularly interesting here is that we see a cis-male envy of a cis-male’s performance of their own gender. Cameron is seen as effortlessly achieving an idealized form of his gender – slim, stylish, muscular, *male* - whereas Ascot, acutely aware of the performance of gender, is even more aware of his own failures to do so. Moreover, he never ascribes blame for these shortcomings to his own personality, but rather to everybody outside of himself; indeed, his longstanding jealousy of Cameron’s patterned suits is fuelled by “his wife’s determination that he should not dress himself in so unbecoming a fashion”.[[482]](#footnote-482) Ascot, though he recognises (to some extent) the performative nature of gender, is unable to overcome or assert himself against the values of his body ascribed to him by others, and it is from there that his unhappiness stems – a recognisable feeling for the trans reader. Perhaps more so than any other character, Samuel Ascot experiences a profound disconnection between the way in which his body appears in the mirror, and the way in which he imagines it to look. The narrator describes him as having grown into “a short, thick-bodied man of fifty-odd who had greyish hair and a red face and a petulant, turned down mouth. All this was entirely contrary to his imaginative picture of himself as a flat-stomached, muscular individual with piercing eyes and an aquiline nose.”[[483]](#footnote-483) In contrast to our earlier examples, the distinction highlighted in Ascot’s description is not between his body and his gendered essence, but between his perceived body and his imagined body. Now, this is a very trans feeling, bearing distinct similarity to the dysphoric self-perception of the body, but it is also a very human feeling, and it is the latter that Hart focuses upon – in *The Undaunted,* all people seem to feel their way through the world (at least in part) as trans people, constantly intentional in their negotiation of the perceptions of their bodies.

It is this, I believe, which typifies what makes *The Undaunted* a useful and deserving object of critical attention. Most obviously, it portrays a character who is described clearly as gay, and demonstrates the devastating effects that an overwhelmingly hostile and homophobic society has upon him. More subtly than this, the novel highlights the way in which all the characters’ sexed-bodies are distinct from their gendered self, and the ways in which they conspicuously perform their gender through clothing and action, always striving toward a gender which is always-already a part of them. Where the novels I have previously examined make frequent use of somewhat grotesque parodies of transgender characters, Hart quietly and sensitively demonstrates that all people aspire to and perform an image of themselves which does not automatically align with the way in which they are perceived. Likewise, where many of the other texts tie the non-binary natures of their characters to a bisexual orientation, Hart subverts this trope by using a homosexual character as a means to talk about his own transgender status – whilst this does not negatively impact the novel’s call for the equal treatment of homosexuals in society, it does inflect it in an interesting way for a modern readership, in a society where even today the presence of trans people in queer spaces is still questioned. However, *Undaunted* also serves to confirm one of the major themes which has recurred throughout the course of this thesis – Sandy shares the empathy that we have seen typifies queer characters throughout the course of this thesis, both in his extraordinary empathy and his powers as a diagnostician using an x-ray machine. I find it uplifting that this has proven to be the most unifying feature of such portrayals, that these characters are connected by their ability to connect to others: that even at a time of writing which was generally hostile in its treatment of queerness, of gender variance and same-sex attraction, that the defining feature of this reading would prove to be so unexpectedly positive.

# Conclusion

The first, and broadest, of the research questions which this thesis set out to investigate was the question of whether it was true to say that non-binary genders were represented in main-period modernist literature. The answer to this is, at this point, a definite ‘yes’. When we look to the figures of Woolf’s Orlando, and Eliot’s Tiresias, whose psyches are described as being divided into male and female parts, we see an early anticipation of what would today be described as a bigendered identity. If we look to Leopold Bloom, we see a male-assigned individual with a psyche which seems to vacillate between the binary genders, particularly in the ‘Circe’ episode – in a way which might today be described as gender-fluid. Robin Vote consistently presents, and is conceived by the other characters, as the ‘third sex’, a character so radically outside of the gender binary that we might very well read her as agender. A.D, and the spirits which animate them, seem to be a special case. Though their body itself appears to have undergone mastectomy, hinting at a past potential dysphoria and gender-affirming surgeries, the spirits themselves repeat the trope of the divided psyche which we saw previously in chapter one. The Foucauldian would say that it is a mistake to apply labels like ‘agender’, ‘non-binary’ and ‘bigendered’ a-temporally, that these appellations’ origins in the 1990s preclude their use upon texts from the 1920s and 30s. My answer, is that trans people did not spring fully formed from the mind of Hirschfeld et al in the early 20th century, followed swiftly by a rush of people clamouring to occupy this new category. Rather, Hirschfeld saw something already existent in the world, and categorised it, gave it a name. In the same way, non-binary people would seem always to have existed, and it is only natural that they too found themselves reflected in art and literature, even if the author did not intend to represent them specifically.

However, this problem of an author representing a manner of person in their society which was not yet named, the non-binary individual, creates a double-blind problem. These strange new images of gendered being were (and still are) open to alternative readings and misinterpretations. Thus, my second research question sought to address why exactly we might productively understand these characters as non-binary, rather than/as well as the androgynes/ cross-dressers/ binary trans/ homosexuals they have previously been read as. Here, I think, the answer lies in taking the character’s identifications at their word (or at the text’s word, where interiority is unavailable), just as we take a real-world individual’s self-identity at their word. If we take Eliot seriously when he says that “all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias”,[[484]](#footnote-484) then our conclusion should be that Tiresias has more than one sex/gender. The same should be said of the fact that Orlando is both “the boy who saw the poet” and “the patroness of letters”,[[485]](#footnote-485) when these are both selves that they can call upon freely. When Leopold Bloom thinks the phrase “I so want to be a mother”,[[486]](#footnote-486) when O’Connor states “I am a lady”,[[487]](#footnote-487) when he describes Robin as the “third sex”,[[488]](#footnote-488) the “third doll”,[[489]](#footnote-489) we do an injustice to these characters simply to assume that they are cisgendered. As seen in the literature review earlier, theorists are apt to state of characters like Matthew O’Connor that he “*calls himself* a woman”[[490]](#footnote-490) (emphasis mine) i.e. to disregard a character’s self-identification (what he calls himself) in favour of his assigned sex. Of course, as I argued previously, I read O’Connor as binary (rather than non-binary), but the fact that a critic would lean towards ‘calls himself’ rather than ‘is’ remains illustrative of the kind of everyday cissexism that pervades both the real world and literary criticism.

Having argued that it is both correct and useful to identify these characters as trans, to identify them as non-binary, the next question which I sought to answer was whether there were any key tropes which accompanied the appearance of a non-binary character. This ‘check-list’ of tropes would hopefully prove useful to theorists identifying other modernist texts which feature prototypical examples of non-binary gender, or may even prove useful in examining other texts outside of a modernist canon, whether as identifiers or contrasting points. To summarise, these tropes include:

*The fracturing of a character’s psyche into male and female personae.*

This trope seems the most obvious and the most easily identifiable, and allows the author to write the binary genders in an otherwise fairly usual manner, save that they happen to occupy the same body. As found in *Orlando, The Waste Land* and *The One Who is Legion.*

*Bisexuality.*

Which is to say, where the erotic energies of the maleness within the character are directed towards the femaleness of other characters, and vice versa. This trope seems to be both one of the most problematic, and the most difficult to unpick, and some time will be devoted to it shortly. As found in *Ulysses, The Waste Land* and *Orlando.*

*Cross-Dressing, the use of androgyny, and the subversion of binary costume.*

As one might expect from both the time period in which the texts were written (with the authors growing up alongside both vaudeville/music hall and the New Woman movement) as much as the subject matter, many of the texts make use of costumes which defy the strictures of binary gender norms, and which may serve as a useful signpost for a similarly defiant gender identity. As found in *Ulysses, Orlando, Nightwood* and *The One Who is Legion.*

*Biographical Subversion.*

The transformation of a real-life (usually same-sex) love interest of the author into a fictive character, usually altering their sex in the process; Vita becomes Orlando, Verdenal becomes the Hyacinth Girl, Renée Vivien becomes A.D. Perhaps it is unsurprising that our non-binary characters result from such transformations, wherein the reader can see both the character’s denotative sex-gender and the real-life inspiration’s sex-gender superimposed together as a double image. As found in *Orlando, The Waste Land* and *The One Who is Legion.*

*Sensitivity.*

Following their origins in the figure of Tiresias, and the thinking of Edward Carpenter, many of the non-binary characters seem especially in tune with the thoughts and feelings of others. As if in response to the early 20th Century fear that the sexes were becoming irreconcilably polarised, the queer-gendered characters fulfil a role of middle-gendered social mediators. As found in *Nightwood, Ulysses, The Waste Land, Orlando* and *The One Who is Legion.*

*Hybridity.*

As the mixing of genders becomes a central theme of the texts, the language of hybridity seems almost to ‘spill over’ into other arenas, such that the image of the centaur, the bat-baby and other hybrid creatures could also be found commonly in the texts. As found in *The Waste Land, Orlando* and *The One Who is Legion.*

*Unidentifiability.*

The texts often include a moment in which one character looks at another, and finds themself unable to parse the other’s sex-gender. The characters experience a failure both of their ability to *identify with* another, and of their language to *identify* another. This too will be examined in greater detail later in this concluding chapter. As found in *The Waste Land, Orlando, The One Who is Legion* and *Nightwood.*

It should be obvious that no one of these texts unites all of these tropes (although *Legion* comes close); rather, they show a ‘family resemblance’ of the Wittgensteinian kind, where the similarities “crop up and disappear”, named for the way in which “the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament etc. overlap and crisscross in the same way.”[[491]](#footnote-491) Just as with our newfound non-binary set of tropes, no one trait is shared with equal strength across the whole sample of texts, but we might assume from the clustering of several of the tropes within a text that we are reading an example of the non-binary modernist family.

The final question which I sought to answer – whether non-binary gender stands for itself within the texts, or whether it stands for something else – has also proved the most difficult. I mentioned earlier that, across the texts, the central characters are almost universally bisexual. More specifically, they possess a bisexuality which is produced by their movement across/encompassing of different gendered positions. Orlando as a man loves women, Orlando as a woman loves men. Bloom as a man loves Molly, but becomes as a woman the sexual object for Mr. Smythe-Smythe and company. All of the living partnerships within *The Waste Land* are heterosexualized, though it is haunted by a lost same-sex love. Robin Vote, perhaps, complicates the trope; her gender seems both less divided than the other examples, and less present altogether, and her sexuality is similarly mutable. But, we are still drawn towards a potential conclusion; there is non-binary gender within the modernist text, but it frequently seems to function as metaphor/euphemism for bisexuality, in a culture where it was ironically safer to talk about gender variation in hypothetical terms than it was to talk about queer sexuality. To this problem, I have three potential answers. The first is that, in the real world, non-binary individuals will also tend towards non-monosexualites i.e. bisexuality or pansexuality. Obviously, data for this statement is unavailable for the 1920s-30s, but if the present day is anything to go by, we might look to 2018’s National LGBT Survey.[[492]](#footnote-492) Of the cisgendered population surveyed, 24.7% identified as bisexual, 2.6% as pansexual, and 0.9% as queer, for a total of 28.2% non-monosexuality. Compared to this, of the trans population of the study, 31.6 % identified as bisexual, 14.1% identified as pansexual, and 4.6% identified as queer, for a total of 50.3% non-monosexuality. Of this trans population, specifically non-binary identified individuals numbered 29.5% in the bisexual category, 17.5% in the pansexual category, and 6.7% of the queer category, making non-binary individuals 53.7% of non-monosexual transgendered individuals in the survey. Thus, when a modernist writer includes a non-binary character who is almost inevitably bisexual, we might not dismiss it as a metaphor, but rather see it as a more accurate representation of the typical non-binary individual.

The second answer is that, to see the non-binary gender as merely a metaphor for bisexuality unnecessarily privileges queer sexuality over queer gender without due cause. Could it not be the case that the bisexuality of a character might be a strong indicator of their non-binary nature, rather than the other way around? As in real life, it is all too easy to pay lip service to the ‘T’ in ‘LGBT’ without truly regarding queer genders as worthy of equal regard to queer sexualities; we should try to avoid making the same mistake in our criticism. Finally, for this section, my third rebuttal is probably both the most relevant, and the least traditionally ‘academic’ – “So what?” Or, in better terms, I’m unsure that it matters whether or not these non-binary characters function as a complex way of talking about bisexuality. Whether we are talking about a bisexual or not, the way in which we are talking about them is through the medium of non-binary gender. Working on this project meant something to me on a personal level, because I had the chance to highlight examples of people like myself in literature, to assert that *they* were *like me,* where few voices in literary criticism seemed to have realised this potential before, which I feel is a worthy enough reason to highlight these instances of non-binary gender in modernism.

At this point, having examined the ways in which *some* of modernism’s most central texts exhibit a prototypically non-binary aesthetic, it is tempting to make the scholarly leap of saying that *all* modernist texts are in some way non-binary. Certainly, it seems like Pound’s maxim, ‘make it new’,[[493]](#footnote-493) may lead naturally to the production of gendered forms which deny binary hierarchies. This newness (of gender) is reflected in my chosen texts in the form of strangeness, an unrecognizability of one character to another. This ‘unknowing gaze’, where one character looks at another without understanding, without being able to easily parse the other’s gender presentation, is repeated in some way across each text. In *The Waste Land*, the Hyacinth Girl’s partner “could not speak,/ and [their] eyes failed”,[[494]](#footnote-494) and the narrator fails to identify “the third who walks always beside you”,[[495]](#footnote-495) which is specifically linked to their inability to tell whether the third is “man or woman.”[[496]](#footnote-496) Or when, in *Nightwood,* Robin “recognised the doctor”, but “struggled to place him now that he had moved out of frame.”[[497]](#footnote-497) Likewise, Orlando’s gaze fails when he looks on Sasha’s “figure which, whether boy’s or woman’s, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity.”[[498]](#footnote-498) In *Legion*, the spirits see that the “fallen rider whom a nightmare had thrown seemed neither a woman nor a man.”[[499]](#footnote-499) Newness produces strangeness – an encounter with something which one has not encountered before – and strangeness produces failure; more specifically, new gender forms produce a particular kind of queer failure, a lack of recognition which is at times uncomfortable in the texts, but never halts nor arrests them. Jack Halbertstam spoke of failure as queer praxis in *The Queer Art of Failure,* stating that:

Failing is something that queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style, to cite Quentin Crisp, or a way of life, to cite Foucault, and it can stand in contrast to the grim scenarios of success that depend upon ‘trying and trying again’.[[500]](#footnote-500)

If modernism’s novelty produces queer failure in some cases, we must ask if it produces queer failure in all cases, if all modernism is non-binary. The answer, I feel, fortunately or not, is ‘no’.

First, we must take into account the fact that not all modernist writers were happy or satisfied with the newfound permeability of gender and gender roles. This dissatisfaction produced a species of reactionary modernism which can be seen in the writers from the rightward end of the political spectrum such as D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis. Take for example, Lawrence’s *Women in Love,* published in the same year as Joyce’s *Ulysses.* One of the male leads, Birkin, thinks to himself in a lengthy soliloquy whilst laid up in bed:

In the old age, before sex was, we were mixed, each one a mixture. The process of singling into individuality resulted in the great polarization of sex […] But the separation was imperfect even then […] There is to come a new day, where we are beings, each of us, fulfilled in difference. The man is pure man, and the woman is pure woman […] There is no longer any of this horrible merging. [[501]](#footnote-501)

Birkin acknowledges here that there appears to be some admixture of gender in the men and women around him, but dreams of a ‘utopian’ future in which a putative binary social order is restored, in which the sexes are made ‘pure’. Even so, the polarization and reinforcement of gender roles within the novel often acts as an exercise in homosexual desire, as in the case of Birkin and Gerald’s desire for one another. Lawrence himself echoes Birkin’s thoughts (revealing the character as the author’s mouthpiece) in his later non-fiction text *Fantasia of the Unconscious,* in which he asserts that:

We are all wrong when we say there is no vital difference between the sexes. There is every difference. Every bit, every cell in a boy is male, every cell is female in a woman, and must remain so. Women can never feel or know as men do. And in the reverse men can never feel and know, dynamically, as women do.[[502]](#footnote-502)

Though this seems to argue that there is never any mixing of the sex/genders, there remains the didactic note ‘and must remain so’, reintroducing the familiar fear of the male modernist; that the male could in fact be partially female, and vice versa. Lawrence recognises the mutability, and the permeability, of binary genders, but reacts in horror, recoiling away from it and reasserting the binary.

This same pattern of simultaneous acknowledgement of gender mixing/permeability in others and anxious rejection of it is also found in the prose work of Wyndham Lewis. His 1930 work *The Apes of God* consisted of a lengthy (600 page) satirical attack on England’s literary scene, particularly the Bloomsbury Group (which happened to contain some of Britain’s foremost queer artists, Woolf included). The novel’s naked homophobia is easily discernible, as when an artist informs the central character – Dan Boleyn, a young man with learning difficulties – that:

“Horace [his mentor] is a repressed homosexual.” […]
Dan blushed, it was impossible to carry on a conversation with this horrid man – he did not understand what these scientific words meant, that people sometimes used, but however scientific they were not nice he knew.[[503]](#footnote-503)

Likewise, a chapter satirises the figure of the lesbian artist, who goes unnamed but is referred to in both the text and the chapter heading as the ‘lesbian ape’. This figure serves both as a type of the female homosexuality, and a lampoon of real and fictional gender-nonconforming individuals, bearing as she does a striking resemblance to Bella/o Cohen from *Ulysses.*

Before him stood a severe masculine figure. In general effect it was a Bavarian youth movement elderly enthusiast. […] But this was a woman, as in fact she had appeared in the typed description. On that he felt only tolerably certain, because of the indefinable something that could only be described as masculine. […] It was a she.[[504]](#footnote-504)

Note the repeated, dehumanising use of the ‘it’ pronouns used for this character, and the mocking mimicry of the ‘unknowing gaze’ we saw in the earlier texts. In somewhat unsubtle parody of Joyce’s ‘Circe’, the artist forces Dan to strip, at the embarrassment of which he faints, only to hear “the man-voice” of the artist and the “softer voice, beside the first” of her female partner, “dressed with recognized feminine elegance”.[[505]](#footnote-505) The fact that the lesbian ape wears a bald spot in her hair, and a “stiff Radcliffe-Hall [sic.] cut, suggestive of a masculine hey-day, when men were men”,[[506]](#footnote-506) cements her as a parody of the female-assigned invert, towards whom the audience is clearly intended to feel a kind of righteous horror. The entire text is filled with a surfeit of statements that a thing is masculine, or feminine, seemingly for no other reason than to reinforce a binary between the two, and so that the reader can share in Lewis/Dan’s horror, and gleeful mockery, when said binary is broken.

Finally, for this brief section on reactionary modernism, we come to Ezra Pound, whose (contested) status as the father of modernist poetry is perhaps the best argument to be made in order to conclude that modernism itself is not non-binary in style. Given Pound’s intimate involvement with the editing of *The Waste Land*, and the fact he wrote his own Tiresias character in his *Cantos*, it would be useful first to compare the two treatments. As we saw in chapter one, the gender of Eliot’s Tiresias is both central to the poem and highly mutable. By comparison, ‘Canto I’ treats Tiresias in his office as prophet only when the speaker states “Tiresias Theban / Holding his golden wand, knew me, and spoke first.”[[507]](#footnote-507) The golden wand here is the caduceus, a stave wrapped with snakes, hinting at the drama of the seer’s transformation without acknowledging it - Pound is interested in the figure not as a sexual intermediary but as prophet, speaking his dire warning to Odysseus. Instead, Pound satirises the gender-crossing of *The Waste Land* in his poem *Sage Homme*.[[508]](#footnote-508) In the poem, Pound casts Eliot as giving birth to *The Waste Land*, and himself as midwife in the line “Ezra performed the Caesarean Operation”, and as one of the poem’s double fathers, with:

By the Uranian Muse begot,

A man their mother was

A muse their sire[[509]](#footnote-509)

Here, we see Pound appear to cast himself in a queer role, insofar as he is in a relationship with another man. However, much as we see with Lewis’ depiction of inverts as figures of ridicule, Pound seems also to treat the subject only as a jest. This is particularly prominent in the lines “Or say that the upjut of his sperm / Has rendered his senses pachyderm.”[[510]](#footnote-510) Pound moves again, such that Eliot is now the ‘woman’ in their partnership, receiving Pound’s ‘upjut of sperm’, which renders him insensible, much like the hysterical women of *The Waste Land.* The queer posturing of the poem functions only as a kind of ribaldry, where Ezra’s sperm becomes poetic inspiration, and he mocks Eliot for his passive reception of it. This equation of sperm, masculinity and artistic inspiration is carried through many of Pound’s other writings, and is particularly prominent in his ‘Translator’s Postscript’ to Remy de Gourmont’s *The Natural Philosophy of Love.* Though he is in part paraphrasing Gourmont’s own views, he appears to be in agreement when he states that “it is more than likely that the brain itself is, in origin and development, only a great clot of genital fluid held in suspense or reverse”,[[511]](#footnote-511) and later that man is “really the phallus or spermatazoid charging headlong into the crude female chaos; integration of the male in the male organ.”[[512]](#footnote-512) Pound valorises the male as orderly, active, and figures it in opposition to the disordered, directionless female principle. Helen Denis calls this a “crude biological essentialism”[[513]](#footnote-513) and an “apparently serious exposition of his belief that artistic genius is intimately connected with biological masculinity, whereas woman’s role as conservator of culture is connected with her reproductive functions.”[[514]](#footnote-514) Pound’s misogyny here certainly seems to be bound up with a cisnormative sentiment - if the mind is genital fluid, biology (as sex-as-it-is-assigned-at-birth) is inescapable, and transness impossible, figuring only as an object of derision in *Sage Homme.[[515]](#footnote-515)*

If, at this point, we have seen a non-binary species of modernism (throughout the main body of this thesis) and, in the previous section of this conclusion, a reactionary, stubbornly cisgendered binary modernism, we are left in want of a third category. If I do not wish simply to subsume all trans stylistics in modernist literature under a genderqueer umbrella (in which case it would seem that ‘trans’ was the simplest appellation), then there should also be evidence of a binary trans modernism. Pleasingly, we do not need to look further than *The Well of Loneliness –* a text which seems to have haunted this thesis from its inception *-* for our first example of this putative category. As I mentioned previously in the introduction, Melanie Taylor and Jay Prosser have both previously performed readings of *The Well* as a trans text, so I will speak here only on what makes the text more ‘binary’ than ‘non-binary’. Stephen states, whilst still very young at the start of the novel “of course I’m a boy. I’m young Nelson […] I must be a boy, ‘cause I feel exactly like one.”[[516]](#footnote-516) Whilst this may (by a certain class of interlocutor) be dismissed as a youthful flight of fancy, she (sic.) later reaffirms these trans feelings to her mother, stating:

‘If I loved [Angela Crosby] the way a man loves a woman, its because I can’t feel that I’m a woman. All my life I’ve never felt like a woman, and you know it […] I don’t know what I am; no one’s ever told me that I’m different and yet I know I’m different.’[[517]](#footnote-517)

If we take Stephen at her word (and I would say that we have no good reason not to) then she sounds as though she identifies as a man, and not as any form of in-between gender. Likewise, her style of dress (contrasting with those examined earlier in this thesis) seems homogenously masculine, being described as wearing “a collar and tie – you know, mannish. And she seems just to change her suit of an evening, *never even* wears a dress”[[518]](#footnote-518) (emphasis mine). It could/has been argued that Stephen remains a butch lesbian, that she feels excluded from (and unable to participate in) the category of woman, seeming to anticipate a Wittigian statement along the lines of: "Lesbian is the only concept that I know of that is beyond the categories of sex […] because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman either economically or politically or ideologically."[[519]](#footnote-519) Trans readers and lesbian readers alike tend to see a lot of themselves in Stephen, and I believe that the reason for this is deceptively simple: Stephen is, probably, both a butch lesbian and a trans man. Stephen is, at several points throughout the book, described and self-identified as an invert, following the theories of Havelock Ellis, i.e. “Like most inverts she found a passing relief in discussing the intolerable situation”.[[520]](#footnote-520) Properly understood, properly historicised, even (if you go in for that kind of thing), Ellis et al. made little to no distinction between lesbians and trans men, gathering both under the ‘invert’ label. I do not believe that, in this context, it is contradictory to say that Stephen is both a trans man and a butch lesbian – our understanding of sexuality and gender has become more complex since *The Well* was written, but this is unlikely to have struck a sexologist of the early 20th century as the paradox we see today.

Until this point, mention of my final text – Alan L. Hart’s *The Undaunted –* has been conspicuously absent from my conclusion. This is because it is, strictly speaking, neither a non-binary text, nor a modernist one. It includes no characters of genders other than male or female, and makes no great experiment of its form, content or language; it is simply a slice-of-life novel about two friends, who happen both to be doctors and men. I still thought it important to include in this thesis, however, because it was written by a trans author, in the same period that my other chosen authors were writing in. *The Undaunted* is worthy of a place in our canon not just because it is an early work dealing with queer themes by name, not just because it was written by an author from an identity group which has been marginalised for too long, but because it makes an excellent counterpoint to the previous texts by means of its upturning of the tropes that they establish. Where Woolf wrote Vita as Orlando, and Eliot transformed Verdenal into the Hyacinth Girl, Hart seems to base Sandy Farquhar upon himself; a slight, cis man who nevertheless goes through a struggle in trying to embody his own gender identity. Like his non-binary counterparts in the other texts, Sandy also epitomises a queer sensitivity, able both to discern people’s thoughts and feelings, and literally see past their bodies by his mastery of the x-ray machine. Where Eliot, Woolf and company might potentially have used non-binary gender as a foil, in order to talk about queer sexualities, Hart instead uses Sandy’s homosexuality as a means to talk about trans gender, addressing a society which was not yet truly ready to understand either. Finally, like O’Connor, like Bloom, like Robin Vote, Sandy is afflicted by a special kind of melancholy, a special kind of neurosis. However, unlike O’Connor and Robin, whose neurosis seems to be treated as stemming directly from their queerness (with no need for societal intervention) Hart states clearly that Sandy’s sadness is the fault of the society around him. Through Steinberg’s relentless homophobic bullying, through Sandy’s desperate comments about suppression, through Cameron’s heartfelt reaction to Sandy’s suicide, Hart builds a picture of a society that takes its gays and kills them by inches and by yards. A parallel is brought to mind with the ending of *The Well of Loneliness*:

‘God,’ [Stephen] gasped, ‘we believe, we believe, we have told you we believe… We have not denied You, then rise up and defend us. Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!’[[521]](#footnote-521)

Like Hart, Hall links her queer character’s misery to their society’s treatment of them, and, like Hart, she uses her novel as an opportunity to proselytise for queer liberation. In the literature review, I traced the origins of trans modernist criticism to Jay Prosser’s reading of *The Well* against *Orlando,* and his comments upon the greater usefulness of *The Well* as a trans text because of its realist nature. It is fitting, then, that this thesis finishes by coming around full circle, ending with a comparison with *The Undaunted*, another realist text which is markedly useful as a trans text. It is fitting, also, that we finish on Sandy and Stephen’s cries that God and society recognise them – this entire project has been an exercise in the recognition of the origins of the non-binary, an extended acknowledgement and affirmation of these characters’ existence.

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N.B. The note in Ricks and McCue instead runs: “’The peace which passeth understanding’ is our equivalent to this word. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
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147. The editing for this stage of the draft was a collective undertaking made between T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Vivien Eliot, with all three making changes to the typewritten copies of the poems. However, the crossing-out of the first, most heavily gendered, stanza of ‘The Burial of the Dead’ is attributed to Eliot himself by the facsimile, which bears the line “Typescript revised in pencil and in ink. Eliot has cancelled the page lightly in pencil. Unpublished.” (p.5) [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
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151. Suzanne Churchill offers a related argument in ‘Outing T.S. Eliot’, noting that “the drafts of The Waste Land also reveal currents of homoeroticism that were suppressed in the final version”. She goes on to say that “the most haunting homoerotic and elegiac referents in The Waste Land drafts are those excised from the final section” with regard to the removal of the speaker’s call to a “brother” and a “friend”, suggesting that the edits served to obscure both the gender and sexuality of the speaker. (p. 14) [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, ll. 142-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
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156. Eliot, T.S, (2015) ‘Gerontion’, in Ricks, C. and McCue, J., *The Poems of T.S. Eliot: Volume 1.* London: Faber& Faber. pp. 31-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Nancy Comley points out in ‘From Narcissus to Tiresias: T.S. Eliot’s Use of Metamorphosis’ that the “Tiresias figure first appears as Narcissus in Eliot’s early poem ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’, and that the “hermaphroditism of Narcissus is absorbed into the more powerful figure of Tiresias”. She argues that Eliot drew from Empedocles’ use of the Narcissus figure, because Empedocles portrayed Narcissus moving through states of being male, female, animal and plant. (p.281) [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
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167. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
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169. Which it certainly might be, as ‘unrebuked’ suggests that there was no ‘no’, but it is unclear if there was actual consent. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, ll. 243-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Adrianna E. Frick notes in ‘The Dugs of Tiresias’ that although Tiresias “is exterior to the scene, he is capable of relating to both genders in the encounter and empathising with both individuals.” Importantly, however, she notes that “Tiresias is grounded in the feminine from the beginning by immediately focusing upon the typist’s perspective” (p. 21), and concludes that Eliot uses the Tiresian narrator as a device to argue against the treatment of women under increasing industrialism. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
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174. See Calvin Bedient’s analysis, above. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, ll. 38-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, ll. 424-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
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189. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
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192. On the original handwritten copy of ‘Death by Water’, Pound wrote “Bad – but can’t attack until I get a transcript”. When he did receive the typewritten transcript, it is evident from the facsimile that he crossed out at least half of the text, and even less made it into the final draft. (p. 55) [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Eliot, T.S., (2015) ‘The Waste Land’, l. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Eliot, T.S., (2015). ‘The Waste Land’, l. 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
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287. To give further context on Ellis’ theory of Eonism, he defined in in *Studies in the Psychology Of Sex* in the following manner: “Inversion of this kind leads a person to feel like a person of the opposite sex, and to adopt, so far as possible, the tastes, habits, and dress of the opposite sex, while the direction of the sexual impulse remains normal. This condition I term sexo-esthetic inversion, or Eonism.” Eonism closely matches what we would today call transgender, though Ellis theorised it as an extreme form of inversion (read homosexuality), which is no longer seen to be the case. (pp. 209-210). [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
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300. This fear, of the revelation of his nature as in some way ‘unmanly’ is also mirrored by Bloom’s position in the narrative as a cuckold, traditionally revealed by the appearance of horns on the deceived party’s head. However, Janina Levin also links Bloom’s role as cuckold to his role as sexual intermediary (much as we have seen in other middle-gendered characters), in his “stepping back to allow the development of [Molly’s] desire”. (p. 636) [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
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306. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 450. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
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309. As we saw earlier, in the analysis of the trial scene, Joyce uses circumlocution as a device to convey Bloom’s anxiety – he mentions trying on Molly’s clothes as a joke, then goes back on himself to suggest that he was made a “corsetlover” back in his school days. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 503. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
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312. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 420-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* pp. 417-418. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
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317. Carpenter, E., (1909) *The Intermediate Sex.* p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
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319. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
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321. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 731. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. As a brief aside, Jung praised Joyce’s writing (particularly the Molly’s soliloquy in the final chapter of *Ulysses),* stating in a letter that “The forty pages of non stop run in the end is a string of veritable psychological peaches. I suppose the devil’s grandmother knows so much of the psychology of a woman, I didn’t”. Nora Barnacle Joyce, James’ wife, is reported saying to Samuel Beckett on the matter that “He knows nothing at all about women”, highlighting that for all our feminist interest in Molly’s sexuality, she is still written/constructed by a man. (Ellmann, p. 681). [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Walkley, R.B., (1980). ‘The Bloom of Motherhood: Couvade as a Structural Device in "Ulysses"’, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
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326. For examples of such literature, Bullough cites *The Order of St. Bridget : Personal Recollections of the Use of the Rod , The Romance of Chastisement : or, The Revelation of Miss Darcy , Sublime of Flagellation , Venus School Mistress , Miss High Heels* and *Gynecocracy.* (Bullough and Bullough, p. 265). [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
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330. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 504. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 505. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. That is, non-BDSM. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* pp. 502-503. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. It may be argued that the sexual relations depicted here are not meant to be taken as making a serious statement on sexuality, because of the role-playing nature of the acts depicted pastiching the modes of Victorian pornography mentioned earlier. However, the majority of these volumes feature female domination of a male subject, rather than male-male, making the comparison jar somewhat. The situation does bear passing similarity to one found in *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain,* in which two men dressed in women’s clothing sleep with another man – though that situation has less of the domination element present in the *Ulysses* scene, so we should still question Joyce’s motivations here. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 503. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Joyce, J., (1998). *Ulysses: The 1922 Text.* p. 506. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
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339. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. American Psychiatric Association, (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*. Arlington: American Psychiatric Association. p. 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
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345. Martins, S., (1999). ‘Gender Trouble and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes's "Nightwood"’. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 20(3), p.113. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
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355. Martins, S., (1999). ‘Gender Trouble and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes's "Nightwood"’, p.112. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
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361. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
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365. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. pp. 55-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
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371. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Michael North’s ‘Modernism’s African Mask’ points out the link between so-called ‘primitive’ characters in modernist literature and art and a lack of sexual differentiation, as we see here in Robin’s case. He makes the case for the use of African masks in the work of Picasso and Stein as a means to obscure bodily sex, such that the “body is no longer a natural or inescapable datum, and gender is no longer a given, but something much more like clothes – or a mask.” (p. 282) [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Barnes, D., (1936). *Nightwood*. p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
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385. Hereafter referred to as ‘*Legion’*. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
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419. We might also read the plurality of the legion as another intertextual reference in *Legion –* this time to the writings of Marcel Proust. Proust’s writing has often been read as including characters with plural identities, particularly the masculine/feminine switching of Charlus in *In Search of Lost Time.* See Ursula Link-Heer and Lisa McNee, *‘*Multiple Personalities and Pastiches: *Proust père et fil’;* and Emily Zants ‘The Comic Structure of *A la recherche du temps perdu’.* [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
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