



**Wolf, J. (2016) *Literary transgressions: constructing a transgender character within a historical novel, and Rainbow, a novel*. PhD thesis. Bath: Bath Spa University.**

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**Jack Wolf**

*Literary Transgressions: Constructing a Transgender Character within a Historical  
Novel.*

*Rainbow*

A Novel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bath Spa University for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Humanities and Cultural Industries, Bath Spa University

December 31, 2015

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### **Abstract**

This dissertation comprises a novel and contextualising research. This study deals with the creative and political problems that emerge when a writer attempts to write a convincing transgender character in a historical novel. It is both critical and intensely personal as it takes full account of both my feminist and my transgender points of view and refers to my own experience of living in a transgender body. Sometimes its focus is emotional and political.

The study comprises two chapters and a conclusion. In the opening chapter I engage with De Beauvoir's comment that to be a 'man' is to be 'one', and describe how my own gender identity has influenced my construction of Mary Anne Ashley/Paul Smith in *Rainbow*. I describe my usage of Somerset dialect as an attempt to unsettle the privileged position of standard English and my intention to make the gendered word 'boy' signify a masculine position that is not defined by anatomy. Relying upon Judith Butler, I suggest that gender in the eighteenth century was signified and largely constructed by clothing and behaviour rather than anatomy. Finally I suggest that it can be hard for a transgender writer to inhabit a fictional transgender voice in a culture that has historically attempted to silence both.

The second chapter deals with three novels whose writers have attempted to write from the viewpoint of a transgender character. I explore specific scenes from two of these novels in the light of both lesbian-feminist and transsexual criticisms (primarily those of Judith Halberstam and Jay Prosser). I then describe how I have attempted to subvert both the tropes of the 'mirror scene' (*The Well of Loneliness*) and the 'transphobic attack' (*Sacred Country*). I finally investigate Eugenides' construction of Cal/llope from *Middlesex* from a specifically trans viewpoint and suggest that it is problematic artistically and politically.

The conclusion deals with how successful I consider my construction of a transgender character and transgender voice to have been, and looks toward the future.

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***Jack Wolf***

***Literary Transgressions: Constructing a Transgender  
Character within a Historical Novel.***

"Boying" Mary Anne Ashley: Writing a Transgender Character as a Political Act, and the Linguistic Potential for Change.

The personal, according to Carol Hanisch, is political<sup>i</sup>. Which partner, in any relationship, makes the tea is political. Who loads the washing machine and puts it on to cycle is political. Who - literally - wears the trousers is political. To this list, which is of course by no means exhaustive, I would like to add the deceptively obvious suggestion that speech, and (more pertinent to my own case as a novelist) writing, is political, too, both in terms of what is written, and in who is writing it. Words, whether we would choose them to or not, have a political life and impact beyond that of our intentions. Words are a form of action<sup>ii</sup>.

Over the course of this contextualising research, I will be examining three novels within which the figure of the transsexual or intersex character is key: John Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*. Within two of these three texts, I have chosen to focus in detail on particular scenes which seem to me to have a special significance for the construction of the transgender characters within the novels to which they belong, and which also seem to me to be indicative of prevailing attitudes to the transsexual body both in fiction and in modern western culture. My approach throughout my analyses will be that of a personal account. My responses will be emotional as well as evidential, and rooted in my identity and lived experience as a transgender human being, who wears trousers.

I have chosen these three novels because, in different ways, each of them has influenced the ways I have chosen to depict Mary Anne Ashley/Paul Smith within my own novel, *Rainbow*. *The Well of Loneliness* is considered by many critics to be a seminal lesbian/transsexual text, and it is my opinion that any study of the ways in which transmasculine or transmale characters have been depicted in fiction should give at least a passing acknowledgement to Radclyffe Hall. I also feel that any novelist writing about this topic should, at least, be aware of her work even if s/he chooses to ignore it. In my case, I have chosen to write both directly against Radclyffe Hall - by constructing a vision of transmasculinity which I see as inherently positive, and beside her - through my re-visioning of her famous mirror scene. My novelistic and critical relationship with *Middlesex*, on the other hand, is almost entirely one of writing against. Although Eugenides' novel seems initially more positive than Radclyffe Hall's, and Eugenides' writing style is, on the whole, much more enjoyable, I find his overall

depiction of intersex so problematic that I have used his construction of Calliope/Cal largely as a guide to what not to do when writing a transgender character. I will discuss this reaction in my second chapter, and explain why I think and feel that *Middlesex* can have a threatening resonance for transsexual and intersex readers. Finally, Rose Tremain's sympathetic depiction of a trans man struggling to inhabit his psychological gender in the restrictive world of 1950s Suffolk spoke on a personal level to elements of my own experience in 2015. It also highlighted a number of important differences between the processes of gender transition in the modern era and those of the eighteenth century, which I was keen to explore in my own work.

I consider myself, and describe myself as, a trans person. My trans status is, thanks to both my own openness and a degree of over exuberance on the part of my French publisher, a matter of public record in the UK and across Europe. I have no idea why I am transgender. If pressed I will come down on the social constructivist side of the argument, but I consider it fruitless, misleading and ultimately counterproductive to spend any significant amount of time worrying whether transgender identity has a biological basis or a social one. Such inquiry, in my opinion, derives its impetus from the cisgenderist assumption that to be transgender is to be wrong, and that this wrongness must be described, understood and contained before it can become socially acceptable. I don't expect to be understood and I won't be contained - but I am not afraid to demand acceptance.

The term "cisgender" comes from the Latin prefix "cis" meaning "on the same side". It is used in opposition to the term "trans" which comes from the Latin "cross over" to mean somebody whose gender identity is congruent with that which is implied by their bodily make up. Like "transgender" it has nothing to do with sexuality, gender expression or the presence (or absence) of any intersex condition. A cisgendered gay man can wear flowery dresses and identify strongly as male. A transgender gay man can do exactly the same. "Cisgenderism", on the other hand, along with its derivation "cisgenderist" is the usually unspoken assumption that attributes normality to cisgendered people and otherness to trans people. It differs from transphobia, which is individual, emotional, and sometimes violently reactionary, in being institutionalised, socially acceptable, and until interrogated, bearing the assumption of a reasonable basis.<sup>iii</sup>

I am using the term 'transgender' in this work to refer to anybody who identifies at any place upon the transgender and transsexual spectrum. Such a person may



identify fully as male or female, or - as in my own case - may fluctuate between both genders or occupy an identity entirely without gender altogether. My sense of myself as a gendered being is complex and shifts between male and female depending on the social context I am in and on my frame of mind. I identify as - and name myself - a transgender man, using 'man' not to mean an individual with a certain anatomy who has been raised in a particular, gendering, manner, but a 'man' in the Beauvoirian sense of being 'one'<sup>iv</sup> - a free and active member of society whose gendered identity is not defined primarily by relation to any other, or considered 'other' or 'lacking' in relation to a primary standard, but stands on its own. I do not use the word 'transsexual' as I see no meaningful distinction between sex and gender, and therefore I do not agree with the implication of physical essentialism that the term carries. Neither do I name myself simply 'man' because 'man', used by itself, appears to oversimplify my identity and subject it to a large number of assumptions - many of which are every bit as cripplingly sexist as the notion that 'woman' is inherently 'other'. If there ever comes a day when the word 'man' is linguistically free from (cis)sexism, I may start using it without the 'transgender' prefix. But I wouldn't bet on it; the word 'transgender' (trans, for short) describes for me something that is becoming a positive identity in its own right. The word transition implies movement - it invokes a positive alterity, an existence unlimited by the artificial, gendered, binary between man and woman - a state of linguistic and political potentiality. To name myself simply 'man', therefore, would constitute for me an attempt to pretend that the road my gender identity continues to travel upon does not matter; when, for me, the journey is more important than any possibility of a destination.

What I am, or at least how I identify in terms of gender, matters to my writing because I am a transgender human being who performs, according to the citational definition of performing gender put forward by Judith Butler, as male<sup>v</sup>. In the case of this contextualising research, I am reading and writing about other authors both as a transperson and a novelist, and my responses must be understood in this light. In the case of *Rainbow* I am writing in the early twenty first century about another, fictional, transgender human performing a similar masculine gender, living at the end of the eighteenth. This parallel between my self and my character adds a certain tension to my work which would not be there if I were a cisgender person of either sex. Since Roland Barthes proclaimed the author dead it has seemed unadvisable, at least within the field of poststructuralist literary criticism, to consider the work of any writer in any

significant relation to that writer's own life and personal circumstances, but I am all too aware that for the general reading public for whom my novel is intended, these biographical considerations will loom very large. My audience will, without doubt, ask the question of how much I, Jack Wolf, have in common with Mary Anne Ashley/Paul Smith. They will want to know to what extent I identify with herm; whether herm formative experiences are also mine, whether I ever had my heart broken by a blonde bombshell called Lily Chivers. And they will ask me, what do you mean by this? Of course, in a way, I am inviting such questioning - at this point in our culture there is still something overtly provocative in a transgender novelist's deliberately writing a transgendered character in a historical novel. My answer is to say that I mean to show that trans people existed, and they were - to some extent at least - people like me. We trans folk have a history, as well as - hopefully - a future.

Nevertheless, it would be ridiculously simplistic to assume that Mary Anne/Paul is equivalent to Jack Wolf, just as it would be naive to assume that Stephen Gordon in *The Well of Loneliness* is equivalent to John Radclyffe Hall, whose own life with her long term lover Una Troubridge did not, whatever internal conflicts she may have endured, reflect the misery Hall inflicts upon her hapless 'invert'. I can vouch for the fact that I have never taken a sailing ship to the Caribbean and have never been involved in any attempt at bloody revolution - although I freely acknowledge that in my performances of gender I am hoping to help bring about a quiet one. I do not speak in Somerset dialect either, although I grew up hearing it; the acceptance of received English pronunciation was drummed into me from about the age of eleven as forcibly, and, it appears, more penetratingly, than the acceptance of the gendered norms that inhere within language itself. The fact that Mary Anne/Paul does speak in dialect is due primarily to my effort to destabilise the class, rather than the gender norms, that can be reproduced within literary language. Nevertheless, the old Somerset dialect provides a very flexible verbal tool with which to challenge linguistic gendering as it typically lacked the pronoun "it" and referred to inanimate objects as "ee" or "er" in both subject and object positions. There is no attempt to maintain any consistent grammatical gender and the same object can be represented by both pronouns within one sentence<sup>vi</sup>. Mary Anne/Paul's lack of formal education and unfamiliarity with 'proper' grammar allows herm a degree of syntactical - and even intellectual - freedom which, as I shall later explain, is critical in terms of my attempt within *Rainbow* to reformulate the meaning of masculinity in a trans framework. The term "herm", which I am using in

this study, is not however drawn from dialect and does not appear in the novel. It is a modern pronoun proposed by the transgender and intersex activist and author Del Grace Volcano as a combination of her and him. It is used when talking about someone whose gender identity (and/or body) combines male and female, or varies between them. Mary Anne/Paul develops a male identity but in the earlier parts of the novel identifies as female - so I feel that in discussing herm within the earlier sections of the novel and in the novel as a whole, this pronoun is appropriate. It is one of a number of pronouns that are currently being trialled to perform this function within the English speaking transgender community, and may not be the one that is ultimately accepted as definitive. However, I find its descriptiveness helpful and so have chosen to use it here.

So; I am not Mary Anne/ Paul Smith, nor is s/he, in any simplistic pseudo-autobiographical sense, my alter ego. But as I have admitted that I would like to bring about a quiet revolution, I must also admit that in a complex, discursive, disingenuous, politically motivated sense, MaryAnne/Paul is indeed my literary stand in, my mouthpiece - even, shall we say, for this is the twenty-first century after all - my sock puppet. I am a trans person, and I have chosen to raise a trans voice. And that voice is a rare one, historically rendered silent either by the cisgendering norms of the cultures of its own and later times, or - as in recent years - by a degree of appropriation by members of the gay and lesbian community, who (understandably, having themselves, historically, been silenced) have often leapt upon evidence of gender ambiguity in historical people as evidence of their possessing a lesbian, pre-lesbian or other homosexual identity. According to this theory, eighteenth and nineteenth century female bodied people who cross-dressed as men were female identified women, who had the misfortune of being born years before the advent of either gender equality or lesbian pride, but who would have proudly identified as lesbian feminists if they had been able to do so<sup>vii</sup>. While I sincerely doubt that anyone from earlier centuries would have experienced a trans gender identity in a way that is wholly identical to that of a modern trans person, this line of reasoning makes the equivalent mistake in claiming a cisgender lesbian identity for historic cross dressers. And though we cannot say for certain what any individual's private sense of gender may have been, there is little clear evidence that earlier generations prioritised the genitalia in determining an adult person's functional gender to the same extent that we do now. Gender in the eighteenth century, for good or ill, was as much a matter of the body's clothing as it was of the body itself. Genitals were kept secret and not considered unless the situation was an

overtly sexual one. This is true even of eighteenth century medicine, where the physician would typically make a diagnosis based on a verbal consultation with a clothed patient rather than on a medical examination. It is entirely conceivable that cross dressers like James How<sup>viii</sup> and Charles (Mary) Hamilton (made infamous by Fielding's *The Female Husband*) experienced a fully masculine gender identity congruent with their period in history and behaved accordingly, with no 'lack' that could not be supplied, if the situation called for it, by a decent dildo. This is not to say that bodily gender for female bodied trans men could be easily subverted, or entirely escaped. As the century progressed British culture developed an increasing concern with regulating the dress of women in order to suppress any latent female masculinity, and women who openly desired masculine-appearing clothing were met with censure. Cross dressed trans men, if discovered living in apparently sexual relationships with women, could be severely punished. Such punishments included being sent to Bridewell, whipping, and being put in the stocks. Charles Hamilton was himself apprehended for fraud in 1748 and sentenced to be whipped in Glastonbury town square<sup>ix</sup>. Ann Marrow, placed in the stocks in 1777 for dressing as a man and marrying a woman, was permanently blinded as a result<sup>x</sup>. On the other hand, a number of cross dressing women such as Charlotte Charke<sup>xi</sup> chose to marry biological men, opening up the possibility that in our society they could have identified as gay or bisexual transmen. It is also interesting to note that when the genitally male but physically androgynous and apparently female identified Chevalier d'Eon adopted female clothing, also in 1777, her desire to dress in clothing 'proper' to her sex was met with approval. It is without the scope of this study to investigate this apparent double standard, which would seem to have allowed androgynous transwomen greater latitude in gender expression than transmen (a situation completely opposite to that experienced by transwomen today). However, given that cross dressing men who frequented London's molly houses were considered sodomites and fiercely condemned, it seems likely that the Chevalier may have owed her success to the same thing modern transpeople have to rely on - a sympathetic doctor.

It appears likely therefore that although it was possible for some female bodied trans men to change their clothing and 'pass' as male, societal interest in keeping 'women' in their proper attire and their proper place was strong enough to ensure that only those individuals who already possessed some masculine characteristics and a high degree of motivation were able to do so successfully. It is relevant also that in this

period there was a very high tolerance of romantic friendships between women, both married and unmarried, as long as these friends did not admit to any genital contact; and so it is unlikely that many lesbian lovers would have needed to employ the dangerous subterfuge of one of them passing as male. But there are other difficulties, separate from any historical inaccuracy, with the argument that such people were simply lesbians in disguise. This cisgenderist reading of history eclipses trans identities in the historical narrative altogether, distorts our understanding of lesbian history and utterly silences the transgender voice. When a writer of the stature of Radclyffe Hall can write, in strongly heterosexist terms: "I have never felt an impulse towards a man in all my life, this is because I am a congenital invert. For me to sleep with a man would be "wrong" because it would be an outrage against nature"<sup>xii</sup> and still uncomplicatedly be considered a lesbian icon, we have a problem.

Part of my project in writing *Rainbow* is to discover the essence of that (or at least, my) transgender voice, and to explore what might characterise it: within what sort of language can it be heard? I want to know whether, and if so how, language can be de-or re-gendered, and whether words and concepts that seem to be fixedly associated with one gender and with one way of performing gendered behaviour can be made to re-signify for modern trans people in ways that are positive, flexible and ultimately freeing. And this re-signification matters, not merely in an academic or creative sense, but at a grassroots level. Despite tremendous recent progress in the visual media, particularly in UK and US television<sup>xiii</sup>, across the modern world trans voices are still being silenced because they are seen as failing to achieve the artificial standards of masculinity or femininity that are perpetuated within language, and thereby within culture. Sometimes, tragically, we silence ourselves.

So my readers are likely to ask if Mary Anne/Paul is me - and I can answer honestly both "yes" and "no". But it is unlikely that this will be the only question that they will ask. The trans community is both numerically small, and under-represented in fiction to the extent where any work of fiction containing possibly transgender characters and/or themes is excitedly seized upon in much the same way that the emergent lesbian community in the early twentieth century and later decades seized (both mistakenly and unfortunately) upon *The Well of Loneliness*. There is a great hunger to read positive role models, both trans masculine and feminine, and a deep disappointment, very keenly felt, ensues when, for instance, a trans character turns out not to be trans after all<sup>xiv</sup> or the character's gender non-conformity is depicted as a

negative, even comedic, thing. Eugenides' 2002 novel *Middlesex*<sup>xv</sup>, which I shall discuss later, provides an example of this. Although he claims to have received praise from the North American intersex community for his depiction of Cal/Calliope Stephanides<sup>xvi</sup>, the writer's stated failure to make contact with any intersex person while writing the novel suggests to me that he did not consider the work at all in terms of an intersex or non-gender conforming audience:

"Just last week, a person came up to me at a reading and whispered in my ear that he has 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrome. *He was the first person I've ever met with the condition, on account of its rarity.*" (my italics)<sup>xvii</sup>

Eugenides explains his character's situation, which causes Cal - originally Calliope - to transition from female to male as being the genetic legacy of close familial incest, and appears to be using the intersex condition partly as a motif to signify sexual sin. In my personal experience, reactions to this sort of representation from the trans and intersex communities are not as positive as Eugenides may think, although some people do express a sense of gratitude at having been represented at all. The infrequency of gender non-conforming characters in fiction and the hunger for representation among such audiences ensures that the book is well known, if not exactly well loved. So it is certain that among the public readers who will ask searching questions of my depiction of transgender masculinity there will be a number of people who are trans themselves - trans masculine, trans feminine, and trans anything in between - and they will want to know that I have not written a transgender character, or positioned such a character within my novel, in any way that could serve as yet another doom laden prophecy or reassertion of the notion that trans existence is essentially flawed. To put it more bluntly, the transgender readership will be keen to see that my work does not encourage, support or promote an interpretation of transgender existence that is transphobic.

It is this sort of sensitivity to the psychological impact of her writing upon a section of her readership that is lacking in Radclyffe Hall. Judith (Jack) Halberstam suggests that although *The Well of Loneliness* was intended for general publication, Hall's writing is really meant for the people like her who made up her Paris Circle of acquaintances - socially transgressive, educated, upper or upper middle class women such as Gertrude Stein and Toupie Lowther who had attained a degree of economic independence and had overcome any psychological and practical barriers posed by

their unconventional sexual tastes or manner of gender expression to achieve a degree of social freedom that was certainly not experienced by the typical trans man or lesbian woman of the time<sup>xviii</sup>. Hall's ideal reader is one who is already sufficiently secure in her own identity that s/he is able to read the story of Stephen Gordon as neither fable nor prophecy. S/he will not assume on the basis of Stephen's misery that loneliness and abandonment is the inevitable fate of the invert and understand from her own experience the difference between fiction and reflection. The real life lesbian or transgender reader of *The Well of Loneliness*, particularly before the 1960s when lesbian and trans-masculine people began to achieve a greater degree of visibility, has not typically been able to do this. Lacking experience of others like her(m), s/he has often given in to the temptation to believe on some level both that loneliness is the lot of the lesbian and that the inferiority inherent within Radclyffe Hall's depiction of masculinity without a penis is an essential truth. Lesbian fiction between the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* and the 1960s tended to reflect this<sup>xix</sup>. Of course, second and third wave feminism - and lesbian feminism in particular - vehemently rejected this premise and strove hard to disprove any notion that to be without a penis is to be in a Freudian position of lack. Women, they pointed out (and I would add non or pre operative trans men) do not lack anything; what they have is a vagina.

But Radclyffe Hall, whose understanding of gender had been strongly influenced by the work both of Freud and the sexologist Havelock Ellis, is not a feminist writer. She positions the invert as possessing a failed masculinity that has, to borrow and twist a metaphor from the pheasant shooting enjoyed by Stephen Gordon's aristocratic father, gone off at half cock. This is most startlingly clear in one often critiqued scene in *The Well of Loneliness*. In it, Stephen Gordon, standing in front of the mirror, finally faces up to the real physical condition of her body and admits to herself the likely implications of the truth that is staring her in the face: that body is not a male one. I shall return to this scene for detailed examination in a later chapter - both for its own sake and because I have quite deliberately drawn upon it in *Rainbow*, in an attempt both to pay something of an homage to the idea of the invert and to subvert the notion that Hall apparently accepts: that gender is fixed in and by the body.

In writing Mary Anne/Paul, therefore, I am re-claiming trans history in the hope of doing some small good for trans people now, and in the future. I am deliberately seeking to create a transgender character who is clever, attractive, heroic and convincingly masculine (I will come back shortly to what 'masculine' might mean in



the context of trans-masculinities); a character whose transgendered origin does not lie in any dubious notion of supernatural possession, psychological damage, dodgy genes or divine punishment, but is both 'normal' and 'natural'. Most importantly, it does not require any modern medical diagnosis. I shall come out here and say that although I absolutely believe the individual's right to determine her own body should extend to accessing hormonal and surgical interventions if s/he desires them, such interventions should never be considered or made mandatory. Moreover, the ability to access them (financial considerations aside) should not rely upon a spurious diagnosis of mental illness. By consciously placing Mary Anne/Paul in the eighteenth century, before the advent of hormone therapy, sex reconstruction surgery, Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Harry Benjamin I am putting her into a situation where her gender identity is her own business and it is up to her to assert it. Paul does not wait to be told that he - from this point in the novel I think it is correct to say 'he' and him as his gender identity is no longer in doubt - meets the criteria for gender dysphoria<sup>xx</sup> before feeling confident enough to assert himself as male, because the concept of gender dysphoria does not exist in his culture. Standing in front of his reflection in the window, Paul instinctively knows, just as Viola knows in *Twelfth Night*, what he is. Moreover, he expects, even demands, that once he has successfully exchanged the clothing that marks his gender as female for male attire and named himself 'Paul Smith', society will accept his knowledge of his own gender without demanding that he undergo some form of gender surgery. Not for Paul the stress of 'achieving' a psychiatric diagnosis that will mark him as mentally ill for the remainder of his life, (but will permit him to be prescribed testosterone and to approach a surgeon); not for him years of saving for invasive and medically unnecessary surgery, which he may only want because society refuses to accept him as properly male without it. Not for him months of uncertainty before the powers that be will agree to award him the precious paperwork that proves him to be exactly what he knows he is. Neither must he suffer the fear of being thought improperly trans, or of being considered 'not real' because he is non-operative. No, for Paul, trans in the eighteenth century, where the clothes quite literally make the man, the situation is simple. As long as he successfully maintains a male social identity and does not get caught, he will be accepted as a man.

This is of course a slightly different definition of gender truth than we, as modern people, are used to; for us, at least outside of queer circles, conceptions of gender are almost wholly centred upon and defined by the physical body that lies underneath the



clothes. But although contemporary eighteenth century constructions of gender were assumed to have their natural origin in the body, that body, male or female, was not a public document in the way a modern body is. People rarely fully undressed, even - as can be seen both in the pornography and medical journals of the period - for sexual intercourse or to undergo examination by a physician<sup>xxi</sup>. This rejection of the naked body, in combination with the constraints placed upon the bodies of both sexes by the restrictive design of the era's clothing, meant that clothed actions and postures were more significantly gendered than they are today. The out-thrust male chest, characteristic of portraiture of the period, and often interpreted as a sign of manliness, resulted from the shoulders-back design of the typical frock coat (intended to ensure that the wearer could not slouch)<sup>xxii</sup>. For women, the restriction of arm, spine and pelvic movement that comes from wearing tightly laced stays (which can also reduce breathing efficiency) was read as an indication of femininity<sup>xxiii</sup>. I can attest from personal experience of wearing both costumes to the fact that this simple change in clothing effects a powerful alteration in bodily movement over and above that encoded by personal habit, which is likely to have eased the transition from one gender performance to another and made passing easier. And most significantly from the point of view of a passing transman such as Paul, young men entered the workforce and the adult male world at or before the point of puberty. Beardless men were common, as were men with high voices and low muscle mass.

The term 'passing' has its origin in early 20th century USA, where it was possible for a black person with a sufficiently light skin to 'pass' as white, thereby avoiding racial prejudice but setting him or herself up for trouble should the fact that they were 'passing' be discovered. The term's first significant appearance in literature was by the American author Nella Larsen, in her 1929 novel of that title. In the modern transgender context it has come to mean a transperson's early efforts to 'pass' as a member of the gender with which they identify. Because of the term's historic associations with subterfuge and the falsification rather than revelation of identity, I find this usage problematic.

To say that this emphasis upon clothing made passing easier is not, of course, to suggest that the eighteenth century was a tolerant era for gender transgressors - as previously stated, if caught and exposed as 'women', passing transmen could suffer punishments ranging from incarceration to violent humiliation in the public stocks. Nevertheless, it remains to be said that despite the brutal and quixotic nature of what

passed for justice in the eighteenth century, if the worst happened and Paul Smith's subterfuge had been uncovered, he certainly would not have faced a worse fate than that which met the 238 trans people murdered worldwide in 2013 alone.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In addition to my desire to write a positive transgender narrative, I have decided that the majority of Paul's story - which is one of three making up the whole novel - will be about issues other than his own gender. Paul Smith is not to be yet another gender non-conforming character whose *raison d'être* is to explore the discomfort and awkwardness that can go along with changing one's gender status. His transformation empowers him, but once he is able to live in the psychologically correct gender, his focus quickly shifts to matters in the world beyond himself, and from the point at which he arrives upon the island of Grenada to the point at which his gender is questioned by Arabella Pitfour (a discovery which has no catastrophic consequences for Paul, though they are unfortunate for Arabella) his gender does not constitute the most important part of his internal narrative or role within the larger plot. At no point do I use Paul's gender, *per se*, as a pivotal narrative device or metaphor upon which the action, purpose or meaning of the novel is to hang. The reason Paul is a trans man is simply that he is a trans man - there is no need for the overall novel to proclaim any cause of his non conformity. But because it would be naive to suppose that the characters themselves will not ask questions of what is, after all, a rare event, Paul himself does come to wonder whether it is something he was born with (nature) or something he learned from his father (nurture) while Cordelia constructs his situation in spiritual terms as that of a male soul inhabiting the body of a female. Edmund rejects out of hand the possibility of Paul's being anything but a biological male, while Arabella, who has considerable wit but no empathy or emotional maturity, insists that Paul is simply a woman, and perceives his transgender status primarily as a threat to her own power. None of these positions, I hope, will ever be taken by my reader as solely representing my - or the - authorial truth - though it is fair to say that I have set up Arabella's as a foil to it. Paul's success, or failure, within the action of the novel is dependent, as it is for my other point of view characters, on his choices rather than his gender identity. Being a trans man neither dooms nor saves him; it is intended as a simple fact of his nature, and is no more prophetic in narrative terms than his ginger hair. The lives of trans people both in reality and in the novel must be about more than their gender.

If gender is understood as a social construct, and discomfort with one's allotted

gender identity interpreted primarily as a social, rather than a medical, problem, then part of the remedy for that discomfort can presumably be found within an appropriation or colonisation of the linguistic structures that create and maintain gender in the first place. Although it may initially seem that the meanings of words and the gender associations within language are resistant to any deliberate attempt to influence their evolution, the ease and swiftness with which words like "queer" and 'gay' have been adopted and reclaimed by the homosexual community to signify something very different from their original meanings proves that this is not so<sup>xxv</sup>. Nevertheless, there are some words: 'man', 'woman', 'boy', 'girl', which would seem resistant to any attempt to make them re-signify within a trans context. There has been an effort to adapt the word 'boy' in certain sections of the lesbian community to signify a certain type of lesbian, but here it is often spelled 'boi' - engendering a new word rather than extending the gendered meaning of a pre-existing one. It is here, in this attempt to rework the meanings of words themselves, that I have found the flexibility of Paul's Somerset dialect to come into its own. Dialect, by definition, deviates from the rules of standard grammar, and in its refusal to accept that which is prescribed (a very trans virtue, if there is yet such a thing) it is capable of reconfiguring the concepts conveyed within ordinary sentences into new, surprising, and illuminating forms. Dialect nouns can fluidly become verbs, and by so doing reveal previously hidden processes within language. So when Mary Anne/Paul says that "perhaps all that working in the forge had boyed I somehow"<sup>xxvi</sup> I intend there to be more at work within the statement than simple ignorance on her part or playfulness on mine. I am trying to change what the language does.

The use of gender nouns as verbs has a precedent - many male raised and socialised people will be unhappily familiar with the colloquial demand to "man up!" and all the stereotypically masculine associations that the phrase conveys. The noun employed as verb is a command as well as a description of what is expected, and the hearer can be in no doubt that failure to comply is no less than a failure of masculinity, and therefore, to an extent, of self. Judith Butler, describing this mechanism in the context of how gender is created in children and perpetuated in later adult life, suggests that even when a gender noun is simply used syntactically as such, it has an interpellative power<sup>xxvii</sup> that creates the thing it names. So, regardless of the resistance encountered within Mary Anne's own peculiar psyche, when 'the Parents' say to Mary Anne, "you'm a girl" or use the expression "my girl" then the word 'girl' expressed thus

is instructing herm not merely in how to behave, but in how to identify. 'Girl' is what the word should cause herm psychologically to become. So if I, as Paul's creator, which places me largely in the role of arbiter of truth in relation to my literary creation, assert: "Paul is a boy", then my intention is to "boy" Paul, within the mind of my reader, and create Paul, within the novel, as a boy, according to a particular idea of masculinity. A similar effect ensues when Paul himself makes the statement: "I be a boy." Because Paul is a trans boy, then the atemporal equivalence inherent in the infinitive form of the verb to 'be' subtly alters the word 'boy' to signify a masculinity that does not depend, at any given moment, upon having a penis or upon the performance of stereotypical male behaviours. "Boy" comes to be a term that is reliant for its justification and meaning upon Paul, as he, in his position of first person narrator, comes to represent the standard against which 'boy' should be judged. Trans masculinity becomes an acceptable standard of masculinity itself and the framework and terms by which gender is called into existence within *Rainbow* shift significantly. For this gambit to be in any way successful relies upon the reader's acceptance of Paul as a reliable narrator, which places the daunting constraint upon myself as novelist that I must take great care to construct him as such.

The journey towards developing a specifically trans voice does not reside purely in the attempt to shift the meanings of specific words within, and potentially without a transgender context. The tone and register of what may become identifiable as a trans voice is important too. As I write there is no clearly identifiable transgender style of writing, although it may be that as it evolves and trans voices become more confident, the writing will appear across all genres of fiction and will be characterised by features it is currently developing. Among these features are an iconoclastic, queer, postmodern willingness to experiment with form and structure, to ignore any unnecessarily limiting constraints imposed by genre and to explore the possibilities of outlaw narratives. Another feature is a playful, taboo busting desire to talk frankly about challenging topics such as the physicality of the body; gender transition; prejudice; racial and class perspectives upon gender; queer sexualities and (despite the risk, especially acute for trans women, that discussing the subject will lead to a refusal of treatment by the medical establishment) BDSM sexual experiences.<sup>xxviii</sup> Certainly, all these features have been identified in my own work. Whatever the future holds, however, the majority of transgender writers - or at least, writers who choose to discuss transgender experience - are currently memoirists, writers of short, often erotic, trans-fiction or gender theorists

rather than long-form narrative fiction writers.

And this brings me back to my opening point; that as an openly transgender man creating through the medium of words the character of another transgender man, I am placed in a peculiar, problematic, situation. As a trans man, I have a first-hand experience of my subject that a cisgender man or a woman does not, but I feel that I am, perversely, also handicapped by the fact that I am writing within, and for, a cisgenderist culture that has historically tended to silence trans voices and to prefer cisgender medical, theoretical or fictional understandings of trans people's lives over the testimonies of trans people themselves<sup>xxix</sup>. Many more people, both cisgender and trans, will have read Jeffrey Eugenides' Pulitzer Prize winning depiction of an intersex person or Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country* than, for instance, the work of Del Grace Volcano or Leslie Feinburg. Simply by the virtue of my own transgender identity, the reliability of my narrative testimony can become suspect. For me to state, for instance, that cisgenderist prejudice exists may be taken as an indication of oversensitivity and bias upon my part - a bizarre situation which has a parallel in the denial often faced by black or feminist activists when they try to talk about their experiences in popular, particularly online, culture. Additionally, in my case, I am particularly vulnerable to the charge that because I also experience occasions of identification with a female sense of gender, I am not 'really' transgender at all, but merely confused. (To which I must reply that though I may be confused about any number of things, my gender is never one of them.) All this leaves me, as a novelist, in the strange position of having not only to construct Paul Smith as a reliable narrator, but also Jack Wolf. For me, every bit as much as for Carol Hanisch, the personal is inherently political. Whether I, as a publicly out, gender-fluid trans man, load the washing machine or make the tea, whether I am financially self-supporting, whether I am in a romantic relationship or not (and if I am, with whom), whether I wear trousers or pink fluffy slippers is political. The fact that I write, and choose to write, upon trans-masculinities within the established genre of historical fiction, thereby calling attention to my own transgender status and the historical existence of trans people, is my most political act of all.

Ma(ry An)n in the mirror: Stephen, Martin, Cal and Paul and Me; Challenging the Power of the Body Narrative in Transgender Fiction.

I am as sick of mirrors, as the Lady of Shallot was of shadows. Between roughly the time when I began puberty and, on finding a lump in my chest, decided I had cancer, and the moment when, six or seven weeks after my bilateral mastectomy, I looked into the mirror and bore witness to the incontrovertible truth that the lumps were gone and would never grow back, I did not once look into any reflective surface, at any photograph, any video film and see myself reflected or referenced in it. My 'looking glass' was transitive only, and my experience of being looked at by myself (as much as by others) entirely and frighteningly absent. What I saw, when I removed my clothes and stared at the reflection in front of me - and I did this more often than I can relate - was a stranger - sometimes quite a pretty stranger, but not one I could associate in any way whatever with myself. She had breasts, peachy skin, and a noticeable waist. She had (and I still have, in fact, and don't care a jot; because as they are normally non-visible, they are less significant in determining my social and psychological gender than one might assume) female genitalia. She was - so her reflected contours proclaimed - a woman.

And yet, nearly always, at some point I would watch that stranger raise her - or herm - hands to herm breasts and flatten them, as if s/he was trying to reshape, at least in the realm of the reflected visual, the unfathomable, solid, sweaty, body that seemed the inescapable determinant of gendered truth for herm referent, in that of the real. Then I would begin to see herm as myself, and look through the reflected surface of herm skin to the potential shadow self beneath - the psychological reality that lay suppressed and hidden under pounds of aching flesh and social pressure to accept the untruth of herm gendered body.

Now, of course, post testosterone and chest reconstruction, things are very different. When I look into the mirror now, I see me as I am - and though I often recoil in horror at the bags under my eyes and the mule-like teeth I mulishly refused to let my dentist fix, I do not endure the unnerving experience of looking at a self that is not mine - and which, divided as it is, cannot be in any sense One. No longer a shadow lurking beyond glass, I am verifiably present, real both physically and visually, to myself.

There is, I think, for most people a psychological hunger to be seen, not only to see; and I would hazard that it is for this reason that mirrored reflections, photographs and the visual impact of bodily changes associated with gender transition have become so much a part of the modern narrative of trans experience that any casual sweep of the internet will turn up a large number of blogs, vlogs and You Tube postings in which some individual undergoing transition uses either still or motion photography to capture every intimate detail of their transformation - as if the physical alterations taking place are insufficient to prove the transition real without the visual confirmation provided by their reflection. Moreover, there is a need to find oneself reflected in literature; to see one's existence acknowledged by another and found worthy of representation. I have this need, even if I don't like mirrors, and it influences my reading of other writers' works. I read as a transperson, looking for myself, and I am uncomfortably conscious of how 'I' appear in other writers' hands. My personal experiences - living as a woman prior to my transition to male, of undergoing transition, of becoming part of the trans community and developing a sense of loyalty and responsibility towards a marginalised group of people, some of whom are among the most vulnerable members of their societies - have coloured my reading, and have made me painfully aware of a multiplicity of themes and interpretations that may bypass the attention of a reader who does not share them. So I freely admit that in my critique of the following three works, all of which have had an influence upon my writing of *Rainbow*, I am reading from the point of view of a transperson who is also a novelist, and trying to find my way through a number of issues and problems, both artistic and political, that emerge.

The 'mirror' scene, focusing upon the reaction of a looker to the reflection of her/m own naked body in some or other glass is now so much a part of trans and lesbian writing that it has become something of a cliché, and its critical evaluation a staple of lesbian and queer literary and cultural criticism. In particular, the pivotal moment in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* where Stephen Gordon, standing in front of her mirror, curses her "poor... body" has been critically mauled, petted and analysed by, among others, Theresa de Laurentis, Esther Newton, Judith Halberstam, and Jay Prosser - each critic discovering in it something different and sometimes - as in the case of de Laurentis, who argues that Stephen's violent rejection of her body is in fact due to her lesbian horror at its masculinity and a frustrated longing for it to embody the femininity she finds sexually attractive - contrary to the general sense



inherent in the text.

That night she stared at herself in the glass; and even as she did so she hated her body with its muscular shoulders, its small compact breasts, and its slender flanks of an athlete. All her life she must drag this body of hers like a monstrous fetter imposed on her spirit. This strangely ardent yet sterile body that must worship yet never be worshipped in return by the creature of its adoration. She longed to maim it, for it made her feel cruel; it was so white, so strong and so self-sufficient; yet withal so poor and unhappy a thing that her eyes filled with tears and her hate turned to pity. She began to grieve over it, touching her breasts with pitiful fingers, stroking her shoulders, letting her hands slip along her straight thighs - Oh, poor and most desolate body! <sup>xxx</sup>

De Laurentis and Newton take the view that Stephen Gordon is a lesbian character, and Halberstam that s/he is a literary embodiment of (lesbian) female masculinity<sup>xxxii</sup>. Jay Prosser, in his essay upon Radclyffe Hall,<sup>xxxiii</sup> argues that although Radclyffe Hall may have been trans-masculine rather than trans-male, her characterisation of Stephen Gordon has much more in common with the embryonic transsexual narrative, which in 1922 was just beginning to take shape, than with that of the stone butch or transmasculine woman that came to comparative prominence in the decades thereafter. Stephen's vehement rejection of her unaltered and unalterable naked form in this scene has, Prosser argues, its own mirror in the passionate rejection of the body's contours that is frequently incorporated into the bodily narratives of transpeople who do identify as a member of the 'other' or 'opposite' sex and who wish to physically alter themselves to fit their internal sense of self. Prosser has, I think, a strong point here, although he also seems - by implied extension - to be invoking an ontological difference between transsexual and transgender people that I do not find convincing. For anyone who cannot accept the gender assigned at birth of the body they inhabit, standing naked in front of a mirror is a disturbing and unpleasant experience, fraught with problems of identity. The naked self that the naked body is supposed to reveal is hauntingly, heartbreakingly absent, visualisable only through that body's failure to represent it. The body that Stephen Gordon, aged twenty-one, sees before her is, for all its strengths, as indubitably and damningly female as mine was at that age. The objective truth it purports to reveal is so severely at odds with her subjective reality and self-conception as to have become a lie. Reflected in the mirror, Stephen's physical body, the supposed determinant of gender, wholly mis-represents to Stephen both who and what Stephen is. No wonder s/he cannot accept it. Moreover - this is where I disagree with Prosser - this mis-signification, this grotesque lie, is no



less painful if Stephen's inner self is transgender - i.e., not a woman, masculine, possibly butch, possibly male - than if it is transsexual - i.e., not a woman, masculine, definitely male. In neither case can the biological body be owned as a seat of gendered identity. In both there is a traumatic psychological and emotional rupture between what can be seen to physically exist and who is mentally cherished. But although this rupture can (and in my case, as in Prosser's, did) lead to both, this heart-breaking disavowal of the body does not translate for Stephen Gordon into the desire to medically transition to male or even to alter the body - even via the projection of that wish onto another body: the suffering housemaid Collins, whose knee operation, according to Prosser, Stephen wishes to undergo as a substitute for the operation s/he can never have. Stephen's desire, as s/he stares at her reflection, is not for the possession of a penis, nor for the removal of her breasts - indeed, when her anger subsides, s/he touches, but seemingly makes no attempt to hide or flatten them. Her initial, angry, desire is to maim her body, not operatively recreate it into a more appropriately gendered representation of herself. It is wrong, I think, to put this omission down to a failure of imagination - that such an operation could ever happen - on Stephen's part, or prudery on Radclyffe Hall's. What Stephen despises in her female body is not exactly that it is not male; it is that its apparent femininity makes it "a monstrous fetter imposed on her spirit"; something other than Self that s/he must drag around, and which, by virtue of its assigned gender, signifies and creates her socially as something s/he is not. It perpetuates, in real life, the lie the mirror tells. The truth, which it cannot reveal, is that whatever Stephen Gordon is, s/he is not a woman<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

It can be argued that in a situation or era such as Stephen Gordon's, where surgical transition is unattainable or - for whatever reason - undesirable, the best way out of transgender anguish and toward life is to abandon any attachment to the physical body as signifier and transfer the locus of gender somewhere else. One emerging theme in transgender theory and political activism, particularly relevant in countries which lack free health care and have high levels of poverty, centres on exactly this - the urgent need for a de-medicalised and non body-centred concept of transgender which allows for the possibility that non-operative transpeople of all genders may live without question in the gender they choose. My effort to re-signify traditionally gendered words - such as 'boy' so that it describes a person with a vagina - forms part of this movement.

Halberstam argues, in fact, that Stephen does this - that "as she achieves adulthood, she realises that she is not in thrall to her female body. Stephen literally

redresses the wrongs of her embodiment by taking on male clothing, meticulously tailored and fashioned to fit her masculine spirit."<sup>xxxiv</sup> And indeed, elements of Radclyffe Hall's own life - her adoption of the male name 'John', her self-identification with the category of 'invert', her love letters to Evgenia Souline and her relationship with her 'brother' Toupie Lowther - show evidence of both a theoretical awareness of this and an effort to incorporate it at the level of the real. But although I agree with Halberstam to a point, for me, *The Well of Loneliness* - ironically, for a novel which has become a foundational lesbian text and which has helped make comprehensible the category of butch - does not fully seem to entertain this possibility. The text has too close a focus upon the inescapable definitive power of lack, and although Stephen does gradually begin to base her gender performances more deliberately upon external signifiers of gender such as masculine clothing and behaviour, her grief is not sufficiently lessened by this affirmative action - nor is the tragic ending of the novel averted. Stephen wants to be a man, at the very least in the sense of being able to live as 'One' and take a female lover without rejection, but s/he cannot fully conceive of herself as really occupying this gender role while s/he is fettered underneath her clothing by a female body. The conceptual leap required to re-designate her bodily contours into masculine signifiers, and allow her gender identity to reside entirely in her gender performance is too much for her to make. It is also too much for her cisgender female lover.

Mary Anne Ashley stands in front of a reflection in *Rainbow*, too, but it is not in a mirror. S/he looks at her body - clothed, because in 1789 it would have been unthinkable for anyone, least of all a domestic servant, to go about anywhere naked - in a reflective, night time window pane. Why a window pane? Not only because, as a housemaid, Mary Anne does not possess a mirror of her own, but also because windows, unlike mirrors, allow for the possibility of passage. Windows do not merely, mutely reflect; light passes through them, both going out, through the reflection into both the real world outside and coming in, super-positioning the reflected image, from the point of view of its subject, into a third, potential, reality, beyond the glass. The image is transparent, undefinitive, uncertain, unfixed, its relationship to its referent never one of determinacy. Georgian glass, moreover, was often irregular and frequently defective - unlike factory made, standardised, modern panes, those of the eighteenth century characteristically intrude to some degree upon the consciousness of the looker because they distort the image seen through, or in them. This image is additionally cut

up into pieces by the presence of the wood or leaden struts which hold each smaller pane of glass in place within the whole. The world as observed through an eighteenth century window, or reflected in it, is never a completely accurate representation of the reality without, and the observer is always aware of this. An eighteenth century window pane cannot, by virtue of its inherent flaws, present its subject with an apparently unavoidable truth that s/he cannot recognise or accept; all it offer is an approximation.

So while Stephen Gordon looks at herm poor and most desolate body in the mirror and feels only its inescapable fetter, and I looked at mine and saw the contours of a figure that I needed to redraw, Mary Anne, living like Stephen in a time and place where bodily transformation is impossible, sees through herm approximated reflection to the potential boy - Paul - s/he will become. S/he sees - for the first and only time - what is wrong with herm female gender presentation, but understands too that this feminine fetter cannot hold herm. The unsignified boy is not rendered invisible or inconceivable by the fixed lie of Mary Anne's reflection, but displayed in the prophetic 'dark glass' as something capable of coming into being; and so Mary Anne/Paul can see straight away how the body that currently signifies as female can easily, with the correct clothing and behaviour, be made to signify as male. The body's naked female physicality<sup>xxxv</sup> is meaningless, because that very physicality is disallowed from any public arena in which it could be understood. It does not matter to Paul Smith, any more than it does to post mastectomy me, what herm naked body looks like in private - s/he has better things to do than to spend time anguishing over herm reflection, and herm conception of herself is not determined by the visible configuration of herm genitals. To Paul, male really is as male does, and, most significantly, as male dresses. Once s/he has removed the 'woman's shift' and dressed in male clothing he will both become visible as a boy and be socially constructed as one by virtue of that visibility. Paul will become both looker and looked upon, in a way that would be impossible for Mary Anne, who exists only as an uninhabitable role, as incapable of looking as she is of being really seen - because the looker, lurking within, has always been the hidden actor, Paul; and because Paul's inadequate gender performance, which 'wadn' fooling anybody' has left both Selves vulnerable to being 'pick[ed] on.' By dressing as a boy, Paul will become, not only male, but himself. Clothing, although external to body, makes attainable a sense of coherent embodiment that is denied him while he is forced to live as 'a stranger to himself' in an inappropriate gender role.

In front of I in the window stood a ordinary youth of my own age or a couple of yearen younger, of middling height, with a strong chin, and clear blue eyeen. He were standing proud and tall, with iron in his spine. He wadn' going to raise no eyebrows in the street or break no ladies' hearts, but to I, he were a miracle. Yes, a miracle, and one I were witnessing for the first time. He were real, cause why. He were me.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Paul has become real. His sense of self, once a shadow, is now a solid, with an iron spine; his gender and his identity each, at last, congruent with the other. He were me, says Paul - his reflected self is at last made objectively perceptible by its own referent and also, by implication, by others. His use of the word 'were', although idiomatic and grammatically incorrect, shifts his identity from the atemporal 'be' and allows him to occupy both space and time. Paul as 'me' has now a chance of an identifiable 'place' in the real, physical, human world. Paul as 'I' is no longer trapped in any mirror, or waiting in some potential third space on the other side of the window. He has stepped through, and stepped out of, his reflection. He is present. Clothing, quite literally, makes the man.

Radclyffe Hall, like me, is a transgender (though not transsexual) writer, and her work needs to be understood on one level as an attempt to articulate and make emotionally comprehensible a state of selfhood with which she was both personally and socially familiar, but which was so alien to the general reader of fiction during the nineteen twenties as to be unthinkable. She is writing into the dark, with both the hope that her ideal reader - someone like herself - will be able to interpret the narrative of *The Well of Loneliness* sympathetically, but also with the inevitable risk that her ground-breaking work will be misunderstood by a hostile public - as, indeed, it was. Like me, she is forced as a speaker to contend with a degree of incredulous suspicion drawn from the very identity that makes her point of view personal and credible.

I have written before of the paradoxical suspicion that inheres at this current time upon a transgender writer's attempt to write a convincing transgender character who does not meet, as Stephen Gordon does, something of a miserable end. This is frustrating for me, as a transgender writer, but also as a reader, looking for some fictional representation of my situation and myself. Transgender characters are simply not expected to exist in fiction unless their trans identity fulfils some - usually tragic - role or symbolic purpose within the narrative over and above that which is expected of a non trans character<sup>xxxvii</sup>. Jeffrey Eugenides - who is a white, cisgender Greek-American man writing in the present decade - plays up completely to this expectation

in his long and complex novel *Middlesex*, casting his intersex character Cal<sup>xxxviii</sup> simultaneously in the roles of scapegoat for familial incest and heroic victim of tragic circumstance, while making the emotional engine of her whole storyline how s/he struggles against and finally overcomes her bodily limitations in order to attain a male life and heterosexual relationship with a woman. This is a prize which, by contrast, is easily attainable for Eugenides' cisgender male characters, and which is not beyond the reach of trans and intersex<sup>xxxix</sup> people in real life.

It is highly relevant to my reading of *Middlesex* that Eugenides is on record to have claimed that he did not contact any intersex or transgender person while writing it, but instead took care to base his character's voice on his reading of medical textbooks:

"Again, with *Middlesex* I tried to be as specific as possible. I analyzed Cal as a doctor would. Cal has XY chromosomes. He was exposed to normal male levels of testosterone in utero, neonatally, and at puberty. If these things affect brain chemistry, and if that in turn results in a linguistic patterning that is identifiably male or female—and again, the jury is out on that—then Cal would write in a so-called male way, whatever that means. All I needed to do was to devise a voice that was Cal's particular voice. I didn't have to sound feminine or hermaphroditic, which was good, because I'm skeptical of those categorizations anyway."<sup>xl</sup>

He also, perhaps more significantly, claims to have taken care to show his manuscript to his (cisgender) wife and "a few other women" so that they could "tell me what I have done wrong"<sup>xli</sup>

Of course, a writer's claims in public may be disingenuous, and it is possible that Eugenides did, in fact, engage in first hand research among the intersex community, but as he has repeatedly and candidly denied doing any, and the book itself seems, to me, to read as if he is telling the truth, I am choosing to take him at his word. I accept that in theory it is possible to write a novel without having done any first-hand research of this type, but in this particular case, I feel strongly that the neglect has been to the detriment of the novel both artistically and - to me as a transgender reader and novelist who considers such a thing very important - politically.

There has been very little criticism of *Middlesex* from a specifically transgender viewpoint, although there is a significant body from feminist critics and a smaller amount from a Queer Studies perspective. Anne Koch-Rein examines the novel from the perspective of Disability Studies, and suggests that its "transgender sympathies" are compromised by a prevailing "naturalised heterosexuality"<sup>xlii</sup>. Stephanie Hsu discusses the novel with regard to its treatment of intersex and argues that it "contributes to a discursive transformation of intersex from a question of social justice into an issue for

medical science."<sup>xliii</sup> Rachel Carroll argues that although the novel's focus on ambiguous sex and gender identity "seems at first to be aligned with queer critiques of fixed categories of 'sex', Eugenides' narrative remains implicated in heteronormative assumptions."<sup>xliiv</sup> Sarah Graham goes further, suggesting that "the novel's use of Greek mythology and tropes of the traditional American 'freak show' destabilise its otherwise affirmative representation of the central character by suggesting that intersexuality is, in fact a 'synonym for monster'<sup>xliv</sup>.

As a transgender critic, reading with a heightened awareness of both Cal's otherness and my own, I would argue that Cal is portrayed as existing perpetually in a situation of lack - lacking, firstly, the penis that would mark him out, at least in the 'common sense', as male, and later, both the X chromosome that would have made her genetically female and the dihydrotestosterone that would have caused his penis to grow in the first place. Callie, or Cal, falls into the void between two sexes, and thus falls out of respectability. Lacking any gender, and therefore any clear position within her own traditional, rigidly binary gendered, community, s/he moves away into the outlaw territory held by the Burlesque community 'Hermaphroditus'. This essential 'lack', which can be read as the visible and physical signifier of the moral debt run up her incestuous grandparents, can only be supplied, and the debt's interest paid, by the death of her father, Milton. From the moment in which he stands in the doorway, barring the return of his father's spirit, Cal (like Paul seeing himself in, and through, the window) becomes fully socially constructed as male, his internal gender and societal place at last able to cohere with each other and the larger world rather than both being rendered incomprehensible by his ambiguous genitalia.

But although in permitting Cal to return from gender outlawry into acceptability Eugenides seems to be allowing for the possibility of an interpretation of masculinity which does not rely upon anatomy, a deeper essentialism - that of DNA - is actually being invoked. "Sing now, O muse," says Cal at the opening the novel, "of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome"<sup>xlvi</sup>. Cal does not become male because he performs as male, but because he possesses XY chromosomes. His masculinity resides in his genetic code, and his masculine identity has its origin not in his personality, behaviour or choice but in those short twisted strings of amino acids that make up his Y chromosome. Cal was raised as female, but, we are invited to think, was 'really' male, and moves into his 'real' gender, and station, as the novel progresses<sup>xlvii</sup>. His performance of the filial ritual can in this context be understood as the moment in

which he steps into this real, chromosomally determined, self. It is inevitable, like the fate of a Greek mythic hero, sung by the muse.

There are a number of problems inherent in this way of thinking. Firstly, if we accept the principle of biological essentialism underlying the novel's premise that Cal's sex and gender identity were genetically determined, we are then instantly confronted by the difficulty that whatever Cal's chromosomal make up, he is not really male any more than Stephen Gordon is - despite her muscular shoulders and athletic flanks - because his genes have created him as intersex, not male. The presence or absence of a Y chromosome cannot affect, let alone determine, bodily reality if it has little or no phenotypic effect on it. In fact, far from being the biological root of Cal's gender, herm Y chromosome functions largely as another site of lack - unable to influence Cal's genital development in a world in which genitals define gender, it might as well not be there at all. The real determinant of herm gender is the alpha-reductase mutation; but this is accidental. If genes do determine Cal's real gender, therefore, they do not determine it as a masculine reality that s/he will gradually move into.

Secondly, Eugenides' conflation of intersex with transgender and his clear assumption that to be intersex involves having a trans identity ignores the reality that a majority of intersex people choose to remain in the gender in which they were raised, regardless of their chromosomes or the conformation of their genitalia. A discovery such as that made by Calliope, though causing immense distress, will only occasionally result in a change of gender and more often induces a closer, if panicky, identification with the gender assigned at birth. Callie shows no sign of being transgender prior to the onset of puberty. Eugenides depicts her - and takes care to do so - as a typical cisgender girl<sup>xlvi</sup>. Why, then, would the changes that occur at puberty, in the absence of any societal pressure to change her gender from female to male (such as that occurring in communities where 5-ARD is relatively common) cause her to do anything other than panic, and do everything she can to reinforce her female gender identity instead of to conclude that she is, in fact, "something in between"<sup>xlix</sup>? How could meeting with a doctor cause a shift in Callie's gender identification to the extent depicted here? As the doctor in question himself points out, Callie's "chromosomal status has been completely overridden by rearing"<sup>l</sup>. Eugenides has constructed Dr Luce as being obsessed by sex, and his internal and psychological examinations of Callie may in fact constitute a form of sexual abuse, although Cal never accuses him of this. It is tempting to suspect that he represents Eugenides' attempt to satirise both social constructivist



views of gender and the disgraced gender consultant John Money<sup>li</sup>. The implication given by the text is therefore that this view of Callie as cisgender is wholly wrong. I am reading against the grain of the novel in suggesting that it is, in fact, correct. Callie is not, at this point in her life, transgender. She may, however, given her strong attraction to her best friend "The Object" and her lack of interest in boys, be a lesbian. Her reaction, however, to her growing attraction to girls, the discovery of her genotype, and the configuration of her sex organs is that she ceases to identify as female. Although I know several intersex individuals who chose to abandon their birth gender on discovering their condition, I do not know anyone who has gone from a feminine gender presentation and - critically - a solid cisgender identification to a transgender male identity. In each of these cases, some degree of non-conformist gender identity has always preceded, not followed, the discovery of a medical diagnosis. Perhaps Eugenides' failure to speak to intersex individuals and the care he took in showing his manuscript to his wife and other women has backfired rather spectacularly. Far from creating a convincing portrait of psychological intersex, Eugenides has created a thoroughly believable cisgender girl, whose transition to a male gender identity at fifteen years of age seems therefore to have no origin beyond that of her chromosomal make up. It does not emerge from Callie's character, but seems to derive instead from her creator's desire to equivocate gender with genes.

One could put forward an argument that Eugenides is constructing Cal (as Callie becomes) as genetically intersex precisely in order to allow her to inhabit the 'middle sex', outlaw zone, separate from those inhabited by men and women. Indeed, Cal's final description of himself in his final conversation with Desdemona would seem to confirm this: " 'You're a boy now, Calliope?' ' More or less' "<sup>lii</sup>. Eugenides himself has suggested that this was what he was trying to do, commenting that the novel argues for a "middle place..... between the alternatives of nurture and nature..... a third gender.... that represents a certain flexibility in the notion of gender itself."<sup>liii</sup> But even if I were to agree that his portrait of Cal/lie is a convincing portrait of an intersex character, to accept that he has been successful in doing this would be to ignore the inflexible binary structure of the world to which Cal returns, which ultimately makes it impossible for her to inhabit a coherent intersex reality. S/he is forced to become one or the other - and it is now that the presence of that Y chromosome becomes paramount destiny. Faced with this either/or decision, Cal ultimately chooses male - not because he feels 'real' as a man, or because it feels natural to him to perform as male in the way that it



does to Paul Smith, but because his possession of the Y chromosome and the mythic force of Greek custom together demand that he choose it: "And so it was I, who, upholding an old Greek custom no-one remembered anymore, stayed on behind on *Middlesex*, blocking the door so that Milton would not re-enter the house. It was always a man who did this, and now I qualified." <sup>liv</sup> When questioned as to "why [he decided] to make the fictional metamorphosis from female to male rather than vice versa... [because] this makes the male condition his final and "true" self," Eugenides replied:

"I chose female to male because that is the truth about that condition. The novel had to be faithful to the medical textbooks (even if the medical profession comes in for some dark satire in the book)." <sup>lv</sup>

It is this notion of compulsion on the basis of dubious medical 'truth', rather than Callie/Cal's eventual choice of a non-female gender, that is, for me, the problem. Ultimately, intersex is not shown to be an acceptable sex/gender position for an individual to occupy, and maleness revealed to be the inescapable result of the possession of a Y chromosome - inactive or otherwise. Casual reader reactions indicate that this, indeed, is the message that tends to be taken from the text. Cal tends here to be described uncomplicatedly as "a young man", or as someone who "is not *really* a girl at all" or who "was a girl who discovered she was *really* a boy" (my italics) while *Middlesex* itself becomes a recitation of its own first line: "the story of a girl who was born twice - first as a baby girl and later as a teenage boy" <sup>lvii</sup> rather than the story of an intersex person occupying an outlaw space.

A bigger problem for me as a transgender reader, however, is the suggestion that Cal's condition results from close familial incest. Research into the prevalence of 5-ARD in small isolated populations similar to those of Greek villages prior to WW2 reveals that it affects 13% of the population - so if such a condition was extant in the population it would not require close familial incest to bring it out. <sup>lviii</sup> In fact, marriages between second or third cousins would be sufficient. So why does Eugenides insist that Cal's grandparents are also brother and sister? The implication that intersex is being used to signify the wages of sin is extremely strong, and the suggestion that Christian sin may have the ability to manifest physically in a modern context difficult to deny. Incest becomes the original sin, able to wield influence over the future body of someone who has not committed it. As a metaphor for original sin this may well be merely consistent and effective; but as a statement which has implications for the

bodies of living people in real life it is potentially devastating. It is not good enough to say that Eugenides did not intend any insult or harm, or that the close relationship is intended purely to "dramatise inbreeding" and to claim that "it doesn't possess the realism that might make it offensive"<sup>lviii</sup>. The fact is that in *Middlesex* he has inextricably linked intersex and transgendered conditions with notions of sin and guilt. The unavoidable implication is that both conditions entail an inherent flaw that is moral as well as social or medical. The mutation upon the 5th chromosome becomes a signifier of turpitude: Cal's very genes, which should - scientifically at least - seem innocent of any moral valency, have been tainted.

It may seem over-sensitive to complain about an implication, especially one which Eugenides may not have intended, but the reality for many trans and intersex people is that such arguments are commonly used in modern day society to deny the reality of our experience, and, moreover, of our genders. Transphobic prejudice is still a problem for many people to whose communities the suggestion that their gender reality results from sin, personal or inherited, would not seem unreasonable. Slurs such as 'dirty tranny' are not uncommon, and represent for many people the thin end of a violent and hate-filled wedge. There are places in this country where I, myself, do not feel safe.

The suggestion that gender inheres primarily and inescapably in one's possession of XY or XX chromosomes, no matter what the appearance of one's physical body, is one that is characteristic of trans-exclusive radical feminists such as Janice Raymond, who argues that male to female transition constitutes a form of rape upon the female body.<sup>lix</sup> To Raymond and her followers, MtF individuals who undergo gender reassignment remain men despite surgery, and transwomen should not be considered women in law or society. Extreme TERFs have also argued, with varying degrees of incoherence, that cisgender women and girls who suffer, even unknowingly, from intersex conditions such as partial or complete 5-ARD and AIS should also be considered boys and men.<sup>lx</sup> The similarity of this argument to the plot of *Middlesex*, and to some of the language used in the novel to describe "genetic males raised as girls"<sup>lxi</sup> though probably coincidental, is striking. In the real world, biological essentialism, like fundamentalist religion, is all too often used to justify hate.

None of this, of course, would matter if these arguments did not have any impact upon attitudes in the general population, or those of policy makers in the medical and political establishments. Recent events, however, such as the recent attempt by

lawmakers in Florida and four other US states to ban all transpeople, regardless of their stage of transition, from using appropriate toilet facilities, suggests that, in fact, they do. The fact that this proposed law was unworkable does not detract from its repressive intent.<sup>lxii</sup> Similarly, rigid interpretation of and attachment to the notion of male/female binary gender along the lines determined by chromosome analysis can result in intersexed children suffering forced and inappropriate 'corrective' surgery. Among my own acquaintances is one such individual who is chromosomally female, but who having been born with ambiguous, somewhat masculine genitalia, was subjected as an infant to clitoral reduction and labial reconstruction. He now identifies as a very angry, intersex, transman.

Nevertheless, despite its dangers, the temptation to assume that there must be some genetic or other biologically essentialist basis to transgender identity is a powerful one, and in some ways seductive.<sup>lxiii</sup> The idea that cross-sex identification is natural in the sense of having some physiological or genetic cause allows the question of whether to be transgender is acceptable in and of itself to be completely sidestepped. There is no apparent moral or ethical requirement, if the condition is genetic and unavoidable, for anyone, either cis or trans gender to interrogate the origin and validity of any prejudice they might hold regarding the situation of being transgendered. Hard line views on gender conformity, can, instead of being confronted, be considered irrelevant to the discourse, which is now seen as being located within science instead of morality. A similar situation obtains in respect of current arguments in favour of a genetic basis to homosexuality, which state that homosexuality cannot be a choice and suggest that because of its inevitability, homosexual desire should not be condemned. Initially, this argument appears progressive, but this line of reasoning is dangerous. Unless prejudice - hate - is confronted and beaten on its own terms, and it made clear that both transgender and homosexual existences are morally acceptable regardless of whether they can be chosen or not, prejudice will persist, and having been unmoored from its original religious anchor may attach itself instead to an essentialist concept of genetic inferiority or inescapability similar to that employed by defenders of white supremacy and TERFs. Eugenides does not go as far as this, but his depiction of Cal quite clearly, if accidentally, plays into a broader cultural narrative that holds that to be differently gendered or to have a body that is non-normatively sexed is to be situated outside of any medical or moral state of normality, health, and grace. In a novel which is, on the surface, the story of an intersex person who is not subject to forced surgery,

this is ironic as well as deeply unfortunate.

In the light of all this, the fact that Eugenides did not contact any member of the trans or intersex communities while he was writing *Middlesex* takes on, for me, a new significance. Not only do I find myself - by proxy - othered in the text, but also excluded from his thought processes as a potential reader of his work. As a transgender reader I cannot help but feel simultaneously acknowledged, slighted and alarmed. As a transgender writer, working upon a novel whose central character is also transgender, I am made even more determined to avoid instilling the same sorts of uncomfortable reactions and feelings in my own transgender readers, who are, after all, the very people whose existence I have to thank for inspiring my story.

Physiological gender essentialism, in the sense of gender being read through the flesh rather than the behaviour or costume, is, I think, a characteristic of, and problem for, our time. We are, as a culture, continually bombarded with visual imagery depicting the naked or semi-naked body, and - unlike eighteenth century people - we no longer rely heavily on cues given by clothing or behaviour when trying to determine the gender of someone in front of us. This has mixed implications for body image and gender expression, for both cisgender and transgender people. Bodies are often measured against an unrealistic physical ideal of masculinity or femininity, with sometimes catastrophic effects upon individual self esteem. On the other hand, women can wear masculine clothing in everyday life and men can wear female drag without it being seriously thought that they must be, therefore, really men or women. Butch women are no longer aggressively targeted for wearing men's trousers<sup>lxiv</sup> and there is an increasing acceptance of male femininity - though this varies between communities. But this very acceptance can pose a problem of invisibility for early-stage transpeople. In the modern paradigm, clothing can be so non-deterministic of gender that an early-stage trans man or woman who does not already exhibit compelling masculine or feminine bodily characteristics will often continue to be read as a member of their birth sex regardless of attire. Pre-testosterone, outside of queer circles, I was regularly assumed to be a heterosexual (sometimes lesbian) female, despite having bound breasts, masculine clothing and sporting a buzz cut, and was addressed accordingly by men and women as "Madam", "Miss", "darlin'", "love", and usually referred to as 'she', and 'her.' After changing my name I was challenged at my bank because my bank details did not match my apparent bodily gender (despite my male gender presentation). I felt unable to use male toilets in safety. Post-testosterone, I am still

occasionally taken for a woman because I now have long hair, but more often people do not have to be prompted to use male pronouns and honorifics. Occasionally, they react with confusion, as in the case of the male and female security guards who both insisted on patting me down at Charles de Gaulle airport before demanding to see my passport and allowing me onto my flight.

It is common, though by no means universal, among transgender children that they begin to identify as members of another sex while still very young.<sup>lxv</sup> Rose Tremain picks up on this idea in her novel *Sacred Country*. While still having the transition itself as the focus of its transgender character's story, the novel is on the whole a sympathetic portrayal of an individual who falls, like Cal, into a space outside gender acceptability - into one of the "Sacred Countr[ies]" of the novel's title. Mary (Martin) Ward is a trans child growing up in the restrictive community of post-war rural Suffolk. Despite the evidence of herm body and pressure from her parents and wider society, s/he identifies very early in her life as "Martin Ward. A boy."<sup>lxvi</sup> This identity remains throughout adolescence and is unshaken by the development of herm body at puberty and the onset of sexual feeling; Martin is a growing into a heterosexual transman and the onslaught of female hormones, instead of rectifying, or at least changing, his gender identification<sup>lxvii</sup> by giving him "white breasts", only confirms it. The novel concludes with the adult Martin, who has broken ties with his abusive family, undergone female to male gender transition, and emigrated to America - where, although excluded from any possibility of a romantic relationship with the woman he loves, he does obtain a functional (if impotent) male life on his own terms. At no point in the novel does Tremain suggest that his transition is anything other than serious and irreversible.

There seems to have been little criticism of *Sacred Country*, and I am aware of none from a specifically transgender viewpoint. David Brauner argues that the Sonny's silencing of Mary early in the novel symbolically deprives his daughter (sic) of a voice and argues that "the unresolved tension between the two (gendered) aspects of Mary's self manifests itself not just in Mary's self-representation as a split self, but in the splitting of her own narrative voice, between chapters attributed to 'Mary' and 'Martin.'<sup>lxviii</sup> Brauner also focuses upon the injuries and insults Mary/Martin's body sustains over the course of herm life, arguing, among other things, that the blood that seeps from Martin's post mastectomy scars echoes the chafing Mary previously endures from

her smock dress.

Largely positive though Tremain's depiction is, I cannot help but read its underpinning assumption as being still that of the definitive power of the body. Although Martin's gender identity is not presumed to result from any physiological flaw or genetic taint, it is hormonal and surgical transition that mentally, as well as socially, unfetters him from femininity rather than any opportunity to successfully experience his body parts as non-representative of it. Martin cannot, for instance, describe his vagina as a masculine organ - because it belongs to a man - in the way that many modern transmen are beginning to do. His early attempts at binding his breasts and, later on, engaging as a transgender butch in a relationship with a woman are unsatisfying and ineffective because they are illusions - the breasts are still there, despite the binding, and Martin, who identifies as a man, cannot come to terms with a butch female identity. Nor can he, in a decade and a century when the naked body is seen as the ultimate measure of gender truth, obtain a psychologically and socially real male identity while still being in possession of female physical signifiers. Unlike Paul Smith in seventeen-ninety, (but like Jack Wolf in twenty-ten) Martin in nineteen-sixty cannot simply change his clothes and thereby become male. Pre-transition Martin is passing - or trying, unsuccessfully, to pass: "I dress as a man"<sup>lxix</sup>. However, he is not socially accepted as male and does not feel himself to be entirely real: "I thought, is the time actually coming for the *invention* (my italics) .... of Martin Ward?"<sup>lxx</sup> The power of the body has become inescapable; the only way to fix the problem it creates is to alter it in the flesh, not merely in its reflection. Masculine realness is approximated only via the administration of testosterone, and the corresponding reinvention of Martin's physical self.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The idea that a pre- or non-operative transperson is passing - only seeming to be a member of their preferred gender rather than being one - is a troubling one. This is because most transpeople, unless they begin transition while very young, spend some time doing exactly this - passing, for a limited time, as effectively as they can within the gender with which they will ultimately identify. But this passing, unlike the theatrical pretence in which the young Mary/Martin engages in an ill-fated attempt to entertain, indicates an underlying potential reality: that the shadowy illusion, unlike that of a magician, may in fact, become real. It is this possibility - that beneath the surface, underneath Mary/Martin's clothing, there may exist a level of reality whose deceptive workings he cannot understand or see that so terrifies Mary/Martin's father,

Sonny. In a novel with no mirror scene, it is he who acts with brutal, deliberate, and sexual precision to remind the growing Mary (as Tremain calls her at this stage of the novel) of her hated femininity and her physical - and therefore definitive - body:

He crooked his left arm round Mary's neck and pinioned her against his chest. With his right hand he pulled off her school tie and opened her shirt. She screamed. She tried to push his hand away. She kicked his shin.

The crepe bandages were exposed. They were grey by now. They could have been secretly washed and hung to dry out of Mary's window, but part of her had refused to believe that she would go on needing them.

Sonny pushed her in front of him towards the kitchen table. [...] He pulled open a drawer and took out the kitchen scissors. His wrist was against her windpipe, beginning to choke her. [...]

[...] Sonny cut into the wad of bandage in the cleft between Mary's breasts. The scissors were blunt and the bandages wound round her seven times. One arm of the scissors dug into her breast bone, bruising her.

[...]

She started to cry. This was a thing she never wanted to do and never wanted to see as long as she lived. [...] She begged him to let go of her. Screamed and begged.

When he'd cut through the wedge of bandage, he pulled back her shirt. He held her breasts in his hands. He pushed them up, showing them to her. He said: 'Look at them. Go on. You look at them!'

She had her eyes closed. The tears came out and ran down her face and fell onto Sonny's hands. She thought, this is the worst moment of my life.

[...] Sonny pushed her away and she fell onto the gritty pavement of the kitchen floor. She struggled to find the two sides of her shirt and close it. Sonny kicked her thigh. 'You're an abomination,' he said. 'That's what you are.'

He kicked out again with his boot, then Mary heard him walk out of the kitchen and slam the door behind him.

She thought, now it's over. Except that it isn't. It's now that it all begins.<sup>lxxii</sup>

It is worth considering this horrific scene in some detail, not least because what it reveals about the familial relationship between Sonny and Mary reflects the enduring literary and cultural expectation that a transgender child will face rejection (at the very least) by her family. The scene is both pivotal in terms of plot, and formative in regard to the character of Mary/Martin.

Sonny's attack on Mary is extremely aggressive, even by the standards of 1961, when corporal punishment was considered normal. This is not a parent disciplining a child for some misdemeanour, but a vicious attack by an adult male on a young individual who cannot effectively defend herself. There is a strong implication that he would kill Mary if he could. The shears cut through the crepe bandages as if cutting through Mary/Martin's own flesh; the white breasts extrude like internal organs through



skin. Mary is almost choked, sustains bruising from the blunt scissors, and is kicked in the thigh while lying on the ground. The scene - which already constitutes sexual assault - is like a rape, or a ravishment; something vital is being stolen - quite literally ripped away - from Mary/Martin. The attack, however, does not spring out of nowhere; it is triggered by Timmy's discovery of Mary's bandages underneath her pillow and correct identification of them as being "part of some awful secret of Mary's"<sup>lxxiii</sup>. The question arises as to how Sonny had the insight to know that by opening Mary's shirt he would find them on her body. Clearly, Mary's resistance to being identified as female has not gone unnoticed, even though s/he has not given any clear admission to anyone of having a transgender identity. Her gender presentation, like Mary Anne/Paul's, must be subtly wrong: she is not successfully passing as female. To Sonny, who is very unlikely ever to have encountered the concept of transsexuality, this makes her an "abomination". It may be that he has some suspicion that s/he is lesbian, or it may simply be that Sonny finds abominable anything he cannot understand or control.

For several reasons, I took it upon myself to write directly against the familial rejection trope while constructing Mary Anne/Paul's family situation in *Rainbow*. The first was personal; although not every transgender person faces rejection and abuse in childhood, I did. Wanting to avoid too close an identification between myself and my 'mouthpiece' I was keen, in this regard, to distance my experience from Paul's, and so I decided to give her a loving family background. A second reason had to do with my desire to leave the cause of Paul's transgender identity entirely open to question. I feared that if he was shown to come from a dysfunctional family, like Mary/Martin's, (or Stephen Gordon's, or, my own) *Rainbow* would seem to be edging towards an acceptance of the post-Freudian hypothesis that such dysfunction can disorder a child's developing gender (and sexual) identity.<sup>lxxiv</sup> A third was that I wished to write about a positive experience of growing up transgender in a historical context, in order to refute the notion that fictional transpeople must always suffer in this way. I was keen to suggest that such familial rejection and abuse such as Mary/Martin suffers are not, and have never been, ubiquitous. The final reason was simply that I had written about a dysfunctional eighteenth century family in my previous novel, and it was not territory I wanted to re-cover.

The relationship between our Ma, our Da and Mary Anne/Paul is warm and loving, although our Ma expresses concern early in the novel that our Da's allowing Mary Anne to work in the forge is influencing her development.<sup>lxxv</sup> Our Da is



depicted as a large, bull-like man, very secure in his own masculinity, who, like Sonny, is disappointed in his passionate desire for a son who can follow him - in this case into the forge - but who, unlike Sonny, does not take that disappointment out on his daughter. Our Da's treatment of Mary Anne, and our Ma's warning, does however hint at the possibility that raising a female bodied child in a masculine fashion can produce a masculine identified adult. This possibility is not intended to be 'the truth'; it is merely one among a number of potential causes of Mary Anne/Paul's transgenderism.

Although I purposefully avoided incorporating familial violence into *Rainbow*, I did, however, draw to some extent upon Tremain's construction of Sonny in my construction of another character whose interaction with Paul is strongly negative: Mr MacDonald, the Bethbarah overseer. *Rainbow* is, after all, in part an adventure story, and it would make for a very dull book if my character never came up against an adversary. When comparing the two scenes, it is important to notice that they occupy different places upon the narrative arc. Mary/Martin's assault is initiatory rather than climactic, whereas Paul's represents the culmination of his development into a young man. By the final stage of *Sacred Country*, the violence is long over. In the closing section of *Rainbow*, however, MacDonald attacks Paul with a genuine intention to kill.<sup>lxxvi</sup> This is not, however, a transphobic attack as, arguably, Sonny's assault on Mary is; instead, MacDonald has convinced himself that Paul is involved with the negro rebellion. Some of the details of the attack - choking, kicking Paul while he is on the ground - are the same as Tremain's, but overall the significance of the attack is very different. Paul is being attacked as a boy, and a potential race traitor, not for being a girl. Even if MacDonald should succeed in killing him, Paul thinks that he will still have won, precisely because the assault is operating in confirmation of his gender rather than, as in Mary/Martin's case, in effort to eradicate it. In writing this scene with this emphasis I have attempted not only to write at an angle to Tremain, but directly against the structural trope which seems to demand that the introduction of a secret as momentous as Paul's into a novel anticipates, even demands, its later discovery and denouement. Reader expectation is raised, but here deliberately subverted rather than fulfilled. However, it seems fair to say that in both novels, being the subject of violent attack functions as a narrative rite of passage, after which the character's transgendered identity is unalterably fixed. As Mary/Martin puts it: "now .. it all begins."<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The concept that the transgender character was always really the gender s/he later manages to become is a recurring one in real life transgender narratives and - where

trans-characters occur at all - in fiction. The transgender narrative, as it is commonly articulated by both trans and non-trans writers, is not yet, it seems, ready to embrace the notion of gender as a truly potential space, open to interpretation, repeated re-signification and ontological change. Some of this resistance, of course, is historical - as Prosser argues in *Second Skins*<sup>lxxviii</sup>, the early work of Havelock Ellis and Radclyffe Hall among others set in place a pattern for transgender (and specifically transsexual) narrative that endures to this day. Key to this narrative is the notion that a person may be a boy or a girl trapped in the wrong body - i.e., in a body with the gender characteristics of the other sex. Every word: boy, girl, wrong, body relies on its common sense meaning, and as such is never fully interrogated.<sup>lxxix</sup> What is wrong, both in the sense of being out of sync with the individual's internal sense of self and in that it is generative of emotional and psychological trauma, is of course the gender which the body signifies; and that signification is due to perceptive and linguistic habit rather than any characteristic inherent in the flesh itself. However, as a novelist I needed to make Mary Anne/Paul comprehensible to my reader, and provide an uneducated eighteenth century boy - who has never read Derrida or heard of Judith Butler - with a scaffold upon which to hang his growing understanding of himself. To do this, I had to rely on something; and despite my initial desire to allow my depiction of this character to explore the frontier region of gender wherein I situate my own identity, my scaffold turned out to be, at least in part, a modified version of the wrong body narrative. Exactly because it does rely on common sense - the very thing that makes it intellectually suspect - the idea that there has been "a mistake" feels to both the reader and to Mary Anne/Paul intuitively right; and after considerable redrafting it became apparent to me that it was easier to go along with this suggestion than to spend time within the novel questioning what genders both body and self in the first place. In the initial draft of *Rainbow*, Paul did, in fact, spend some time overtly pondering the Butlerian perspective on performative gender. But following this philosophically challenging and very modern line of thought via Paul proved too difficult. I began to feel that his voice was being swamped by mine, and that he was asking questions that would simply be beyond his awareness as an eighteenth century country boy, even one capable of quite revolutionary thinking. I ultimately decided that any overt exploration of complex concepts - such as whether gender identity may be deterministic of bodily gender rather than determined by it, and whether breasts therefore may be seen as masculine organs (if not signifiers) - was inappropriate both for his character and for

the novel, qua novel, rather than a work of gender theory. So Paul simply states that he is, by his own word, a boy; his only difficulty as such - and mine as his writer - is to ensure that the word "boy", and therefore the ontological category it references, can be made to describe and include him.

But prior to his self-identification as a boy, Paul is not one, in the common sense physiological and psychological meaning of the term, any more than I was, and there are many reasons why such a simplistic reading should be resisted. To agree that he was is to imply that a transgender person is not real until s/he comes out, and that the life s/he may have led pre-transition was not valid because of its having been lived 'untruthfully' in the 'wrong' gender. This position is of course discriminatory - it disallows the possibility of transgender positions that do not involve medical transition, and excludes non-binary gender identities that shift between male and female and reject the notion of either gender being more or less psychologically real than the other - but it is also not representative of Mary Anne/Paul's experience. Prior to her meeting with Sally Bridges and her "pack of vixens"<sup>lxxx</sup>, Mary Anne/Paul's gender identity is that of a masculine girl who works in the forge with her father but never considers herself other than - if somewhat reluctantly - female. At this point, s/he assumes her femaleness to be inevitable, determined not - as in Stephen Gordon's case - by the contours of her naked body (which s/he, as a late eighteenth century person, almost never sees in its entirety) but by the interpellative power of the word "girl" that was assigned to her at birth by her parents. Words, names, clothes and social roles are far more definitive of identity to Mary Anne/Paul than bodies are. But although in seventeen-ninety bodies cannot be changed, words and clothing can. Ultimately it is much easier for a clothed Mary Anne/Paul to resist the definitive power of the word "girl" than it is for Stephen Gordon to refute that of her reflected naked body, or Martin Ward his "white breasts". Paul Smith's unclothed body, although it does not reflect who Paul is, is not a 'wrong' body as per the traditional transsexual narrative because Paul is able to assert, on the basis of his clothed reflection in the window and his own internal experience of himself, that it is not a girl's body. Female though it appears to be, because it belongs to a boy, because it lives as a boy, and almost dies as one, it is, in fact, a boy's.

So, Paul is not a boy, in any common sense way, trapped in the body of a girl, any more than he is fettered by the body's femininity. But he is a boy in a new way, a transgressive way, a re-signified, queer way: a trans-boy in a trans-boy's body that

happens to appear, when naked, as if it were a girl's. Its breasts are male, its private parts masculine, regardless of their conformation and usual signification. The vague reflection, the potential, unrealised shadow he sees in the uneven window pane has moved psychologically to the level of the real and has supplanted the definitive role of the body in determining subjective identity.

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## In Conclusion: Raising a Transgender Voice

My main preoccupation, while writing the character of Mary Anne Ashley/ Paul Smith in *Rainbow* was to show how a transgender character could successfully play a role in a complex and multi-layered narrative that was independent of her transgender journey.

As a writer and a reader, but also as a transgender man writing in 2015, I believe it is vital that fictional transgender characters are permitted other destinies than misery or death, and other storylines than those directly connected with, or drawn from, the transition narrative. But whether I would have reached this conclusion so readily if I had not had personally to live through it is doubtful. Nobody who has not undergone gender reassignment can really be aware of how dreary, confining, and repressive the trans-narrative can be. It has only one plot, and one narrative outcome. After the hundredth telling, even if its details were originally true, it becomes untellable, unhearable; less personal history than ritualised recitation. At some point it may even become unownable; how much of it is truly the teller's original story, how much a rehashing of the established trans-narratives that began with Havelock Ellis and Radclyffe Hall? For all that the telling and re-telling of one's transsexual story is styled a journey into self, over-investment in the trans-narrative may, in fact, represent a loss of identity, as individual history becomes of less importance than prescribed expectation.

Why should this cliché, already problematic in the consulting room, be allowed to represent the only plot available to transgender people in fiction? Surely trans-people can, and should, have other stories too? In *Rainbow*, I was keen to demonstrate how a trans character could be a friend, an adventurer, a revolutionary, and ultimately, a lover, rather than - as in *Sacred Country* and *The Well of Loneliness*, a tragic hero, doomed to struggle and celibacy. There is no Gordian knot in literature; it is not always desirable - if, indeed, it ever is - to construct characters according to a simplistic ideal that all too often results in falling back upon a supposedly market friendly default that is white and cisgendered.<sup>lxxxii</sup> I wanted to show that narrative does not automatically become overcomplicated if this default is challenged and other protagonists are allowed to take centre stage or share narrative space with more conventional characters. Readers are not stupid: in a world in which one's readership is multiracial, multi gendered and drawn from a multiplicity of social backgrounds, one's characters can, and should be

both varied and variable. This is not simply a matter of allowing the reader an opportunity to find herself reflected in contemporary fiction; British history, let alone that of the remainder of the planet, is by neither racially homogenous nor sexually orthodox. Black people, gay people and trans people have all a place in it, and a commensurate right to be represented in historical fiction. They have the right to have their voices heard. It is my hope and intent that Mary Anne/Paul's adventure will show that the transgender voice, both modern and historic, will not continue to be silenced, distorted or drowned out. Transgender experience need not be forever confined to the margins of representation, reduced to the cliched trope of suffering, or cursed, 'Other'. Rather, it may assume a place closer to that occupied at present by the cisgender norm. A quiet revolution will have begun; and though it will certainly be televised, it will also appear in print.

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- i The phrase is drawn from the title of Hanisch's essay, "The Personal is Political" in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (ed. Firestone and Koedt, 1970.) It became an important feminist rallying cry in the 60s and 70s.
- ii "Words are a form of action, capable of influencing change." Ingrid Bengis, *"Man Hating" in Combat in the Erogeous Zone*, (Harper Perennial, 1972) p54.
- iii See Kennedy, Natacha: "Cultural Cisgenderism: Consequences of the Imperceptible" - Keynote address, POWS annual conference, 2012. Available on Academia. Edu
- iv de Beauvoir, Simone: *The Works of Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex and The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Z EL Bey, 2011. Original printing 1949) : " 'The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities,' said Aristotle; 'we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness.' And St Thomas for his part pronounced woman to be an 'imperfect man', an 'incidental' being. This is symbolised in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called 'a supernumerary bone' of Adam..... Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Michelet writes: 'Woman, the relative being ...' And Benda is most positive in his Rapport d'Uriel: 'The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself ... Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man.' And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.' p6
- v See: Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1992) and *Bodies that Matter; on the Discursive limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993)
- vi See: Elworthy, Frederick Thomas: *An Outline of the Grammar of the Dialect of West Somerset* (English Dialect Society, 1877, reprinted Bibliobazaar, 2012) p33
- vii Halberstam, Judith, "The Androgyne, The Tribade, the Female Husband" in *Female Masculinity* (Duke U.P. 1998) p72. See also for example Wheelwright, Julie, *Amazons and Military Maids*, (Pandora Press, 1989) who in her discussion of the likely transsexual James Barry refers to him throughout as female. p166.
- viii [http://www.riabrodell.com/\\_/Current\\_Work/Entries/2011/9/9\\_James\\_How\\_aka\\_Mary\\_East\\_%26\\_Mrs.\\_How.html](http://www.riabrodell.com/_/Current_Work/Entries/2011/9/9_James_How_aka_Mary_East_%26_Mrs._How.html) <http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1766east.htm>  
See also: Donoghue, Emma, *Passions Between Women* (HarperCollins, 1993) pp70-73
- ix Fielding's *Female Husband*, (1748) <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/f/fielding/henry/female-husband/> is the sensationalist retelling of a real life court case which was first reported in Bodley's Bath Journal on 22 Sept 1746. See also: Donoghue, op cit pp73-80
- x [http://www.riabrodell.com/\\_/Current\\_Work/Entries/2011/9/7\\_Ann\\_Marrow.html](http://www.riabrodell.com/_/Current_Work/Entries/2011/9/7_Ann_Marrow.html)  
See: Boe and Corkyndale (eds) *Heteronormativity in Eighteenth Century Literature and Culture* (Ashgate, 2014) p182
- xi Charke, Charlotte *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke, youngest daughter of Colley Cibber, Esq, written by herself* (1755)  
[https://archive.org/stream/ANarrativeOfTheLifeOfMrs.CharlotteCharkeYoungestDaughterOfColley/A\\_narrative\\_of\\_the\\_life\\_of\\_Mrs\\_Charlotte\\_Charke\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/ANarrativeOfTheLifeOfMrs.CharlotteCharkeYoungestDaughterOfColley/A_narrative_of_the_life_of_Mrs_Charlotte_Charke_djvu.txt)
- xii John Radclyffe Hall to Evgenia Souline, August 17th 1934, in *Your John: The Love Letters of Radclyffe Hall*, ed. Joanne Glasgow, 49-52. Hall's description of herself as a 'congenital invert' reveals the influence of the sexological theories of Havelock Ellis.
- xiii 'Tremendous' progress in the context of there having previously been no progress at all. Paris Lees (UK journalist and transwoman) has appeared several times on Question Time, BBC TV, between October 31, 2013 and the present day. Sophia Burslet (fictional character in *Orange is the New Black*.) was named in December as one of the top 5 most important fictional characters of 2013. On Oct 9, 2015, it was announced that a transmale actor, Riley Carter Millington, would be joining the cast of *Eastenders* to play a young transgender man. Also in 2015 Rebecca Root and Bethany Black (both transwomen) have had regular roles in the sitcom *Boy Meets Girl* and the LGBT dramas *Cucumber* and *Banana*. Both roles were of transwomen. Root has also previously played cisgender female roles.
- xiv As one reader puts it: "At the moment I'm seriously pissed off at the young adult fantasy writer Maria V. Snyder, who came so close to creating a truly awesome FTM trans character in her "Study" series, only to mess it all up in the sequels. She says she originally conceived the character simply as a man who fulfils a certain role; the idea that he has a female body came to her later. Unfortunately, ordinary trans people aren't allowed in her universe, so she had to tack on a stupid and contrived "possessed by someone else's soul" retcon. I have never literally thrown a book across the room, but this time I came VERY close." <http://skepchick.org/2012/01/13-myths-and-misconceptions-about-trans-women-part-one/> Comments:ParanoidAndroid.
- xv Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*, (Fourth Estate, 2002)



xvi Eugenides, Readers Book Club, The Guardian, Friday 2 December 2011.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/dec/02/jeffrey-eugenides-middlesex-book-club>

James Gibbons, Interview with Jeffrey Eugenides, The Paris Review 2013 "The Art of Fiction" No. 215  
<http://bombmagazine.org/article/2519/jeffrey-eugenides>

xvii Gibbons, *ibid*.

xviii Halberstam, Judith, "A Writer of Misfits: John Radclyffe Hall and the Discourse of Inversion" in *Female Masculinity*, (Duke University Press, 1998) p87

xix See: Faderman, Lilian *Surpassing the Love of Men* pp322-333. See also Skinner, Shelly, "The House in Order" *Lesbian Identity and The Well of Loneliness* ( Womens' Studies 23, 1994) pp19-33.

XX Transgender people, according to the DSMV in the USA and NHS guidelines in the UK, are currently to be diagnosed with 'gender dysphoria'. This diagnosis, which replaces the older 'transsexuality', still stigmatises gender identity as an illness and consequently places the keys to gender transition in the hands of - typically cisgender - medical professionals rather than those of the individual concerned. Many modern countries will not allow a transgender individual to live legally in their identified gender unless they have undergone some form of medical gender reassignment. In the most extreme cases (where transition is possible at all) sterilisation and surgery is demanded. In 2013 the UN condemned this requirement as an abuse of human rights and, thankfully, some countries are now abandoning it.

A list of the criteria according to which gender dysphoria may currently be diagnosed can be found here:  
<http://www.news-medical.net/health/Diagnosis-of-Gender-Dysphoria.aspx>

XXi A representative series of plates of 18th Century pornography showing bodies at least partially clothed can be found in: Gatrell, Vic: *City of Laughter; Sex and Satire in 18th Century London* (Walker, 2007)

See also: Peakman, Julie, *Mighty Lewd Books* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) *Lascivious Bodies* (Atlantic, 2005) for further discussion of 18th Century pornography. For discussion of 18th Century diagnostic practises see: Porter, Roy, "The Enlightenment" in *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (HarperCollins, 1997) pp256-58

XXii See for example: <http://frenchculture.org/visual-and-performing-arts/interviews/interview-denis-bruna-curator-fashion-and-fabrics-french>  
and also: <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter12/deportment.cfm>

xxiii"Examples of both men and womens' fashions can be found in the V&A museum  
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/0-9/18th-century-fashion/>

xxiv Statistic from: Transgender murder project, part of Transgender Europe, [www.tgeu.org](http://www.tgeu.org)

xxv 'Gay', which had the primary historic meaning of 'carefree' has been resignified almost by accident. The word 'gay' meaning homosexual, came to us via its previous additional meanings of "addicted to social pleasures" and 'rakish man' via both twentieth century homosexual slang and the the 1960s back formed acronym 'G.A.Y.' which stood for "good as you". This 'backronym' is now often assumed to be the origin of the modern term. [www.oed.com/view/Entry/77207](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77207)

xxvi Wolf, Jack, *Rainbow*, unpublished PhD novel. 2014 p39

xxvii Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter*, (Routledge, 1993) p82, p171

xxviii See for example: Bornstein, Kate *Gender Outlaw* (Routledge, 1994); Taste This Collective, *Boys Like Her* (Raincoast Books, 2002); Valerio, Max Wolf *The Testosterone Files* (Seal Press, 2006); Krieger, Nick *Nina Here nor There: My Journey Beyond Gender* (Beacon Press, 2011)

xxix For instance, after Caitlin Jenner's transition, the New York Times carried five op-ed pieces by cisgender women, and not one by a transwoman. This was not for want of submissions: see <https://medium.com/gender-2-0/i-m-a-trans-woman-here-s-my-rejected-new-york-times-op-ed-on-caitlyn-jenner-305fef19cbc4>

xxx Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Virago Modern Classics Edition, (Virago Press, 1982) p187

xxxi Halberstam, Judith, *op cit* ; Newton, Esther, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the new Woman" (1984) pp557-575; De Laurentis, Theresa, "Perverse Desire: The Lure of the Mannish Lesbian" (1991) pp110-125 ; both in: Doan and Prosser (eds) *Palatable Poison, Critical Perspectives on The Well of Loneliness* (Columbia UP, 2002)

xxxii Prosser, Jay: "Some Primitive Thing Conceived in a Turbulent Age of Transition: The Invert, *The Well of Loneliness*, and the Narrative Origins of Transsexuality" in *Second Skins, the Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (Columbia University Press, 1998) p159

xxxiii Halberstam, *op cit*, p106

xxxiv Halberstam, *ibid* p106.

xxxv It is questionable to what extent any body part truly signifies any gender; but I am using 'female' here according to the 'common sense' meaning of the word.

xxxvi Wolf, *Rainbow* p116

xxxvii While negotiating with a potential publisher regarding *Rainbow* I was asked to justify the

presence of a transgender character within the narrative. Why have a trans character in this role, I was asked, when a cisgender character will suffice? Trans characters in fiction are still perceived as so completely other (as trans-people have been in real life) that their inclusion, unless the storyline specifically calls for it, can be seen as a potential publishing problem.

xxxviii Cal possesses an intersex condition called 5-ARD [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5-alpha-reductase\\_deficiency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5-alpha-reductase_deficiency)

xxxix Intersex, which is a physiological situation, is not the same as transgender, which is psychological. It is possible for an intersex person to identify with any gender position on the spectrum, including intersex itself.

xl Gibbons, interview with Eugenides, op cit.

xli Jonathan Safran Froer, interview with Eugenides, op cit.

xlii Koch-Rein, Ann "Intersexuality - in the 'I' of the norm? Queer field notes from Eugenides *Middlesex* in Haschemi and Michaelis (eds) *Quer durch die Geisteswissenschaften* (Berlin, Querverlag) pp238-52

xliii Hsu, Stephanie, "Ethnicity and the Biopolitics of Intersex in Eugenides *Middlesex*" in *MELUS, Volume 36, no 3, Fall 2011*. pp 87-110. available at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/melus/v036/36.3.hsu.html>

xliv Carroll, Rachel "Retrospective Sex: Rewriting Intersexuality in Jeffrey Eugenides *Middlesex*" *Journal of American Studies*, 44 (1) pp187-201 available at: <http://tees.openrepository.com/tees/bitstream/10149/96394/2/96394.pdf>

xlv Graham, Sarah, "See synonyms at Monster; en-freaking transgender in Jeffrey Eugenides *Middlesex*" *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 40, no4, (Sept 2010) available at: <http://www.ariel.ucalgary.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/view/4048>

xlvi Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p1

xlvii "I grew tall. My voice matured. But nothing seemed unnatural. My slight build, my thin waist, the smallness of my head, hands and feet raised no questions in anybody's mind. Many genetic males raised as girls don't blend in so easily. From an early age they look different, move differently, they can't find shoes or gloves that fit. Other kids call them tomboys or worse: ape women, gorillas." p303-4. As well as being untrue, this passage strikes me as staggeringly transphobic.

xlviii "My early girlhood passed, on film or otherwise. I was brought up as a girl and had no doubts about this." *Middlesex*, p226 "The beauty I possessed as a baby only increased as I grew into a girl. It was no surprise why Clementine Stark had wanted to practise kissing with me [...] For hours at a time I would admire my looks myself, turning this way and that before the mirror, or assuming a relaxed pose to see what I looked like in real life. By holding a hand mirror I could see my profile, still harmonious at the time. I combed my long hair and sometimes stole my mother's mascara to do my eyes." *Middlesex* p278

xlix *Middlesex*, p375 The basis on which Callie concludes this is also highly suspect: pain on losing virginity is far from rare, and I have never heard of any woman who has come seriously to question her physical sex as a result of it. p375

l *Middlesex*, p421

li Dr John Money was the gender specialist responsible for the forced transition of one of a pair of twin boys who lost his penis at 8 months of age during a botched circumcision. Money saw this as a chance to prove his theory that gender is entirely socially constructed. He advised the parents to bring the child up as a girl and never reveal the truth to him. The experiment ended tragically as the child (who had already been a boy for 22 months at the time of transition) could not adjust to a female identity and always 'felt male'. Eventually he found out the truth and de-transitioned. He later committed suicide. Adherents of biological essentialism often cite this case as proof that gender is innate and unresponsive to upbringing. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Money](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Money)

lii *Middlesex*, p526

liii Eugenides, 2003. <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2519/jeffrey-eugenides>

liv *Middlesex*, p529

lv Eugenides, Readers Book Club, The Guardian, Friday 2 December 2011 22.55 GMT

lvi <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2187.Middlesex>

lvii Julianne Imperato McGinley "The prevalence of 5alpha reductase deficiency in children with ambiguous genitalia in the Dominican Republic" *Journal of Urology*, 11, 1986. 136/4 pp867-73. Available at: [http://www.researchgate.net/publication/19666181\\_The\\_prevalence\\_of\\_5\\_alpha-reductase\\_deficiency\\_in\\_children\\_with\\_ambiguous\\_genitalia\\_in\\_the\\_Dominican\\_Republic](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/19666181_The_prevalence_of_5_alpha-reductase_deficiency_in_children_with_ambiguous_genitalia_in_the_Dominican_Republic)

lviii Gibbons, op cit

lix "All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves .... Transsexuals merely cut off the most obvious means of invading women, so that they seem non-invasive." Raymond, Janice, *The Transsexual Empire*, (Beacon Press, 1979) p104

lx <http://www.cheryl-morgan.com/?p=17908>

lxi *Middlesex*, p304

lxii <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/06/florida-bill-crime-transgender-restroom>  
<http://lexiecanes.com/2015/04/22/nevada-bathroom-bill-fails-california-style-anti-trans-ballot-petition-possible/>

lxiii See for example: Dar-Nimrod, Ilan, Heine, Stephen J. "Genetic Essentialism; on the deceptive determinism of DNA" *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 137 (5) Sept 2011 pp 800-818  
<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26572-largest-study-of-gay-brothers-homes-in-on-gay-genes.html#.VWXgmqYuNS8> and in the same publication  
[http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22429963.700-gay-gene-discovery-has-good-and-bad-implications.html#.VWXj\\_6YuNS8](http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22429963.700-gay-gene-discovery-has-good-and-bad-implications.html#.VWXj_6YuNS8)

Swaab, D.F. "Sexual differentiation of the human brain: relevance for gender identity, transsexualism and sexual orientation" (*Gynecol Endocrinol*, 2004; 19: 301-312) available at:  
<http://postcog.ucd.ie/files/Schwaab.pdf>  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7689007.stm>

Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender*. (Icon Books, 2010) Chapter 11, pp118-130 are particularly interesting in a transgender or intersex context.

Scientific research into a variety of intersex conditions calls into question the methodology of assigning gender on the basis of physiological sex differences: <http://www.nature.com/news/sex-redefined-1.16943> February 2015.

lxiv See Feinburg, Leslie, *Stone Butch Blues* (Alysson Books, 1993) for a chilling depiction of anti-butcht prejudice in pre-1970s USA.

lxv <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-32037397>  
<http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/transgender.html>  
<http://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-transgender-kids-gender-identity.html>

It is hard to find either academic studies or popular news stories dealing with transsexuality whose subjects do not claim an identification with their desired sex from early childhood, although some papers allow that transpeople may only 'come out' in adolescence or later. Such early identification is not my experience. I suspect this may be in part because of a developing narrative which expects trans people to have had such experience and ignores contradictory evidence, but to investigate this is beyond the remit of this study.

lxvi Tremain, Rose, *Sacred Country*, (Vintage, 1992) p129

lxvii I have been told by medical professionals that some transgender children do, in fact, grow up to have a non-trans identity after puberty. This may, however, simply mean that they do not present for treatment as expected.

lxviii Brauner, D, "No Man's Land: the Transgendered Voice in Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*" in Kim R. and Westall C (eds) *Cross Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing* (Palgrave Macmillan) pp 148-163 (p156)

lxix *Sacred Country*, p199

lxx *ibid*, p200

lxxi *ibid* p259

lxxii *ibid*, pp117-8

lxxiii *ibid*, p116

lxxiv See for example: Bieber, Irving, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals* (Basic Books, 1962)

lxxv *Rainbow*, p21

lxxvi *ibid* pp332-334

lxxvii *Sacred Country*, p118

lxxviii Prosser, *Second Skins*, pp140-155

lxxix This can be useful - most medical practitioners (in my experience and that of other transpeople I know) take no interest in gender theory, and presenting at a clinic with a transgender narrative that ticks the 'wrong body' box is a proven method of obtaining medical co-operation.

lxxx *Rainbow*, p36

lxxxi Also, typically, middle class, and male - although this depends on genre and the gender profile of the novel's expected readership. Literary novels featuring (and written by) men are still considered somehow more 'serious' than those written by and about women, although the existence of prizes specifically for women is challenging this. Since 1996 there have been twelve male winners of the Booker prize and seven female. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/10/baileys-womens-prize-for-fiction-longlist-shami-chakrabarti>

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### ***Other Acknowledgements***

Many thanks to Tracy Brain and Gerard Woodward for their ongoing critical support; to Cheryl Morgan and Jennie Kermode (among others) of Trans Media Watch for their particular perspectives on Eugenides; finally to those Priestesses and other UK based followers of Santeria and Voudoun who have asked to remain anonymous, but whose input was essential to the writing of *Rainbow*.

This PhD was funded by a grant from AHRC.