Trans Forms:
Gender-Variant Subjectivity
and First-Person Narration

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ABSTRACT

My thesis argues for the 'gender-variant' narrator as a key figure in contemporary Anglophone literature. I examine first-person narratives from the past five decades in a range of genres (memoir, literary fiction, science fiction, historical fiction) that explore gender identities that are other than binary or fixed. The purposes and impacts of these narratives vary according to their different engagement with feminist, queer and trans theory and activism. These differences can be ultimately read in the formal choices (uses of temporality, pronouns, metaphors, focalisation, description, etc.) of the texts representing gender-variant narrators. Throughout the thesis, I establish a methodology at the intersection of studies of narrative form and studies of trans and non-binary gender identity. In Chapter One, I develop two key concepts as part of this methodology: trans-inhabitation and re-narration. Trans-inhabitation builds on theorisations of gender as space in trans, queer and feminist theory and on narratological understandings of metaphor: it designates an inhabitation of gender categories that is successive, multiple and/or in between, and I argue that gender-variant narrators trans-inhabit genders and texts. Re-narration designates the way in which narratives of gender variance exist in tension with canonical plots of transition, disrupting them and reconfiguring them. In Chapters Two to Six, I test this methodology on a range of contemporary texts with gender-variant narrators. My conclusion summarises what has emerged from these readings in relation to the politically and textually resonant concepts of 'visibility' and 'voice' and argues for an examination of metaphors of time and space that does not only apply to gender in an abstract manner but considers the geographical realities of borders, homes and inhabitations.

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INTRODUCTION

> For example, once when my father started telling a story about a memory of me as a child, he said: "When Jake was a little boy—I mean a little girl—I mean a little child—he—I mean she—I mean—I don't know what I mean!" There he broke off. My father was right to be frustrated, for there are no available grammatical structures with which he could compose one sentence that referred to me both as a girl child and as an adult man [….] The linguistic problem is deeper than temporality: representations of me as a stably gendered girl child (or boy child) or as a stably gendered adult man (or adult woman) would all be false. Structurally, insertion into language—therefore, into social ontology—requires gendered stability both over time and at any given time that some of us lack.
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> ~ Jacob Hale, 'Tracing a Ghostly Memory in My Throat: Reflections on Ftm Feminist Voice and Agency' (2009)

On 7 September 2021, an interview with Judith Butler by queer historian Jules Joanne Gleeson was published in the *Guardian*. The interview presents Butler's reflections on the notion of gender as it was conceived in their early work and as it circulates in today's political landscape. On the same day, a section of the interview was removed by the website. As many were quick to point out on social media, the omitted question and answer featured Butler's denunciation of the "very appalling and sometimes quite frightening" circumstances in which "trans-exclusionary feminists have allied with rightwing attacks on gender" (Butler, *Ill Will*). As Butler explains in the removed answer, "trans exclusionary radical feminists" and "so-called gender critical writers", in failing to oppose ideologies according to which "sex is biological and real" and "gender is a destructive fiction", fail to oppose fascistic thought. Trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) and gender critical feminists are terms currently used to describe those who deny the rights (and sometimes the existence) of trans individuals, invalidating their claims to their gender by resorting to fixed definitions of man and woman tied to biological understandings of sex. When embraced by 'feminists', this attitude styles itself as a defence of women from a perceived erasure of their struggles, which is supposed to be caused by language and policies that are inclusive to trans individuals, and by

reflections on the flexibility and culturally constructed status of gender categories.[1] While the *Guardian* has claimed that the removal of the answer was not an attempt to censor Butler's criticism of these views,[2] the episode has gained traction as an example of how TERF ideologies are increasingly accepted in mainstream British discourse, and how criticism of these ideologies is subject to silencing. We are at a historical moment in which gender identities that are other than binary or fixed have become an integral part of academic and popular conversations in the Anglophone world, while the basic rights of gender-variant individuals have not yet been fully secured and are continually up for debate. In it is this context that discussing, as I do in this thesis, how gender-variant subjectivities are articulated in narrative forms, and how these narratives circulate in different social milieus, becomes a pressing matter.

The need to recognise and value genders that are other than binary and fixed is expressed by Butler in a section of the interview that was not redacted. They argue that "securing greater freedoms for women requires that we rethink the category of 'women' to include those new possibilities", and therefore that "we should not be surprised or opposed when the category of women expands to include trans women" (*The Guardian*). Expansions and resignifications of identity categories are precisely what TERFs aim to prevent, and what the texts I discuss in this thesis strive to achieve. The simultaneous visibility and erasure of genders that are other than binary or fixed needs to be urgently addressed in order to secure futures and freedoms for groups that are targeted by violence and marginalisation. In order to examine the narratives that have been produced over the past few decades by and about gender-variant subjects, a methodology is needed that draws both on the resources of narrative studies – especially as it attends to how narrative is produced

[1] Examples of these views can be found on the websites for trans-exclusionary organisations such as A Woman's Place UK, Fair Play for Women and the Lesbian Rights Alliance, and in the work of gender critical feminists such as Kathleen Stock.

[2] A footnote appended to the *Guardian* interview clarifies that the section was "removed by editors because the interview and preparation of the article for publication occurred before new facts emerged regarding an incident at Wi Spa in Los Angeles" – an incident illustrating the alliance of TERF and far right groups against trans-inclusive policies which was not mentioned in the question to which Butler was responding. In a statement to *Pink News*, the interviewer explains that, when she was notified that the question had to be redacted as it made references to what are considered active legal proceedings, she was "happy" for the question to be "revised or removed" but she "could not endorse removing Judith Butler's answer" (Wakefield). Further details about the Wi Spa case can be found in this article. The fact that Butler's answer, which did not mention the incident at all, was removed as well can be seen as indicating that the newspaper may have taken objection to the views expressed in it.

about, and has an impact on, real-life identities and power relations – and the insights of trans studies – a field that theorises the self, politics and ethics from the lived experiences of gender-variant folks. This thesis proposes and tests a methodology at the intersection of these two fields – feminist/queer narrative studies and trans studies – in order to read formal textual choices, such as the uses of temporality, pronouns, metaphors, focalisation, and the relationship between description and omission, in relation to gender variance. At the same time, I make a case for the 'gender-variant narrator' as a key figure in Anglophone contemporary literature, one whose characteristics express and negotiate the positioning of gender-variant subjects in the social world.

Contemporary trans scholars note that visibility of genders that are other than binary or fixed is a double-edged sword or, as it is called in an influential collection in the field, a *Trap Door* (2017). Introducing this collection as a trans of colour critique of cultural visibility, Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley and Johanna Burton explain "the paradox of trans representation": "trans people are offered many "doors"—entrances to visibility, to resources, to recognition, and to understanding" but "these doors are almost always also 'traps'—accommodating trans bodies, histories, and culture only insofar as they can be forced to hew to hegemonic modalities" (xxiii). As (some) trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming individuals are increasingly accepted in mainstream culture, misunderstanding and violence show no sign of abating. An example is the backlash to the proposed 2017 reform of the UK Gender Recognition Act (GRA), which would involve allowing individuals to change sex on their birth certificate via self-determination rather than through medical diagnoses. As part of this backlash, women's organisations such as A Woman's Place UK, Fair Play For Women, and the Lesbian Rights Alliance have renewed efforts to invalidate the identity of gender-variant individuals (especially trans women) and restrict their rights. Attacks on the existence, freedom and safety of gender-variant subjects arise daily in the media in relation to a number of issues, such as the presence of the first trans athlete in the Olympics, the implications of the judgement on the *Bell v. Tavistock* case (with the British High Court restricting the ability of young people under sixteen years old to consent to puberty blocker treatments for gender dysphoria), and the work of trans scholars, artists and activists around the world who are on the receiving

end of vitriolic harassment on social media and physical harm on the street.[3] Given this context, the representation of gender in literature needs to be analysed with the understanding that being visible does not put an end to, and can indeed exacerbate, the struggles faced by trans subjects.

The situation that I have briefly outlined so far makes clear that the topic of gender-variant identity requires an examination in a transnational context. The texts I discuss in this thesis respond to – and generate responses from – a Western Anglophone tradition of feminist, queer and trans theories and practices, and the hetero-patriarchal systems they critique. Indeed, I deal with Anglophone literature from countries whose hegemonic political structures and epistemologies in relation to gender and identity have become a global paradigm – mainly the US and the UK. This allows me to consider the negotiation between dominant modes of understanding time, the self, gender and the social world, and possible resistant paths articulated from within the same culture. Without wishing to conflate a North American and a European (mainly British) context, it is important to note that the visibility of gender-variant individuals has followed comparable, and entwined, directions. In the 1950s, the sensationalist reporting of cases of 'sex change', such as with Christine Jorgensen and Michael Dillon, received international attention, and, in the 1960s, networks and communities for transsexual and crossdressing people began to form in parallel in the UK and the US, such as the American subscribers to Virginia Prince's *Transvestia* magazine and the British 'Beaumont Society' (Burns, 'Introduction', 11).[4] Over the course of the twentieth century, media representation, pre-digital communities, and the influence of sexological and psychopathological models (from Magnus Hirschfeld's early gender-affirming surgeries to Harry Benjamin's treatments for 'transsexuality') shaped articulations of gender variance that remain in

[3] A summary of the transphobic objections raised in relation to the inclusion of a trans woman in the Olympics can be found in Kelleher. These objections centre once again on policing the boundaries of the category of 'woman'. The full judgement of the *Bell v. Tavistock* case can be found on the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website (*passim*).

[4] While not the first person to undergo gender confirmation surgery, American trans woman Christine Jorgensen is arguably the first 'transsexual' to become widely known as one: she gained the status of an international celebrity after her 'sex change' was the object of a front-page story on the New York Daily News in December 1952. Michael Dillon was a British trans man who underwent mastectomy and genital surgery in the 1940s and managed to change his birth certificate – he was outed in the press in 1958 (Burns, 'Introduction', 17).

operation today.[5] The field of trans studies defines itself in relation – and partly in opposition – to these established models, and my methodology is designed to uncover and unpack the continual acts of drawing on, reworking and critiquing epistemological frameworks through which gender variance has been understood in the past.

Trans studies aims to break with sensationalist media language, popular narratives on which gender-variant individuals have learned to model themselves, and the upholding of medical sciences as "the dominant mode of trans coherence and intelligibility" (Stryker and Aizura, 2).The emergence of the term transgender, in the early 1990s, and the political and academic activity around what it designated, is linked to a critique of the term 'transsexual', a word linked to the medicalisation and pathologisation of gender variance. A pamphlet by Leslie Feinberg, 'Transgender Liberation' (1992), is credited with having popularised the use of 'transgender'. For Feinberg, transsexual, as well as terms such as "transvestites" or "androgynes" are names that gender-variant subjects "didn't choose" and, they argue, "don't fit all of us" (5). The emphasis on choosing one's own language and on not fitting assigned labels introduces a primary concern of my thesis: the extent to which gender-variant subjects can say 'I' and thereby articulate a discourse about themselves. In the pamphlet, Feinberg identifies "a community [that] has begun to emerge": this is the "transgender community", comprised of a "diverse group of people who define ourselves in many different ways" but are above all "demanding the right to choose our own self-definitions" (6). At the same time, Sandy Stone's 'The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto' had begun to circulate in academic circles. In Chapter One, I take Stone's 'Manifesto' as a starting point to outline the issues that lie at the foundation of trans studies as a discipline, which hinge precisely on the link between

[5] Magnus Hirschfeld was a physician and sexologist operating in Germany in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In *Die Transvenstiten* (1910), he coined the term transvestite to refer to individuals whose wellbeing is dependent on wearing clothes associated with a sex different from the one they have been assigned at birth – a term that encompassed what we would now call cross-dressers but also trans individuals – and collected first-person accounts from his patients, the narrative structure of which contributes to the canonical models of transness that I discuss in Chapter One. His treatment of patients in this category was focused on affirming their gender rather than on dissuading them from presenting as they wished. Decades later, American sexologist Harry Benjamin published *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), arguing for hormone replacement therapy and surgery as treatment for patients whose gender identity does not match the one that is associated with the sex that is assigned to them. As I discuss in Chapter One, Benjamin's book contributed to creating norms that still regulate the way in which trans identity is understood – namely, as a being born 'in the wrong body', desiring an 'opposite' sex or gender, and conceiving of the latter according to a heteronormative framework.

narrative and identity that characterises my methodology. My reading of Stone draws out the already existing overlaps between trans studies and analyses of narrative form. The "insertion into language" of those who are not "stably gendered", which Hale mentions in the epigraph (53), is a problem that can be addressed by attending to the effects of linguistic and narrative features like plots, temporalities, metaphors and syntactic organisations.

Given that labels and definitions are central to the inception of trans studies, it is important to outline the terms I have chosen. In this thesis, *gender-variant* is the umbrella term I use for gender identities that are other than binary or fixed. When these identities are those of individuals, I sometimes specify them further as trans, non-binary, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, etc. (or, in Chapter Six, intersex, for which I provide a longer explanation). When I refer to the narrator of a text, gender-variant also encompasses non-gendered or difficult-to-gender speaking positions. At the same time, I also use *trans* as an umbrella term, especially when gender-variant identities are articulated in relation to trans studies. As I outline in Chapter One, 'trans', as the object of trans studies, is variously understood as a specific identity label, a verb, a generalised prefix, and more. Therefore, while *gender-variant* and *trans* in this thesis mean almost the same thing (which is a gender other than binary or fixed, though this too is an imperfect definition), *trans* is used for its specific resonances with theoretical frameworks I discuss, and *gender-variant* is used as the broadest possible umbrella term – since *trans* can also designate a specific identity distinct from other gender-variant ones. As will become clear, the hazy boundaries of these terms are integral to any discussion of gender-variant representation. Finally, it is important to clarify that, as a white cis (non-trans) scholar, I do not enter into debates about what constitutes transness, what trans studies' aims should be, what concrete steps are best to take to ensure justice for gender-variant subjects, and how to most effectively resist the systemic racism that is inextricably linked to the oppression of gender-variant subjects.[6] On these matters, I defer to trans, non-binary and intersex scholars and writers. My intervention here is about narrative: I am interested in theorising what narratives do with gender-variant identity, what gender-

[6] As C. Riley Snorton argues, "the condensation of transness into the category of transgender is a racial narrative": racialisation and gendering are intimately connected (8).

variant identities do to narrative, and what analytical tools can be developed from the insights of trans studies in order to analyse narrative.

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, the visibility of gender-variant identities has made available alternative models of gendered experience to the ones critiqued by Stone and Feinberg thirty years ago, but has, at the same time, created new forms of trans normativity, making certain identities, embodiments and lives intelligible at the expense of others. In the introduction of the *Transgender Studies Reader 2* (2013) the editors note that trans is no longer "an obscure, minor, exotic or emergent topic" (Stryker and Aizura, 2). After an initial focus of trans studies on autoethnographic work and attention to autobiographical narratives as necessary to gain a speaking position, what Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura call a "second iteration of the field" has taken place (3). Under conditions of increased surveillance and anxiety around borders (both issues that, as I argue, are relevant to understandings of the gendered body), "new imperatives and opportunities for 'transgender normativity' have taken shape that secure citizenship for some trans bodies at the expense of others" (3). These academic discussions – alongside the popular discourse with which I have begun the Introduction – have developed alongside the emergence of new literature by gender-variant authors, who continue to insist on the multiplicity of ways in which identity, desire, politics, history, and care are negotiated from the viewpoint of queer, trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming communities. Some of this literature is considered in detail in my thesis chapters, but I have also included other examples in my chapter epigraphs. While the emergence of the fictional, autofictional or autobiographical gender-variant narrator in texts *by* gender-variant authors who are reworking pre-1990s models of identity is a central focus of the thesis, I also include texts by authors who are not (or are not known as) gender-variant but are similarly influenced by the increased presence of trans, non-binary and intersex identities in popular discourse over the same time period.[7]

The purpose of bringing these narratives together, while paying attention to their different contexts of production and reception, is to find patterns and common strategies for describing gender that is other than binary or fixed, and to examine how these

[7] In Chapter One, I go into detail about what these pre-1990s models of gender identity entail. Two texts I discuss in Chapter Five are published before 1990, and I provide an explanation there for their inclusion.

patterns and strategies contribute to doing justice or harm to subjects outside of texts. In Chapter One, I outline how feminist narratology is a key theoretical approach on which I build precisely because it shares these aims. In turn, feminist narratology defines itself in relation to the structuralist analysis of narrative developed in Europe and North America in the 1960s and 70s. Early narratology aimed to create comprehensive taxonomies of categories and systems of combinations which could be used to describe all narratives regardless of their socio-historical and ideological context – such as Algirdas Greimas' six actants and their possible relations as predicting the types of action that can occur in narrative, or Gérard Genette's categories of order, duration and frequency, whose finite number of variations would describe narrative temporality.[8] As Jonathan Culler puts it, there is in this period a search for a "poetics" that "would not seek to explain what individual works mean but would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do" (8). Feminist narratology moved away from a search for universals that would describe narrative in the way that grammar describes language, but still uses some of the descriptive vocabulary and systems of distinction developed in this structuralist phase, since, as Susan S. Lanser argues, "[t]he comprehensiveness and care with which narratology makes distinctions can provide invaluable methods for textual analysis" ('Toward', 346). Like other contemporary approaches that examine what narrative form *does* for real subjects and, in turn, how social and political contexts shape narrative form, I argue in this thesis that lived experiences of gender variance can be put into conversation with how narratology thinks of narratorial acts such as constructing a temporality, representing the narrator's body, presenting the narrating voice as a unified consciousness, revealing or withholding knowledge.

As I discuss how gender-variant identity is negotiated in narrative, I focus specifically on first-person narration. What I call here 'first person' is defined by Genette in more precise

[8] I discuss Genette more in detail in Chapter One. The term *narratologie* was coined in 1969 by Tzvetan Todorov to designate a (yet to be developed) *"science du récit"* (science of narrative) (10). The emergence of narratology is associated with a set of methodologies and techniques for analysing narratives developed by such semioticians and literary critics as Todorov, Genette, Greimas and Roland Barthes (in France) and Culler, Seymour Chatman, Wayne Booth and Gerald Prince (in the United States). The structural anthropology of Claude Lévi Strauss and the structural linguistic of Ferdinand de Saussure have strongly influenced the formation of this field, as they attend to, respectively, myths and language in order to uncover a deep universal structure that underlies all of their individual instances (Meister, par.35).

terms as a category of narrator based on the notion of diegetic levels. Once narrative is perceived to be made up of diegetic levels, "an event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed" (*Discourse*, 228). Therefore, every act of narration creates an extra level (a sort of 'story container'), distinct from the one in which the narrator exists. Through the spatialisation of narrative levels, Genette develops the distinction between "heterodiegetic" narrator – "absent from the story he [*sic*] tells" (244) and "homodiegetic" – "present in" the story (245).[9] While a narrator will always be extradiegetic (be 'outside' the story they tell), they can, when homodiegetic, exist in a second capacity as character, 'inside' the story they tell. Therefore, homodiegetic narrators straddle two diegetic levels, being both narrator and character. In the context of my project, which focuses on the extent to which subjects can cross the boundaries between categories, this becomes relevant as it can correlate, for instance, with the capacity of gender-variant subjects to exist in multiple gender categories, just as a homodiegetic narrator inhabits two diegetic levels. Despite the precision of these categories, throughout the thesis (and in its title) I still use the term 'first person'. This may seem counterintuitive or inaccurate, as Genette explains: "Insofar as the narrator can at any instant intervene […] in the narrative, every narrating is, by definition, to all intents and purposes presented in the first person" (244, emphasis in original). At the same time as any narrator can always say 'I', they are also technically always narrating in the third person when telling a story about someone else. However, the reason why I primarily keep the term first person (while occasionally employing Genette's terminology when the discussion requires fine-grained distinctions) has to do with the resonance that its component words – 'first' and 'person' – have in relation to the struggle of marginalised subjects to gain the right to speak *before* others on what concerns them, and the recognition of their personhood when faced with dehumanisation.

This resonance can be seen, for instance, in trans scholar Talia Mae Bettcher's argument that "trans politics ought to proceed with the principle that transpeople have *first-person authority* (FPA) over their own gender" ('First Person Authority', 98; emphasis in

[9] Genette's term for a homodiegetic narrator who is the "hero of his narrative" is "autodiegetic" (*Discourse*, 245). This type of narrator characterises the texts I discuss, though the inadequacy of the term "hero" will become clear – not least because Genette takes it for granted as masculine.

original). With the term 'first-person authority', Bettcher designates the situation in which an individual's statements about themself occupy "a superior epistemic position" than those of another person about them (100). The ethical and political necessity of granting gender-variant subjects first-person authority will become clear over the course of the thesis, as I address contexts in which these subjects have been violently dispossessed of it. As Bettcher explains, "[t]ranspeople have been historically relegated to objects of investigation, where any capacity to avow has been disabled under the socially recognized authority of the medical scientist" (114). The *capacity to avow* as narrator, then – to speak *first* about one's *person* – becomes a way in which, through narrative, the gender-variant subject has the opportunity to redresses an unjust situation. Despite any questioning that may arise as to the extent to which a narrator is a 'person' and narrating constitutes 'speaking', the textual constructs that say 'I' in the texts I consider in this thesis function insofar as they resemble speaking people – speaking people belonging to groups whose capacity to speak and whose status as people is continually denied.

Together with its capacity to define 'someone', I am also greatly interested in the 'I' for an ostensibly antithetical reason: the slipperiness of the object it designates. As a deictic word, the referent of *I* is dependent on context, and in first-person narratives it is a double one: the narrator (in a statement like '*I*'m telling you a story') and its counterpart as character in the diegetic level where this story takes place ('I'm telling you that *I* was standing on that street'). Monica Fludernik suggests that, in first-person narratives, "the barrier between the diegetic and extradiegetic levels is already porous" ('Category of "Person"', 122). The capacity of *I* to exist in between diegetic levels (designating simultaneously the narrator and 'what' they narrate), to cross barriers, to be multiple, is crucial in an analysis of identities that challenge normative categorisations that are indeed, as I argue in Chapter One, conceived in these same terms. Moreover, the pronoun I is also not gendered, which in English is not the case for third-person pronouns.[10] Therefore, it offers a solution to the problem outlined by Hale in the epigraph to this

[10] This is different from languages like Finnish, which has only gender-neutral pronouns and does not mark gender in its grammar. Most Romance languages have feminine and masculine gender markers for pronouns, nouns, adjectives, determiners, and demonstratives. English *can* avoid marking the gender of a speaker if it sticks to the first person, but must make a choice with third-person pronouns (they/them now also constituting one of these choices).

Introduction, allowing for "a sentence that refer[s] to me both as a girl child and as an adult man", and as someone who is not a "stably gendered girl child (or boy child) or […] a stably gendered adult man (or adult woman)" (53).[11] Both as regards narrative and as regards gender, the I has the capacity to exist ambiguously, to cross the borders that order language and identity, and to designate multiple selves. Narratives that articulate gender-variant subjectivities therefore have specific investments in the first person, as it is entangled with particular ways, which I unpack throughout the thesis, of conceiving of gender, the self, hierarchies, and collectivities.

While the suspension of the character/narrator's gender is a central reason why I focus on the I in the thesis, in referring to narrators while I write I have to necessarily use the third person, thereby fixing their gender to some extent. For authors, I have used, to the best of my knowledge, their pronouns at the time of my writing this thesis, as gleaned from paratextual material. For fictional characters, I have determined the appropriate pronouns from textual cues (other characters referring to them, their avowed gender in dialogue or description), and used my own interpretation of their personal identities as produced by the text. Whenever possible, I have referred to each character with the pronoun corresponding to the narrator's identification. This, to an extent, presupposes that the narrator is the 'most recent' version of the character to whom the I is referring (and therefore that they are narrating retrospectively): if we take this to be the case, their pronouns apply to all statements about themself in the past, mirroring the accepted practice in real-life situations. There are exceptions to this in the thesis, as well as situations in which the narrator may not be considered the most 'current version' of the character, and I have clarified my reasons for selecting certain pronouns wherever these are not evident. For fictional characters whose gender is other than male or female, I use the singular pronoun they/them/themself, for reasons similar to the ones stated by Awkward-Rich: "because it is currently one of the most prevalent self-selected neutral pronouns among trans and gender-nonconforming people" and because it "stresses the multiplicity involved in (trans) identity, allowing for both/and identification, in addition to neither/nor" ('Trans, Feminism', 823). However, since the focus of my project is precisely the flexibility allowed by the first person, my use of the third person will always

[11] Even if my sentence here would require the pronouns in the quotation to be changed to the third person, I leave the 'me' intact to illustrate my point, as I also do at other points in this thesis.

necessarily reduce ambivalence, fluidity, and shifts in relation to the characters' identities. In not choosing to experiment with using 'I/me/mine' as a *third* person pronoun – perhaps the only option that would have allowed its polyvalence to be preserved – I have sacrificed some of this polyvalence for clarity, fitting subjectivities into the imperfect linguistic system that Hale critiques in the epigraph. However, as my argument focuses on gender-variant narrators negotiating how 'successfully' they can, or want to, fit in existing structures, the ambivalent consequences of pinning down with language what partly eludes it are part of these negotiations.

The thesis is comprised of six main chapters. In Chapter One, 'Toward a Trans Narratology', I develop two key concepts as part of my methodology at the intersection of narrative studies and trans studies: *trans-inhabitation* and *re-narration*. Trans-inhabitation builds on theorisations of gender as space in trans, queer, and feminist theory and on narrative understandings of metaphor: it designates an inhabitation of gender categories that is successive, multiple and/or in-between, and I argue that gender-variant narrators trans-inhabit genders and texts. Re-narration designates the way in which narratives of gender variance exist in tension with canonical plots of transition, disrupting them and reconfiguring them. Chapter Two, 'The Autobiographical I', argues that contemporary trans autobiographical writing re-narrates these canonical plots by manipulating narrative order, event selection, genre expectations and temporal elements like beginning, ending and climax, in order to convey identity as a trans-inhabitation of gendered spaces. Narratives by gender-variant authors who use metaphors of ghosts and haunting are the focus of Chapter Three, 'The Haunted I': I examine how these texts critique (through re-narration) metaphors of the body as a home and of transition as a journey, which are prevalent in popular understandings of trans identity, by presenting alternative trans-inhabitations. In Chapter Four, 'The Fluid I', I discuss novels with a narrator whose gender is fluid or unknown, and I claim that this type of narrator trans-inhabits gender and narrative levels through textual omissions of descriptions of the body. Opportunities to imagine human gender variance in ways that can help re-narrate conventional understandings of gendered identity are also offered by science fiction texts that represent aliens whose gender is other than binary or fixed, as I argue in Chapter Five, 'The Alien I'. Finally, Chapter Six – 'The Exposed I' – examines the extent to which gender- and sex-variant bodies are (or are not) described in texts set in historical

moments characterised by the surveillance and policing of these bodies, and considers the ethical and political implications for the representation of marginalised groups. These re-narrations of history reveal trans-inhabitations functioning across time and space.

In the Conclusion, I take up the politically resonant concepts of 'visibility' and 'voice' that have been discussed over the course of the thesis: the extent to which, and the ways in which, gender-variant folks participate in contemporary culture, and are visible/seen and speaking/heard is a central concern in current political and cultural debates. I also argue for an examination of metaphors of space that do not only apply to gender in an abstract manner but consider the geographical realities of borders, homes and belonging, taking my discussion beyond narrative form to the world with which this narrative form always necessarily interacts, building on in and shaping it at the same time. My readings throughout the thesis primarily treat the texts as case studies to test the methodology I establish, but I also trace how each one is shaped by the particular sociohistorical context in which it is produced, defining gender-variant identity in different ways in relation to medical science, feminist commitments, intersectional politics, trans activism, or queer theory. Terms like the 'autobiographical I', 'the fluid I', the 'exposed I', and so on, should not be intended as rigid or comprehensive categories, but rather as modes that can be occur simultaneously in the same text. Contrary to some narratological approaches, these terms are not intended to account for all possible instances of first-person narration, nor do they constitute an exhaustive taxonomy of all types of gender-variant narrators. The case studies I present are meant to expand and challenge existing work on narrative form rather than proposing new universally applicable models. Owing to its structuralist origins, narratology can tend toward making narrative phenomena fit into a finite number of groups as well as making either/or distinctions. However, as will become clear, gender-variant texts effect a disruption of binaries and negotiate the difficulty of fitting within fixed and bounded categories; therefore, the relationship of these narrators to systems of classification is one of careful adoption and partial resistance. The thesis ultimately argues for how theorisations of embodiment, identity and social relations from the field of trans studies can be reconfigured through the language of narrative studies, and therefore makes a crucial intervention in narratology by showing how categories and tools used to analyse narratives can be transformed through a consideration of gender-variant subjects as authors, readers and characters.

CHAPTER ONE

Toward a Trans Narratology

> It's actually a very old archetype that trans girl stories get put into: this sort of tragic, plucky-little-orphan character who is just supposed to suffer through everything and wait, and if you're good and brave and patient (and white and rich) enough, then you get the big reward… which is that you get to be just like everybody else who is white and rich and boring. And then you marry the prince or the football player and live boringly ever after.
>
> ~ Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir* (2016)

This 'very old' narrative outlined by Kai Cheng Tom constitutes a model for trans identity that Thom's own book, as well as many others published in the last three decades, aims to challenge. This popular understanding of genders that are other than binary or fixed is articulated in narrative terms: it has a protagonist (the plucky-little-orphan), a plot (*suffering through everything*) and an ending, after which nothing else happens (living *boringly ever after*). As we identify these narrative elements, however, it is important to unpack their political implications: this story is attainable (or desirable) only for those who are *white and rich* as well as *brave and patient*, and those who are not will find it ill-fitting. This brief example allows me to introduce the central argument of this chapter: literary representations of gender-variant identity require analysis with a methodology at the intersection of trans studies (which provides tools to analyse the political and ethical stakes of these narratives) and narrative studies (which provides tools to identify the elements that constitute these narratives). These two fields of inquiry, which I define and contextualise in what follows, already reach toward each other in significant ways: trans studies is invested in the ways in which narrative form enables and constrains the intelligibility of gender-variant identities, and, in turn, many works of feminist/queer narrative studies illuminate how the gender of authors, readers and/or represented subjects shape formal elements of narrative. While feminist/queer narrative studies at times considers genders that are other than binary or fixed, a sustained analysis of the

relationship between narrative form and gender-variant subjectivity is lacking.[12] I propose that any such sustained analysis needs to engage with the field of trans studies, which articulates insights about identity, language and social relations from the lived experience of gender-variant subjects. At the same time, trans studies can also benefit from a methodological encounter with feminist narratology. As I discuss below, the vocabulary developed by the discipline of narratology can be used to nuance the analysis of how gender-variant identity is represented in writing by showing that formal choices related to plot, temporality, metaphor, narrators and/or linguistic features are linked to ways of conceptualising gender, the body, transition and marginalisation that can be reiterated or challenged by authors and readers.

Feminist, Queer, Trans

I take Stone's 'Posttranssexual Manifesto' as a starting point to outline the issues that lie at the foundation of trans studies as a discipline, issues that hinge precisely on the link between narrative and identity that characterises my methodology. My discussion of trans studies has three aims. First, I want to establish what kind of issues, debates and theories I draw on over the course of the thesis. Secondly, I want to focus on the relationship between trans studies and its close disciplinary 'neighbours': feminist and queer studies. My use of the term neighbours introduces my third aim: highlighting the centrality of concerns with space in theorisations of trans studies. This tendency toward spatial metaphors can be seen, for instance, in Stryker's argument that "queer studies remains the most *hospitable* place to undertake transgender work", sometimes offering an "*in-house* critique" and sometimes "*setting out* to *make a home* of its own" ('Evil Twin', 214; emphasis added). I build on these references to dwellings and movements in order to examine how not only the field of trans studies, but gender identity itself is understood spatially, before I move on to establish how these spatial relations are presented in narrative form. I argue that trans studies, as a discipline formed around the writing of those who have lived experience of gender variance, is characterised by a tension between viewing embodied identities, as well as gender categories, as flexible, transformable and multiple, and viewing them as fixed, bounded and homogenous.

[12] With 'feminist/queer narrative studies' I designate a set of methodologies, which I discuss more in detail in this chapter, that consider the links between narrative form and gender/sexuality.

At its inception, trans studies articulates itself in relation to existing feminist theory and emerging queer theory. Stone's 'Manifesto' is a response to Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (1979). In this book, Raymond (in)famously conceives of transsexuality as a conspiracy of the medical establishment to reinforce patriarchal gender roles and construct, out of 'men', women that would conform to specific models of femininity. She warns against trans women invading female spaces and "rap[ing] women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artefact, appropriating this body for themselves" (104). Stone responds to Raymond through a discussion of narratives of trans identity, noting that popular transsexual autobiographies, such as Lili Elbe's *Man into Woman* (1933) and Jan Morris' *Conundrum* (1974) are constructed to show their protagonists' transformation from "unambiguous men, albeit unhappy men, to unambiguous women" (156). The pivotal moment of genital surgery allows the story's hero(ine) to cast aside her previous self and suddenly wake up as a woman. Stone argues that it is because of the simplistic plot structures that constrain the depiction of transsexual subjects that writers like Raymond do not attribute agency to them as subjects, and thereby consider them 'dupes' of the medical establishment. Stone agrees that transsexual narratives all sound the same: they centre on an utter refusal of the past and a quasi-magical switch, accomplished through surgery, to a 'new' gender conceived of in patriarchal and heteronormative terms – female identity coinciding with a desire to marry a man, be a mother, wear feminine clothing, become a "male fetish" (156). Crucially, however, she points out that in order to have access to treatment and to legitimise their desire to transition, gender-variant individuals often must reproduce this dominant narrative, expressing a desire for this complete switch, in the clinic and in public. [13] Narratives of gender identity as gleaned from texts used by clinicians to 'detect' transsexuality, such as Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), are internalised and/or emulated as a means to obtain a diagnosis (Stone, 161). Because of this centrality of narrative to the formation of trans identity, the 'transgender' or 'postttranssexual' moment is articulated as a resistance to being

[13] In *Conundrum*, Morris describes the moment in which the possibility to "alter the body" is first presented to her: "to hear it actually suggested, by a man in a white coat in a medical office, seemed to me like a miracle, for the idea held for me then, as it holds for me now, a suggestion of sorcery" (53). The quasi-magical transformative powers of surgery are characterised as providing a complete and seamless solution to the conundrum of the protagonist: "To match my sex to my gender at last, and make a whole of me!" (53). Stone 'argues that these simplifications hide the complexities and contradictions of lived embodied gender.

narrated by others, and as a call for gender-variant subjects to write themselves into a discourse that names them from the outside.

The assimilation of gender-variant individuals into the psychopathological identity of the 'transsexual' is conceived by Stone as an erasure of narrative:

> The highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase him/herself, to fade into the "normal" population as soon as possible. Part of this process is known as *constructing a plausible history* – learning to lie effectively about one's past. What is gained is acceptability in society. What is lost is the ability to authentically represent the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience. (164; emphasis in original)

Revealing the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience, made visible against a demand to *fade into the normal population*, is a crucial aim of the political, cultural and theoretical activity conducted under the sign of 'transgender' in the 1990s.[14] The first *Transgender Studies Reader*, published in 2006, collects many of these efforts. In its Introduction, Stryker clarifies that "the embodied experience of the [trans] speaking subject" is an "essential […] component of the analysis of transgender phenomena" ('Knowledges', 12). This experience reveals that gender "is more complex and varied than can be accounted for by the currently dominant binary sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity" (3). Theorising a posttranssexual and transgender identity is about presenting a different account of gendered embodiment and subjectivity than what has previously circulated in Western culture, including in the narratives constructed by gender-variant subjects themselves in order to provide a *plausible history* that would allow them to blend in. Generally, these dominant narratives start with a "terrible-present-in-the-wrong-body" and follow a transformation in order to arrive at the 'opposite' sex and achieve a "better-future-in-the-right-body" (Fisher *et al*., 2), with the imperative that one's sex/gender ought to be a coherent whole of mind, body, behaviour and appearance clearly locatable on one side of the male/female binary. A discussion of

[14] Aside from the texts I discuss in this thesis (with Stone, Feinberg, Jack Halberstam, and Kate Bornstein as particularly representing this commitment to early 1990s 'transgender' activism), notable early interventions in trans studies are special issues, such as in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (1998), the founding of journals such as the *International Journal of Transgender Health* in 1997, and the publication of book-length works like Viviane K. Namaste's *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (2000). 'Transgender' visibility and rights in the 1990s were also the objectives of organisations like Press for Change in the UK and Transgender Nation and Transsexual Menace in the US.

what more "complex and varied" (Stryker, 'Knowledges', 3) accounts of trans identity look like will become clear over the course of this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

Before I move on to consider trans studies' specific negotiations with canonical trans narratives, I want to clarify the relationship between this field of inquiry and other political and theoretical approaches to gender identity – 'feminist' and 'queer' – in order to examine the spatial metaphors surrounding concepts of 'trans' that form the basis of my analysis of identity in narrative. In discussions about the relation between trans and feminist politics, the subject of feminism – women – becomes a space that can be expanded or restricted, opened up or closed off. Writers like Raymond, who deny trans subjectivity in the name of feminist politics, often frame their arguments in terms of space. The question of trans women (seen as 'men') invading female-only spaces is a tension that characterises the formation of the 'transgender' movement in relation to a feminist politics that is hostile to it. The ejection of trans woman Nancy Burkholder from the women-only Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in 1991 and the subsequent setting up of a camp of trans activists and allies outside the grounds of the festival is a ubiquitously cited incident in trans studies that illustrates, like Stone's response to Raymond's attack, the territorial tensions between trans-exclusionary feminists and the early 1990s trans movement. Three decades later, while trans studies has gained stability as an academic discipline, feminist writers hostile to trans individuals continue to frame their arguments around issues with spaces.[15] Sheila Jeffreys' *Gender Hurts* (2014) decries that lesbian communities are "fractured over the entryism of men who transgender, and the disappearance of their members to the […] constructed heterosexuality that transgenderism offers to increasing numbers of lesbians" (3). Entryism, the infiltration of a political party or movement with the purpose of thwarting its objectives, is named by Jeffreys as the dynamic by which trans women "seek to destroy women-only spaces" (3). Illicit entrances into, or exits from, feminist spaces are an enduring concern for trans-hostile feminists, revealing an anxiety about boundary crossing that presumes male and female to be separate and bounded spaces.

[15] The founding of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* in 2014, the publication of the *Transgender Studies Readers,* and the increased presence of trans studies texts on university syllabi signal that the discipline had reached a certain level of institutionalisation.

The anxiety about protecting the borders of women's spaces takes as its object both material spaces (women's bathrooms, feminist collectives, etc.) and metaphorical ones, such as gender itself. It is important to note this because the way in which the texts I discuss in this thesis conceptualise gender is precisely as a challenge to seeing 'women' and 'men' as bounded, separate and fixed territories, citizenship into which has to be earned by conforming to a specific narrative. Much is at stake in changing the way in which gender is understood, as trans-exclusionary notions of 'womanhood' result in real harm to many gender-variant subjects. In Raymond's *Transsexual Empire*, it is both communities of women and women's bodies that are conceived as partitioned areas that can be 'invaded' by 'men'. For a woman's body to be 'raped' by the 'maleness' of the individual transitioning into it, male and female need to be seen as two separate(d) domains, one of which contaminates and inevitably violently appropriates the other if it comes into contact with it. An argument that sees trans women's 'maleness' as persistent and pervading no matter whatever 'femaleness' they attain inevitably relies either on seeing gender and sex as unchangeable from what is assigned at birth or on conceiving of trans women as having been socialised as, and thereby having enjoyed the privileges of, a man up to a certain point – and on believing that this is enough to permanently exclude them from the category of women. A politics that sees gender categories as discursively produced, malleable, and multiple can instead form a basis for alliances between trans and feminist aims. Indeed, the focus of approaches that seek to reconcile trans politics and feminism is on expanding the meaning of 'woman' and highlighting the oppression that trans women face as women (as it intersects with the one they face as trans individuals). The concern with intersections that characterises transfeminist approaches reveals an attention to spaces not as separated but as converging. Efforts to integrate feminist and trans indeed attempt to articulate a positive spatial relation by using language denoting inclusion, expansion, blending and opening as opposed to exclusion, invasion, infiltration, violation. Bettcher and Stryker, introducing a 2016 special issue on 'Transfeminisms' in response to the publication of *Gender Hurts*, note that, in the Anglophone 'transfeminism' and the Spanish and Latin American transfeminismo "the trans- prefix […] performs the lexical operation of attaching to, dynamizing, and transforming an existing entity, pulling it in new directions, bringing it into new arrangements with other entities" (11; emphasis in original). Despite attempts to make feminist and trans approaches reach toward each other, a separation of spaces is not only

a concern of trans-exclusionary discourse, but of trans studies itself. Arguing for limitations of transfeminist efforts, Awkward-Rich notes that, starting with Stone, "[t]rans studies has continued to emerge through repeated performances of splitting from feminism" ('Trans, Feminism', 828). This repeated splitting signals that, despite "something usable" being "produced" (839) by the efforts to join 'feminist' and 'trans' into a unified political stance, tensions between the two cannot be fully neutralized. On the side of trans, there is always a sense that feminism, despite its ability to articulate the harm of failing to find a place in a patriarchal order where male dominates female, often retains notions of male and female that are too fixed and essentialist to fully serve a trans politics.

Although transfeminine individuals are the primary targets of trans-exclusionary attacks – as in Raymond and Jeffrey's fears of infiltration and invasion of female spaces – as well as of efforts to oppose it by creating transfeminist alliances, transmasculinity raises similar spatial questions. For instance, Awkward-Rich argues that "the precise arguments" used by trans-hostile feminists "to justify excluding trans women would require them to include trans men" ('Trans, Feminism', 830). Trans men's socialisation as women and the gender they are assigned at birth would make a case for their inclusion as subjects of feminisms. Instead, they are seen, as I have noted in the case of *Gender Hurts*, as having abandoned the space of 'women'. The inclusions, exclusions, delineations and transgressions that are mobilised in these discussions ultimately raise the question of what kind of space gender is, and who has the right to inhabit that space. Alongside arguments such as Jeffreys' that see trans men as lesbians who have chosen heterosexuality, transmasculinity has also been viewed positively by a certain type of feminist discourse as an empowering transgression of patriarchal restrictions. In turning to discuss these uses of 'trans' as a symbol for the destabilisation of gender categories, I focus on spatial relations between trans and other discourses on gender, and the extent to which trans studies adopts or rejects the latter's methodologies. In addition to the question of belonging in spaces, the question of crossing boundaries – and moving in between spaces – characterises the representation of gender-variant subjects in the feminist and queer tradition to which I now turn.

Where certain feminists police the crossing of boundaries, others celebrate it. In a recent book about trans cultural representation in the twentieth century, Rachel Carroll surveys some instances of representation of trans men for feminist purposes, arguing that in these cases "motifs of 'sex change' or 'gender crossing' are understood primarily as metaphors for women's experience, with the unintended consequence that the transgender potential of these narratives has often been overlooked or obscured" (12).[16] Transmasculine subjects have been seen in this tradition as non-heteronormative women who found a way to access roles reserved for men, thereby making transness into a 'metaphor' for something else. As Rita Felski argues, this gesture carries the "risk of homogenizing differences that matter politically: […] the difference between those who occasionally play with the trope of transsexuality and those others for whom it is a matter of life or death" (347). For this reason, celebrations of 'gender crossing' come under scrutiny in trans studies at the end of the 1990s. This moment has implications not only for the distinction between trans and feminist approaches to identity, but also for the relationship between trans studies and queer theory.[17] My argument is that 'trans' overlaps but does not coincide with its gender studies others – feminist and queer – having been shaped partly in alignment with and partly in opposition to them, and that these relationships are complicated by the fact that each term labels a variety of sometimes incompatible views. So far, I have noted how 'trans' is born of an opposition to certain feminist views (those maintaining that only women assigned female at birth are women) but in an alignment with others (those recognising the political value of 'gender crossing' in subverting a male/female binary hierarchy). The latter approach, at the time of Stone's 'Manifesto', was itself linked to a then emerging queer theory. In what follows, I outline the attempts in trans studies to challenge what is seen as a too easy conflation of queer and trans – attributed to the temporal and spatial 'closeness' of the

[16] Carroll discusses the adaptation of George Moore's novella *Albert Nobbs* (1918) by Simone Benmussa in her play '*The Singular Life of Albert Nobbs* (1977), in which the main protagonist's crossdressing is given unambiguous meaning as a woman's strategy to survive in a patriarchal power structure (209). Jay Prosser makes a similar case for Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), whose protagonist's trans masculinity has more often been read as relating to lesbian sexuality rather than gender identity (137).

[17] The distinction between feminist and queer is itself object of academic debates. A discussion of the extent to which 'queer' is 'feminist' and vice versa is beyond the scope of this project, but over the course of my discussion I will signal how they are viewed as sometimes aligned, sometimes opposed views of gender. These complexities are due to the diversity of approaches that trans, queer and, especially, feminist name. The fact that Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1991), a (if not *the*) seminal text of queer theory is subtitled 'The Subversion of Feminism' illustrates this ambiguous relation: is the subversion of feminism still or no longer feminist?

two as fields of inquiry about gender – in order to show how my own methodology overlaps, but does not entirely coincide, with a queer one.

One of the main reasons for trans writers to question queer theory as a methodology for the analysis of gender-variant subjectivity is the field's emphasis on sexuality and desire rather than embodiment and identity. Jay Prosser's book *Second Skins* (1998) makes this influential argument. He shows that queer theory tends toward an "enmeshing of homosexual desire with transgender identification" by examining, for instance, the repeated use of "trans-gender" in Eve Sedgwick's work on sexual desire (22). He also focuses on Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1991), identifying it as the root of most subsequent queer readings of trans identity. For Butler, the sexed body as supposedly natural, anatomical, pre-social fact, is produced by a "disavowed homosexuality" (71). A compulsory heterosexuality is therefore responsible for what comes to be accepted as "the self-evident anatomical facticity of sex, where 'sex' designates the blurred unity of anatomy, 'natural identity' and 'natural desire'" (71). Therefore – and this is where Prosser takes issue with the argument – the troubling of gender, as may be brought about when someone disidentifies with the gender assigned at birth and with what is deemed to be their anatomical sex, is also a troubling of heterosexuality. Prosser warns against this conflation, noting that adopting it in trans studies would conceal the fact that "by no means are all transgendered subjects homosexual" or even non-heteronormative (31). For him, it is not only the emphasis on desire that is misleading about adopting queer as a framework to analyse trans phenomena, but the premise itself that all trans subjects are troubling heteronormativity in the first place. In order to clarify why this is the case, we need to examine what sets of assumptions, views and methodologies are seen by trans writers like Prosser as 'queer' and how they are perceived as failing to attend to the identities and concerns of all trans subjects.

The relationship between queer and trans that emerges from these views is characterised by a tension between stability (belonging and fixedness) and instability (transformation and fluctuation). Over the course of the thesis, I argue that this spatial relationship is key in the narrative construction of gender-variant identity. I have discussed how feminist approaches that embrace gender-variant identities have, in Carroll's formulation, used the motifs of 'sex change' and 'gender crossing' as metaphors for women's experience. An

extension of this argument via Prosser shows that these 'motifs' have similarly been used as metaphors of queer desire.[18] Prosser discusses this crucial spatial term – crossing – when he notes the reliance of queer theory on the "transgendered subject" in their crossing of "several boundaries at once" (21): those between "gender, sex and sexuality" and "the boundary that structures each as a binary category" (22). The spatial politics of queer, therefore, puts an emphasis on mobility, flux, traversing and deviating. Prosser's emphasis, instead, is on transsexual desires for stability, permanence, belonging and coinciding, as he argues that trans subjects "do not yet have" a "recognition of our sexed realness; acceptance as men and women; fundamentally, the right to gender homes" (204). Henry Rubin similarly argues that "trans desires for realness and legibility" are seen as "'unseemly' to queer theory" (186). For these scholars, queer names an ongoing disruption of binary gendered identity that is incompatible with the desire of some trans individuals to 'stay' (be 'at home') in/as an intelligible gender. Transsexuals, as subjects who desire surgery and passing, are noted by Prosser as "most succinctly illustrat[ing] the limitations of the queerness of transgender", as they can be seen as upholding – rather than disrupting – a link between sexed embodiment, gender identity and gender presentation (45). On the other hand, the linked origin of 'trans' and 'queer' is seen by others as being too readily dismissed by Prosser, with the consequence of excluding those who find value in their intersection. Kadji Amin argues that, as a consequence of this forced distinction, "the self-understandings of those gender-variant subjects who do not experience their gender as separate from their sexuality are increasingly dismissed" (221). As I identify gender-variant embodiment in spatial terms, as both inhabitation and movement, distinction and enmeshing, my aim is to maintain this core tension of trans studies without effacing either side.

[18] An example of this is the emphasis on drag as queer theory's gender-variant practice of choice. Judith Butler argues that, in drag practices, "[i]n the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" (*Gender Trouble*, 138). Prosser argues that Butler's (very brief) discussion of drag has been subsequently interpreted to mean that "gender performativity means acting out one's gender as if gender were a theatrical role that could be chosen […] that gender, like a set of clothes in a drag act, could be donned and doffed at will, that gender is drag" (28). There is an extent to which Bornstein, whose texts I discuss in Chapter Two, leans toward this view. Prosser's argument is that conceiving of gender variance in this way effaces trans subjects' experience of gender as a keenly felt reality.

The fact that, despite disagreements, efforts are made by publications such as the *Transgender Studies Readers* and journals like *Transgender Studies Quarterly (TSQ)* to clarify a unified object and methodology that is 'trans' leads me to the search for a unified concept that can name the mode of embodiment that is described by contemporary gender-variant authors. If we take seriously the voices in trans studies that are keen to separate themselves from a "consistent decoding of 'trans' as *incessant destabilizing* movement between sexual and gender identities" (Prosser, 23; emphasis added), theorising gender-variant identity will entail seeing it as in some way 'ceasing' and 'stabilising'. Andrea Long Chu urges us not to forget Prosser: she provocatively notes in 2019 that trans studies' "working definition of trans is just 'queer, again'" (Long Chu and Drager, 105). At the same time, scholars like Jack Halberstam are wary of pitting against each other those gender-variant identities that are viewed as stable and those that are viewed as fluid. While he opposes the idea that "fluidity and flexibility are always and everywhere desirable", he argues that "[s]ome bodies are never at home, some bodies cannot simply cross from A to B, some bodies recognize and live with the inherent instability of identity" (*Female Masculinity*, 164).[19] In order to address these ongoing negotiations between sometimes incompatible views on trans identity and methodology, I theorise below a mode of embodiment and inhabitation of spaces that maintains the tensions I have outlined without attempting to resolve them. Before moving on to this, however, it is necessary to outline the other approach that I build on: narrative studies, and, specifically, feminist narratology. The relation between this field of inquiry and the one I have just discussed is once again a spatial one: in the same way in which my reading of Stone's article (and the theoretical approach that it inaugurates) has drawn out the already existing overlaps between trans studies and analyses of narrative form, I also map the locations in which feminist narrative studies brushes up against an acknowledgement of gender-variant subjects as textual participants.

Gendering Narrative Form

Just as gender is discussed in multiple, overlapping, and sometimes mutually exclusive locations (under 'feminist', 'queer', 'trans' labels and more), a field of inquiry into narrative form is equally difficult to simplify and circumscribe. Over the course of the

[19] Texts by Halberstam listed in my Bibliography have been published with the author's former first name.

thesis, I draw, in a deliberately *ad hoc* manner, on works that define themselves as narratological in method. Approaches to narrative form are manifold, shifting and heterogenous, in the way that discourses about gender – and genders themselves – also are. Borrowing, transforming, and repurposing tools of analysis, letting methodologies touch and enrich each other, is the only way in which the multifaceted formal, political and ethical implications of gender-variant subjects' first-person narrations can be adequately addressed. My engagement with narrative studies in this chapter extends in two directions. On the one hand, some of the categories and distinctions that have been developed in this discipline to describe narrative operations are invaluable to my methodology as they help theorise the construction of the I in narrative. On the other hand, I take inspiration from the challenge that feminist and queer narratologies have posed to the discipline in its initial form (a universalisable 'science' of narrative) by showing that new narrative elements and dynamics can be uncovered when paying attention to how gender shapes, and is shaped by, narrative form. In what follows, I discuss these two topics in turn, establishing which insights and approaches from the field of narrative studies I aim to develop through a methodological encounter with trans studies. Throughout, my goal is to find a place where trans studies' attention to narrative form and narrative studies' attention to gender variance can meet.

As I anticipated in the Introduction, the distinction between diegetic levels (the world in which the act of narration takes place and the world in which the narrated events take place) is fundamental to my analysis of gender-variant narrators. I have indicated that these narrators are homodiegetic and autodiegetic: they are narrators in one diegetic level and characters in another, thereby existing ambiguously in relation to borders not only of genders but of narrative worlds.[20] A closely related distinction that is equally valuable for my discussion is the one between story and discourse (*what* is narrated and *how* it is narrated).[21] The relationship between story and discourse becomes particularly useful in delineating the narrative presentation of identity in time: aspects of narrative temporality are central to the way in which gender-variant lives are made intelligible in the texts I analyse. Genette's categories of order and duration allow me to describe with

[20] I discuss more decisive crossings of diegetic boundaries – metalepses – in Chapter Four.
[21] This distinction is mapped onto Viktor Šklovskij's *fabula* and *sujet,* renamed by Todorov as *histoire* and *discours* and taken up by Genette as *histoire* and *récit (Discourse, passim).* Narrative studies texts in English use a variety of terms to address this distinction – here I choose *story* and *discourse*.

precision how events of the story are ordered in the narrative and how the time it takes for something to happen in the story compares to the time/space dedicated to it in the discourse. I occasionally therefore use distinctions developed by Genette such as "anachronies" for "all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders" of story and discourse, the main instances of which are "prolepsis" ("narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later") and "analepsis" ("evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are") (*Discourse*, 40). As I examine not only how events in the lives of gender-variant characters are ordered, but also which parts of the story told by a gender-variant narrator are dwelled upon or condensed, Genette's terms for aspects of duration such as "scene" (which "realizes conventionally the equality of time between narrative and story") and "summary" (which instead has "greater flexibility of pace") are also useful (94). If we take for instance the quasi-magical transformation from man into woman that is described by Stone as characterising canonical trans memoirs, its place in the unfolding of the narrative – is it a prolepsis, an analepsis, or does it occur in its proper place in a linear chronology? – as well as its duration (indicating how much of the narrative time it takes up and therefore its centrality to the story) will have specific consequences for how gender is understood.

In addition to temporal relations between story and discourse, I also often focus on the location of the perspective from which the story is told, as this has implications for how agency and power are negotiated in the text. In order to discuss this, it is necessary to address the double referent of the deictic 'I' (both narrator and character) or, as Franz Stanzel puts it, "the illusion of the identity of the narrator and a figure from the fictional world [that] is continually renewed by the use of the pronoun 'I'" (60). Stanzel notes that, in first-person narration, "[t]his 'I' or 'self' reveals itself to the reader as a figure experiencing the events of the plot – a figure which ultimately becomes the narrator of those events" (60). He therefore proposes a distinction between "the *experiencing self*" and the "*narrating self*" (61; emphasis in original). The process by which the former becomes the latter occurs across a "narrative distance" which measures "the degree of alienation and tension between these two manifestations of the self"; the experiencing self "undergoes a development, a maturing process, a change of interest" in order to transform into the narrating self (66). Over the course of the thesis, I often refer to the *experiencing-I* and the *narrating-I* in order to clarify whether the first-person pronoun

refers to the character in the storyworld or the narrator outside of it. However, because of the deictic nature of the pronoun, the two can never be separated or designated with absolute precision. Most of the texts I discuss, in fact, challenge the idea that a *maturing process* or a definitive *change* has occurred to create a *tension* between the narrating-I and the experiencing-I (against those who would argue, for instance, that one of them is a woman and one of them is a man). Their separation is therefore useful to the extent that it is recognised as often difficult to achieve completely.

The distinction between the experiencing-I and the narrating-I can help nuance how focalisation works in first-person narration. Genette notes that, in homodiegetic narration, the "oneness of person of the narrator and the hero, does not at all imply that the narrative is focalized through the hero" (*Discourse*, 198). While the narrating-I is the one who 'speaks', they are not always the one to perceive, and the text can instead focalise through other characters or, crucially, through instances of the experiencing-I. I argue that this can indicate a difference between narratives that view the narrating-I as a more complete and definitive identity, the result of a 'maturing' process that is linear and unidirectional, and ones that view it as only one of the multiple temporal locations that, together, constitute the I. I discuss this instance of focalisation through the experiencing-I – from Wesley Stace's *Misfortune* (2005) – in Chapter Six: "I was a girl of course, and of that there was no doubt" (146). Here the 'I' refers ambiguously to both narrator and character (both of whom can equally be considered to be, or not be, a girl), but the sentence is focalised strictly through the former self, with the narrating-I not intervening to explain whether they have since changed their mind about this, and whether they think that they are not now, or were not then (or both), a girl. This example should help clarify the level of nuance that is required to analyse the identity of gender-variant narrators, and how tools of analysis developed by narratology can aid in providing this nuance.

I have begun to allude to the fact that formal choices have implications for how gender identity is represented in narrative: the case for this has been made by scholars working in feminist narratology. Lanser's 'Toward a Feminist Narratology' (1986), a first theorisation of this approach, suggests that narratology can benefit from the consideration of "women as both producers and interpreters of text" (343). I take up this question and shift its focus: How does an attention to trans, non-binary or gender-

nonconforming authors and readers change how narrative form can be both constructed and analysed? The title of this chapter explicitly echoes Lanser's, the 'toward' intending to inaugurate, rather than impose a definitive shape on, the encounter between 'trans' and 'narratology'. Lanser uses theories of plot to illustrate how narratology can be transformed through a feminist perspective. She argues that theoretical models positing that plot is structured by "units of anticipation and fulfilment" and "problem and solution" take for granted that "textual actions are based on the (intentional) deeds of protagonists; they assume a power, a possibility, that may be inconsistent with what women have experienced both historically and textually, and perhaps inconsistent even with women's desires" (356). I argue that narratorial acts such as ordering events, representing the narrator's body, presenting the narrating voice as a unified consciousness, and/or revealing and withholding knowledge, yield different interpretations in contexts where gender-variant subjects participate in the narrative situation as authors, readers or characters. For instance, as I argue in Chapters Two and Six, the extent to which a gender-variant narrator carries authority or is reliable within a text cannot be solely assessed through an analysis of formal indicators, but needs to be examined against the background of a historical context in which subjects who share the narrator's identity are perceived as incapable of articulating an authoritative, reliable and authentic discourse about themselves.[22] Overall, I show that narrative forms are used by (or to represent) gender-variant subjects in ways that reinforce or challenge certain ideological positions on the fixity or flexibility of gender, on the legitimacy of trans or non-binary identities, and on the modes of embodiment that are intelligible within conventional parameters set up by previous narratives.

The theoretical position from which I can address these concerns could not be articulated without a tradition, established by feminist narratology from the 1980s onward, of examining how narrative structure, language and textual dynamics encode ideological positions. The essays collected in *The Poetics of Gender* (1986) question from a feminist perspective supposedly impartial literary theories, in a "common interrogation" of the

[22] This argument has affinities with Lanser's own in *Fictions of Authority* (1992). She argues that analyses of how texts by women work to create an authoritative narrator need to be conducted with an understanding that "in Western literary systems for the past two centuries [...] discursive authority has, with varying degrees of intensity, attached itself most readily to white, educated men of hegemonic ideology" (6). I argue that real-life power imbalances between those who are authorised to speak about gender variance and those who are not impact how narrative authority is produced in a text.

universalisation of masculine experience and norms "as they inhere in all diacritical and interpretive acts, including the workings of grammar itself" (Miller, xii). Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing Beyond the Ending* (1985) similarly argues that "[a]ny literary convention – plots, narrative sequences, characters in bit parts – as an instrument that claims to depict experience, also interprets it" (2).[23] Both claims, although not specifically theorising a feminist narratology, point to how production and interpretation of literary forms is always conducted from specific subjective and ideological positions. For instance, DuPlessis examines novels that set up contrasting plots for female protagonists (such as quest vs. romance) and argues that their endings must always "attempt an ideological solution to the fundamental contradictions that animate the work" (3).[24] After these initial interventions and Lanser's 'Toward a Feminist Narratology', Robyn R. Warhol explicitly describes the subject of her book *Gendered Interventions* (1989) as a problem that can be addressed by a "feminist narratology" (3). Asking why direct address in Victorian realist literature occurs "more frequently and more prominently in novels by women than in novels by men" (3) leads Warhol to "investigate the connection between gender and narrative strategies" (xv). Arguing, as I do, for an approach to narrative at the intersection of narratology and trans studies entails recognising that this encounter does not exist in a vacuum: the entanglements between narratology and feminism, feminism and trans studies (which I outlined earlier), and trans studies and narrative (even if not narratology *per se*) create a web of overlapping political and formal concerns on which my analysis of gender-variant narrators builds.

In fostering the encounter between narratology and trans studies, I argue for the gain of both disciplines, as Lanser and Warhol do for narratology and feminism. Indeed, in addition to asking how narrative theories "might be altered by the understandings of

[23] Gender is one of the elements of the 'context' of narratives that was excluded in narratological approaches of 1960s and 70s. This inseparability of form and context characterises what are called 'post-classical' narratologies. The term is coined in David Herman's *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis* (1999), which collects articles from the previous decade that are "attentive both to the text and the context of stories" and simultaneously adopt and critique structuralist narratology (8). This context, depending on the approach, can variously be constituted by: the intersectional identities and/or cognitive operations of authors and/or readers, the historical circumstances in which a narrative is produced and/or interpreted, its medium or genre and the history of this medium or genre, the ideological positions of authors, readers, and/or critics, and so on. The 'context' of the narratives I examine is formed by socially and historically embedded theorisations and descriptions of gender and by the lived experience of gender-variant subjects.
[24] In the last section of this chapter, I also focus on endings, this time asking which plots are set up not (only) for female characters but for trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming ones.

feminist criticism and the experience of women's texts", Lanser also asks "whether feminist criticism, and particularly the study of narratives by women, might benefit from the methods and insights of narratology" ('Toward', 342). She notes a "primarily mimetic orientation of most (Anglo-American) feminist thinking about narrative": that is, a concern with fictional representations to the extent that they mimetically reproduce real-life gender identities, roles and relations, rather than an interest in linguistic constructs and formal choices (344). Warhol also urges feminist critics to move beyond "the study of how women are portrayed in texts" which occurs at "the level of story", in order to take "a detailed look into genders effect on the level of discourse" (*Gendered Interventions*, 6). Trans studies, like the feminist criticism and Warhol and Lanser take to task, also foregrounds issues of representation, cultural visibility and how texts measure up to lived experience, rather than concerns with narrative form and aspects of discourse. However, discussions of aesthetics, narrative structure, and literary criticisms are not entirely missing. My aim is to translate these insights into the language of narrative studies, thereby nuancing trans studies' description of textual operations, while at the same time using reflections on literary form by gender-variant authors to refine narratological tools.

The argument that gender politics and historically situated power relations are inseparable from narrative form is central to both feminist narratology and this thesis. There are other approaches in narrative studies that can aid in examining the ethical implications of textual phenomena along the same lines. I am also indebted in my methodology to rhetorical narratology, though I do not use its terminology in my work. Rhetorical narratology is characterised by a view of narrative as an act of communication, by someone, to someone and for specific purposes. This method "locates meaning in a feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response" (Phelan, 18). Warhol argues that both feminist narratology and rhetorical narratology "see narrative as an act of genuine communication that has consequences in the material world" and have in common a "dedication to considering the ethics of narrative transactions" ('Rhetorical Narrative Approach', 201). The commitment of rhetorical narratology to consider the ethical implications of narrative form is one that aligns well with my own concerns about narratives' power to shape the ways in which gender-variant identity is understood and, consequently, how the material lives of individuals are impacted. Although I do not focus on it extensively,

rhetorical narratology is one of the approaches in narrative studies that lends itself to accommodate reflections on gender-variant subjects as participants in the communicative acts of narrative, while it currently does not.

A consideration of genders that are other than binary or fixed is persistently absent in narrative studies: individuals who do not identify as men and women (or who are trans) are almost never imagined as possible readers or authors. Just as feminist narratology proposed to address "the gaps in models that are based almost exclusively on men's writing" (Warhol, *Gendered Interventions*, 14), by discussing gender-variant narrators I extend this challenge to models that are based almost exclusively on cis authors' writing. The question 'what narratives are excluded?' can in fact be posed to feminist narratology itself. This partially responds to a call for intersectional approaches that has followed early feminist narratology's work on a seemingly uniform category of 'women'. In her 2006 book on feminist narratology, Ruth Page recognises that it "seems less easy now to pose 'texts by women' as a simple, homogenous category, and important differences between women need also to be recognized" (15). A desire to nuance categories of gender is also expressed in Warhol and Lanser's *Narrative Theory Unbound* (2015), the first collection to include interventions in 'queer narratology'. Warhol and Lanser show awareness of the risk that the "rich multiplicity not just of genders and sexualities but also of narrative practices could indeed get reduced into essentialist and universalizing generalizations" (2). Introducing a 2018 special issue dedicated to feminist and queer narratologies, Tory Young similarly notes that, at this point, "the formulation of feminist narratology by its named practitioners has dissembled into diverse queer and feminist theories of narrative" ('Introduction', 914). The result of this repeated attention to keeping the field inclusive, while insisting on the local nature of all analyses, is that gender-variant identities are not outright excluded from feminist narratology. However, they are always addressed somewhat tangentially. The development of a queer narratology (which is always somewhat ambiguously 'part' of feminist narratology) comes close to addressing this – and I now turn to how my own project overlaps with, but also deviates from, the concerns of queer narratology.

Queer narratology takes as its object both sexuality and gender. Twenty years before the *Narrative Theory Unbound* collection – which dwells at length on the relationships

between feminist, queer, gender, sexuality, and narrative – Lanser's article 'Sexing the Narrative' (1995) suggests the possibility that "there might […] be a queer narratology in which questions of sexuality become a telescope through which to seek narrative elements not before attended to" (93). She argues that the gender and sexuality of a narrator are "narratologically significant elements" (90) through a reading of the first-person narrator of Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992). The argument is that, as the sex of the narrator is unknown, this unmarkedness creates two possible "narrative scenarios" (the narrator is male or the narrator is female) that have implications for the heteronormative trajectory of the love story presented in the plot (89). The way in which my own argument about this novel, in Chapter Four, proposes a reading of this narrator beyond the 'two' options illustrates the different emphasis of my work compared to early feminist/queer narratology, as I continue to ask how analyses of gender and narrative change when gender is considered as other than binary or fixed. Lanser's own development of the queer narratological approach in a recent article touches on this question. In 'Queering Narrative Voice' (2018), she focuses on queer gender and specifically (as I do in this thesis) on the gender of the 'person' or voice who speaks. I now turn to examine the extent to which what Lanser calls 'queer' comes close to what I, in my project, call 'trans', in order to show how 'trans', as it is conceived of in trans studies (in tension with 'queer', in between stability and movement, transformability and permanence), can add detail to, and extend the scope of, queer analyses.

Lanser's category of a queer narrative voice keeps brushing up against what I would define as 'trans', but never quite names it as such.[25] For instance, she draws attention to students' habit of using the pronoun 'it' when referring to a third-person narrator ('it says…'). She begins to link her notion of queer voice to gender-variant identity when she comments: "In this sense, 'it' resembles the neutral pronoun 'they' currently chosen by persons who reject the binary of he or she" ('Queering', 33). I have my own discussion about the possibilities of 'it' for denoting gender-variance in Chapter Five, but here I am interested in Lanser's position as viewed through a trans lens. As non-binary identities and the pronouns associated with them gain visibility, readers could begin referring to a

[25] Lanser mainly focuses on the "sexual indeterminacy" ('Queering', 933) of heterodiegetic narration, whereas I work with embodied autodiegetic narrators to whom the same notion of 'sexual indeterminacy' can be applied. The scopes of these analyses are different, but I use the article as an example of how theorisations of queer narratology open up toward what can be called 'trans'.

non-gendered narrator as 'they' as a matter of course. Additionally, 'neither male nor female' could become a way in which not only heterodiegetic narrators (who are disembodied), but also autodiegetic narrators (who resemble 'real' individuals) can be viewed – being 'beyond the binary' as a characteristic not only of an abstract narrative voice but of an embodied character. Similarly, Lanser describes a situation called "narrative 'cisgender' – a state in which the author's and the heterodiegetic narrator's genders both coincide with a normative body" (932). If narrative cisgender is a match between the gender of the author and that of the narrator, narrative transgender would then be a disidentification *across* narrative levels – the gender of the narrator is different from that of the author. How can we deal then with a disidentification *within* narrative levels, where it is the narrator who is trans and their trans gender may or may not match that of the author? Further, do we have a 'narrative transgender' when the genders of the experiencing-I and the narrating-I do not match? On these topics and many others, an engagement with trans studies, emerging out of trans politics and a consideration of issues affecting gender-variant subjects, can develop already existing insights by feminist and queer narratologists to new conclusions.

The tendency to gesture toward 'trans' without quite reaching it appears in other feminist narratology texts. For instance, Page acknowledges that "other gendered alternatives may be possible that go beyond [a] two-way distinction [men and women], for example, through gender blending or in cyborg imagery" (15). As I have shown, what is missing from these statements is the specific vocabulary of trans studies, which moves on from references to 'cyborgs' to instead address real-life gender-variant embodiment.[26] My approach can therefore help nuance what these 'other gendered alternatives' might look like. A similar gesture toward the remit of trans studies can be found in Young's Introduction to the special issue on 'Futures for Queer and Feminist Narratology' (2018), which includes Lanser's article 'Queering Voice'. Young argues that work on the ambiguity of pronouns being conducted by narratologists can be put into relation with

[26] Donna Haraway articulates the notion of the cyborg as a figure representing "transgressed boundaries" (154) and belonging to "a post-gender world" (150). As a creature who blurs the boundaries between male and female (as well as human/animal and organism/machine), the cyborg is sometimes taken as a metaphor for gender variance or trans identity. As I argue over the course of the thesis, some writers identify with transgressing boundaries, existing 'beyond' gender, or being hybrid, whereas others do not. What matters is whether this figure is adopted *by* gender-variant subjects or attributed *to* them, as the latter can sometimes deny their actual experience.

"problems also at work in contemporary thinking about a more widespread kind of pronoun use": the use of they/them for non-binary subjects ('Introduction', 916). Such references demonstrate an awareness of discussions of language and gender variance conducted in trans studies, and of how they may be put productively into dialogue with feminist narratology. However, this dialogue is never quite initiated, and it is my purpose in this thesis to do so. The tension between the two methodological orientations leads me to theorise, in what follows, *trans-inhabitation* and *re-narration*: respectively, a term for interconnected metaphorical systems for conceiving of identity as space, and one for narrative temporalities that negotiate linear accounts of trans lives. Both terms become analytical tools that I use in my readings to examine how narrative, identity, space and time function within texts with a gender-variant narrator.

Trans-inhabitation: Embodiment and Space

In discussing the relationship between feminist, queer and trans, I have noted how these positions are often articulated through spatial metaphors: queer theory can be viewed as 'hospitable' for trans studies, some feminist approaches make an effort to exclude any notion of trans from their 'territory', and so on. This tendency extends beyond debates about academic fields to discussions of gender categories and the body. I now focus more narrowly on the metaphorical organisations that lie behind different accounts of gender-variant subjectivities, in order to clarify the stakes of adhering to them and countering them. This leads me to propose the notion of trans-inhabitation: a mode of embodiment that describes *both* the investment by some trans authors in gender and the body as fairly 'unambiguous' and stable locations *and* the emphasis, linked to queer theory, on the movement and flexibility of never quite belonging to clearly delineated categories. Gender-variant authors theorise embodiment as a relation of the self with space, borrowing discourses of displacement and boundary crossing from queer approaches while at the same time accounting for a certain rootedness in the body and a desire to belong to intelligible gender categories. The word trans-inhabitation invokes dynamics that are already implicit in trans writing, but I elucidate these through an analysis of metaphors that follows the methodologies of linguistics and narratology. In the Introduction of a 2008 special issue entitled 'Trans-', Stryker, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore focus on "the questions of space and movement that that term implies" (12) and define "transing" as "a practice that takes place within, as well as across or between,

gendered spaces" (13). These three modes of inhabiting space (within, across and between) are facets of trans-inhabitation, and I especially aim to emphasise their frequent co-occurrence within one text, subjectivity or theoretical approach.

Trans-inhabitation is also connected to David Getsy's definition of "trans capacity" as "the ability or the potential for making visible, bringing into experience, or knowing genders as *mutable, successive, and multiple*" (47; emphasis added) or as "*temporal, successive, or transformable*" (48; emphasis added). Again, what here is a set of three characteristics of gender that are made visible, or are focused on, by trans studies, is encompassed at once by my notion of trans-inhabitation. The term *inhabitation* implies that both bodies and gender categories are spaces, in the manner that I have already anticipated when discussing, in trans-hostile feminism, the exclusions of some subjects from a gender whose boundaries are rigorously policed, or, in trans studies, the investment in belonging to a gendered home. The term *trans* has three related meanings with respect to this dwelling 'in' a gender or 'in' a body. The first is a movement from one inhabitation (as body or gender of origin) to another (as body or gender of destination), the sense of the *successive* and the result of the moving across. The second meaning relates to being in between bounded spaces, or existing at the boundaries of them, capturing the potential of *transformability* and in-between-ness but also the in-progress sense of 'across'. The third meaning captures the sense of *multiplicity*, of inhabiting multiple spaces at once, or being at the same time inside and outside the boundaries of a specific area. The relation I have outlined between trans studies and feminist and queer approaches is a trans-inhabitation – at the same time an uneasy dwelling, a movement across or between fields, and a belonging to multiple fields at once. The modes of embodiment I focus on now similarly maintain the tension between movement and stability, permanence and change.

I have noted trans critiques of tendencies to cast gender-variant subjectivity as a metaphor for subverting gender, for queer desire, or for women's strategies for accessing power in patriarchal societies.[27] Attending to the metaphors used to describe trans embodiment in the experience of gender-variant individuals entails a crucial shift from

[27] Felski notes another use of trans as a metaphor, this time for the "dissolution of once stable polarities of male and female" (sometimes positive, sometimes negative) seen as characterising the end of the twentieth century (337). Once again, a focus on real-life gender-variant subjects and their lived experience is missing when their identity is viewed as a symbol of something else.

individuals *being used as* metaphor to them *using* metaphors, thereby entailing a focus on the self-determination and agency of marginalised authors. Stone's 'Manifesto' argues that personal accounts of gender-variant subjectivities are key in disrupting canonical autobiographical narratives that hinge on casting off a 'previous' gender to achieve complete happiness in a 'new' one. Morris's literal and metaphorical journey to Casablanca for surgery in *Conundrum* is a prime example of this canonical narrative. In my discussion, I take as my starting point the journey as a dominant metaphor for transition, as it appears both in canonical accounts of transition and in posttranssexual attempts to subvert this form. As I unpack the implications of this metaphor and other related ones, I ask whether the body is the origin, the destination, the vehicle or an obstacle in the journey, and whether the 'I' is coextensive with the body, inside it, outside of it, or both; this leads me to the notion of trans-inhabitation as an inclusive term for the co-existence of these possibilities and the ongoing reflection on them.

'Transition is a journey' is a ubiquitous metaphor in trans narratives. Contributing to a trans studies collection titled *Transgender Migrations* (2012), Aizura argues that "travel narratives are central to understanding trans experience" and explains that they often "denote a one-way trajectory across a terrain in which the stuff of sex is divided into male and female territories, divided by the border or no man's land in between" ('Travel Narratives', 140). Independently from Aizura's discussion in the field of trans studies, a quantitative linguistic analysis of this metaphor by Jenny Lederer concludes that "transition is primarily understood as a journey through space. In this metaphor […] states are locations, change is motion, progress is forward movement and purposes are destinations" (100).[28] Lederer notes that this notion of a journey through space relies on "a dual or binary category model of gender assignment, in which each category is understood as a bounded region in space" (96). For both Aizura and Lederer, in the journey metaphor, origin and destination are represented by two binary genders separated by an in-between territory (and/or a boundary) that needs to be crossed. Genders as fixed and bounded spaces – and trans(ition) as a linear and unidirectional

[28] This metaphor has clear implications for narrative temporality, which I discuss in the last part of this chapter. In Aizura's metaphor, the fact that the in-between zone is called a 'no man's land' also implies that the category of 'woman' may have more flexibility than that of 'man': could the in-between zone be a woman's land if not a man's?

movement between them – form the conceptual system that is at the basis of a canonical understanding of trans identity. In Lederer's view (and mine), 'transition is a journey' constitutes what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their seminal work on metaphors, term a "metaphorical concept": a systematic metaphor that structures the conventional understanding of a concept in terms of another (6). Aspects of 'transition' are thus understood as aspects of a 'journey', and the vocabulary used for talking about transition is borrowed from that of a journey – seen in expressions such as "the next major *step*", "it's taken five years to *get here*" (Lederer 104; my emphasis). Conceptual metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, function by downplaying and highlighting different aspects of the concept that is being understood metaphorically (10). The 'transition is a journey' metaphor highlights how transition is experienced as a teleological series of progressive steps but downplays (or even hides) the possibility that it may not end or even go somewhere. This possibility, which many of the authors I discuss attempt to make visible, is difficult to acknowledge precisely because the normative understanding of transition is based on the journey metaphor.

'Transition is a journey' structures a normative understanding of transition as what Lakoff and Johnson term a conceptual metaphor rather than a poetic or creative metaphor. This means that the "conventional ways of talking about" a concept (in this case, transition) "pre-suppose a metaphor [in this case, the journey] we are hardly ever conscious of" (Lakoff and Johnson, 6). The journey metaphor is not always used consciously, but it determines the way gender variance can be talked about. As Lakoff and Johnson argue about conceptual metaphors, the journey not only structures the way that gender-variant identity is discussed, but the way it is experienced. When a writer's experience is at odds with a journey, then, this can prompt them to find language to describe it that does not rely on the conventional metaphor. Creative metaphors can thus take on a political meaning, as they point out that conventional ways to conceptualise the world benefit some individuals (in the context of trans narratives, those who arrive at a specific destination and stay there) and exclude others. Examining creative metaphors in literature, Elena Semino argues that a metaphor can challenge "conventional representations of a particular experience" (52) by effecting the "extension, elaboration and combination" and thereby "the 'questioning' of conventional metaphors" (44). Metaphors for gender-variant experience can function in this way. For instance, Joe

Samson employs a creative metaphor to explain his attitude towards transition: "I am not interested in becoming male, and I don't want to be on a conveyor belt in the trannie [*sic*] factory, moving from female to male" (206). [29] If 'transition is a journey' dominates the conventional understanding of this experience, the conveyor belt is a distorted version of it, as it still somewhat maintains a linear progression – a beginning and an end, phases, and steps. At the same time, however, the distortion functions as a political critique of this progression as it emphasises the lack of agency involved in following the transition path prescribed by medico-legal authorities and canonical narratives.

My notion of trans-inhabitation names such a re-elaboration of existing ways to describe movements and modes of occupying gendered and bodily spaces. A systematic discussion of the different metaphors for gender-variant embodiment has not been undertaken in trans studies. Some scholars in the field have focused on spatial metaphors before, most notably Aizura in 'The Persistence of Transgender Travel Narratives' (from which I have quoted), and Halberstam in a chapter on 'Butch/FTM Border Wars' in *Female Masculinity* (1998).[30] I draw on both texts over the course of the thesis, but my own project deals more extensively with how these metaphors are configured in literature, and, especially, how they are distorted and critiqued. The need to imagine the movement of trans "according to different spatio-temporal metaphors" is stressed by Stryker, Currah and Moore (13). As opposed to two bounded regions separated by a space that the subject has to cross, these authors see "genders as potentially porous and permeable spatial territories (arguably numbering more than two)" (12) and "transing" as something different than "moving horizontally between two established gendered spaces" (13). These possibilities are explored to some extent in all the texts I discuss in this thesis. As writers (implicitly or explicitly) pick up a dominant metaphor, such as the journey – which is linked to the sense of trans-inhabitation as movement from one gender/body to another – they often critique it, for instance by conceiving of embodiment as being in two places at once, or at the borders of them. Crucially, however, the first sense remains as an echo of meaning because, ultimately, discourses about gender-variant identity always

[29] This metaphor is used in Joe Samson's 'An Other-Gendered Boy', an autobiographical narrative collected in *Finding the Real Me* (2003). I discuss this collection in Chapter Two.

[30] In Halberstam's book and in the debates in which it intervenes, FTMs are 'female to male' (trans subjects assigned female at birth who medically transition into 'male' gender assignment) and butches are subjects assigned female at birth who have a relationship to their masculinity that does not fit with the 'transsexual' model: they may still identify as women, seek no medical intervention and/or not 'fully' transition.

have to reckon with the dominant understanding of gender variance as leaving one place and arriving at another – a formulation that indeed still describes the experience of some.

Trans-inhabitation includes not only a movement but the place(s) where one 'is'; my choice of the term inhabitation ultimately stems from a concern of gender-variant authors with homes. These homes are gender categories, as origins or destinations of the journey, but can also name different locations of the body 'on the way', as well as the body's function as a bounded container for the self throughout. Lederer, while not addressing the metaphor of home as such, notes that the body in the journey metaphor is seen as a container. The use of expressions such as 'emergence of a true self' and 'trapped in the wrong body' presupposes a model that comprises an internal ('true') self – equated with the mind – and an external ('false') one equated with the body. The two are travelling together to "match the mind's gender with the body's gender" (Lederer, 112). The body in this model is an "opaque container" (108), which hides either the 'true sex' or, after the supposed end of transition, the one assigned at birth. The metaphor of the body as a specific type of container, a home, is central to Prosser's discussion of trans narratives, and it describes the location of the self both 'in' the body and 'in' a social intelligible gender. The goals identified by Prosser of "passing, belonging, attaining realness in one's gender identity" (203) are often metaphorised as coming home: "the drive of conventional transsexual narratives is nostalgically toward home – identity, belonging in the body and in the world" (177). In the texts he examines, the 'home' is the destination in which the divided self of the 'wrong body' narrative, the "unliveable shattered body", can become "a liveable whole" (92). As Prosser defines home as belonging in the body *and* in the world, a double conceptual metaphor is actually at work, connecting *home* both with the desired body and with public recognition of one's gender identity. Therefore, inhabitation is already multiple, because at least double – the dominant metaphor of the body as a home, where the self can be whole, entails a bounded whole within a bounded whole. This multiplicity moves into the 'trans' aspect of trans-inhabitation, opening up the boundaries of the 'one' space that is inhabited.

A further complication of what being at home is concerns the extent to which gender-variant bodies are 'housable' in social spaces, and therefore feel 'at home' in a certain bounded area. This has been discussed in conjunction with literal as well as metaphorical

spaces. Aizura warns that a desire to be culturally locatable, at home in the world, a desire to "belong without complication to a normative social sphere" conceals the fact that this sphere is a "fantasy" ('Borders and Homes', 290). The notion of home "forecloses the possibility that some people never wholly cross that particular border" and it "precludes the possibility that transpeople may not, for many reasons, blend into normality once sex reassignment is 'over'" (296). In this formulation, Aizura not only points out how certain subjects may not be granted a 'home' (legitimation and belonging 'in' an intelligible gender identity) but also that the ability of gender-variant subjects to 'cross borders' can be curtailed. The notion of home as a bounded space of belonging is linked to the bounded space of a nation which selects certain legitimate citizens and excludes others, and the borders delimiting social categories are implied by Aizura to be as difficult to cross as national borders for subjects who are not 'welcome' within them – for those who, to use Stone's words, cannot or will not "fade into the 'normal' population" after transition (164). The "good and brave patient (and white and rich)" (Thom, 2) described by Thom in the epigraph to this chapter gives an indication of who might be most welcome in the proper homes of gender: those who are white, wealthy, respectable, and disinclined to challenge the power imbalances inherent in the medical management of sex. Transition as a journey and gender as a home are both revealed to be metaphors with ideological implications that dictate which experiences count as legitimately trans and which do not. Trans-inhabitation aims to track a diversification of these metaphors, a more inclusive spatiotemporal conception of the body and gender that maintains the dominant models as an initial moment.

As trans-inhabitation names the occupation of multiple spaces at once, as well as a certain mode of existing across boundaries – neither fully within or fully outside the bounded container of the body and its proper place in the social order – this notion is linked with metaphors of haunting and ghostly presences. As I argue in Chapter Three, metaphors of haunting are used by gender-variant writers to express non-normative modes of embodiment. Since home is a conventional metaphor for the body and gender categories, authors who wish to present an alternative to this conceptualisation do so by conceiving (explicitly or implicitly) of this home as haunted. Hale describes his "ftm subject position" (54) as a "flitting" through "overlapping border zones constituted by the margins of several gender categories" (55). He points out that flitting "is a type of movement proper

to ghosts", who "have only partial, limited social existence" (55). The metaphor 'the trans individual is a ghost' inevitably complicates the notion of home, which is revealed to be inhospitable to gender-variant subjects: "ghosts can never again expect a social world, structured by discourse, to provide homely comforts; we have already learned that home was an illusion, so we forego nostalgia for origins lost because never properly had" (55). When categories of male and female (or even trans) cannot accommodate identities like Hale's, these categories are haunted by these identities that they exclude. The ghosts, in turn, when they find themselves assimilating into socially sanctioned homes, are haunted by what does not fit there. Becoming 'whole' in a home that is the conventional destination of the transition journey will entail leaving out certain aspects of the self, like the journey just experienced (or perhaps the fact that there was no journey), which remain as ghostly presence.

This disavowal of a 'pre-transition' past is an example of what must be cut off in order fit into a rigidly bounded category.[31] Hale gives an example of such a costly adjustment when he discusses the demand for trans men to identify with non-trans men more than with feminist women, although they often share a politics and a history with the latter (60). Stone's call to make one's past visible can be read as a call to show oneself as inhabited by different versions, or ghosts, of the self, and to show how this ambiguous presence traverses boundaries between gender categories, or between the body 'now' and 'before', thereby making them more porous. While the desire for finding a home where one can be whole still very much appears in discourses about gender-variance, contemporary trans writing also often expresses the desire to remain haunted by what cannot temporally or spatially fit into conventionally bounded categories. Despite the pathologisation of in-between states or of negative affects such as 'being haunted', there is a desire to find there a position from which to speak. Rather than wholly disavowing the idea that gender categories and bodies are homes, metaphors of haunting nuance the way in which these homes can be inhabited. As I have pointed out, my notion of trans-inhabitation captures both the dominant, and still valid for many, understanding of embodiment (the self at home) *and* the ways in which this inhabitation cannot be uncomplicated – the *trans*

[31] 'Cutting off' the past can translate into quite a literal cutting – the way in which surgery is often conceived.

capturing here the sense of the self flitting at the borders of the home, partially belonging elsewhere.[32]

Haunting and the trans-inhabitation of spaces are also, in the texts I discuss, overdetermined metaphors – representing not only gender but its intersection with other experiences of place and identity. Marisa Parham points out that haunting "is appropriate to a sense of what it means to live in between things – in between cultures, in between times, in between spaces – to live with various kinds of doubled consciousness" (3). Indeed, while I focus on trans-inhabitation as the result of being 'in between' genders, this term has implications that relate to racial and national identities as well. I have shown how Aizura's critique of the concept of home indeed views the latter as a politically loaded term denoting a site of inclusion and exclusion whose borders are policed. Additionally, haunting not only makes visible the between spaces that can be inhabited by subjects, but also between spaces that needs to be inhabited by research. C. Riley Snorton indeed sees trans subjects of colour as "shadows" of the archive, with the potential "to refigure trans historiography, necessarily redirecting focus on occasions […] of disappearance, of haunting" (145). Such shadows, like ghosts, have always existed in the 'house' of trans studies and in histories of gender variance, but dwell at the borders of legitimised gender, never fully allowed to inhabit it. Similarly, Che Gossett notes instances in which links between trans politics and anti-racist politics fail to appear, and shows, for instance, how anti-trans bathroom legislation in the United States "cannot be disimbricated" from forms of bathroom segregation representing "the legacy of racial slavery" (184). Belonging in, and crossing the borders of, bounded spaces like bathrooms, which stand in for violently enforced separations of identity categories, are spatial relations that are multiply determined, pointing to a layered and pluri-directional inhabitation of spaces.

Those who are made to haunt the homes of gender are therefore reminders of how the existence of these homes is predicated on an exclusion, a separation between subjects

[32] It is also important to point out that those of us who are not explicitly labelled as gender-variant can also trans-inhabit, haunt or fail to belong to specific spaces, both depending on our intersectional identities and simply as subjects who are never fully present, transparent, or fitting into language and social norms. However, trans or non-binary subjects more often tend to be perceived, or to perceived themselves, as trans-inhabiting in the way that I describe here.

who are viewed as legitimate inhabitants of the space, and subjects who are haunting it. The ghost metaphor is therefore coherent with, while effecting a critique of, the metaphors of the journey and the home that I have discussed so far. In Lakoff and Johnson's formulation, metaphors that are not "consistent (that is, they form no single image), [can] nonetheless 'fit together'" (44). Journey, home and ghost may not form a single image, but they all rely on the same spatial conceptualisations of identity: gender is a bounded region in space, the body is a container, gender variance involves moving in between regions whose boundaries have been conventionally traced. Adding ghosts to this conceptual organisation means extending the metaphor of home to suggest that the body – and the place that the body is recognised as inhabiting – can be haunted. Haunting is being on the border of a bounded region in space, rather than fully within it or fully outside of it, entailing that these two spaces (the binary genders) can never simply be 'left' or 'arrived at' at the start or the end of a journey. The coherence between these metaphors is complicated by the fact that, as I have argued, 'the desired body is a home' and 'recognition by society of one's gender is a home' are two distinct metaphors. My focus throughout the thesis is on both, but especially on 'the body is a home'; this metaphor is always partially consistent with the journey metaphor, as home is conventionally taken as the origin and/or destination of a journey. I argue that the home metaphor is extended and challenged (meaning that it is both relied upon and disrupted) by metaphors of ghosts and haunting, which convey different ways of inhabiting the body. What this metaphor reveals about the gender-variant body is that it is always haunted by what is not yet self, no longer self, also self.

In order to conclude that the space of home in trans writing is often already haunted, it is sufficient to note that Prosser – the critic in trans studies who most explicitly describes transition as a desire for home – occasionally uses the language of haunting. He links the desire for a different material body (expressed by trans individuals who opt for surgery) to the phenomenon of the "phantom limb"; however, while the latter "represents the remembering in the body image of parts actually lost from the material body" (84), the "phantomization of sex" (85) is a sort of remembering of the *desired* body. Gender confirmation surgery constructs not a body "that actually existed in the past, […] but one that should have existed" (84). This "recovery of what was not" makes the "arrival into the body" not "the return to home per se […] but to the romanticized ideal of home" (84).

The arrival home is thus felt to be a return because it materialises what was already a "ghost-body" (85). Prosser does not discuss haunting *after* the home is reached – once the ghost-body is materialised, once the self is supposedly whole – but he still describes a complex trans-inhabitation during the process of transition. In this use of the ghost/phantom metaphor, the body/home one is travelling toward is itself a ghost-home, a spectre of the future that the traveller strives to materialise. The home, however, is not simply *arrived at*, it is *returned to*, thereby undermining the conventional temporality of the journey as a forward movement toward a home-body that exists in the future. The ghost-body, in this formulation, is therefore not simply a spectre of the future, but of a past that was not, making its already flitting spatiotemporal location even more ambiguous. Therefore, once home (the destination of the journey) is reached, the body that arrives there (and the self that arrives 'in' the body there) carries with it multiple past bodies – one that never was, one that materially was, any other 'in-between' ones. The notion of trans-inhabitation captures the multiplicity, ambiguous presence, and slippery temporality of these bodily and 'embodiable' locations.

Many of the authors I discuss convey this more explicitly by foregoing a notion of bodily wholeness and uncomplicated presence and highlighting how the 'end point' or the 'end body' is opened up beyond its spatial and temporal boundaries by the haunting of what has come before and will come after. The ghost in trans writing conveys the difficulty of affirming that 'there' is separated from 'here', that 'now' is separated from 'then'. This viewpoint comes across in texts that critique a notion of home where the self finds itself whole. Taking up the notion of phantasmatic body parts, Gayle Salamon questions Prosser's insistence that the subject 'after' transition be an "unbroken figure of plenitude" and that "any disjuncture at the level of the body or the psyche […] must be disavowed or repudiated to secure subjectivity" (Salamon, 41). She instead suggests alternative models for trans embodiment that affirm a ghostly inhabitation of the body, a mode of ambivalent presence, and less distinct boundaries between the self and the non-self, no-longer-self, not-yet-self. She defines the body as "a mixture or amalgam of substance and ideal located somewhere between its objectively quantifiable materiality and its phantasmatic extensions into the world" (64). Multiple materialities – which exist as pasts, presents and futures in the body – and ambiguous materialities – made up of the body in its mixture of facticity and ghostly extensions – create the conditions for trans-inhabitation, a dwelling

that is at the same time in, at, and beyond the borders of the body. Affirming, as Salamon does, the capacity of the embodied self to cross borders, to be manifold and heterogenous, while still being one, and still being self, exemplifies the tension that characterises trans-inhabitation: on the one hand, movement, variation and transformability, and, on the other, stability, locatability and permanence.

Affirming that gender-variant subjects are somehow 'haunted' may seem to run counter to efforts toward de-pathologising their identities; agency, legitimisation and full unambiguous citizenship in gender categories can appear incompatible with a ghostly existence. Yet, many authors in trans studies choose to dwell on these seemingly disempowering formulations of identity – disempowering because to be haunted or a ghost is to be held back, is to speak from an ambiguous place, is to define oneself negatively with respect to existing identity categories – and argue that they have phenomenological value in describing their experiences. For instance, Eva Hayward counters a notion of becoming whole by arguing that she sees her "trans-sex as a cut-sex that 'cripples' an imagined wholeness" and that this position is "livable" and "even desirable" ('Starfish', 71). Awkward-Rich similarly emphasises how "bad feeling" can be "an unavoidable fact of being embodied" and suggests we read embodiment with a "knowledge of the fundamental fleetingness of self-sameness, […] exemplified in moments of transition" ('Trans, Feminism', 826). These authors describe, respectively, the experiences of surgery and of transition as revealing the fragmentation, disjuncture and discontinuity of the embodied self, while at the same time providing for the subject a desired and liveable identity. My notion of trans-inhabitation accounts for these feelings while grounding them in a positive notion of presence and belonging. While *inhabitation* is the desired or experienced dwelling in a sort of home (and with it, sometimes the undertaking of a journey that does go somewhere), *trans* nuances this inhabitation as taking place often in multiple and divided places by multiple and divided selves.

I have mentioned that, despite the fact that this journey-toward-home metaphor (captured in one of the meanings of trans-inhabitation – inhabiting one place and then another) is at times completely rejected as a description of the experience of gender-variance, it nonetheless leaves a trace in – or I could say 'haunts' – alternative formulations. Hayward, for instance, employs the language of journeys without the

necessity of leaving a body and arriving into another: "When I pay my surgeon to cut my penis into a neovagina, I am *moving toward myself through myself*" ('Starfish', 72; emphasis added). Indeed, Hayward conceives of transformation as a journey from one place to the same place, thus subverting the idea that one gendered space needs to be 'left' in order to 'arrive' at another: "We create embodiment by not jumping out of our bodies, but by taking up a fold in our bodies, by folding (or cutting) ourselves, and creating a transformative scar of ourselves" (73). If the body is a home for Hayward then, it is not a home lost or found, but a mutable home, transforming and being transformed over the course of a sort of journey that goes from the embodied self to the embodied self, which both *are* and *are not* the same. Not only the body as a home, but gender categories and social locations as homes can be conceived in a similar way: substantial but multiple and fluid. Bettcher argues that the meanings named by "man" and "woman" are "variable and contestable" ('Wrong Theory', 389) and that only if we "take the dominant meanings of gender terms for granted" do we see gender-variant subjects as being in between categories or in the wrong category (390). Where 'man' and 'woman' are defined in ways that are more flexible and expansive than normative understandings would have them, some subjects may find themselves inhabiting them less or more precisely. Trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming individuals often find themselves existing in multiple wor(l)ds, ones where 'woman' or 'man' is a category that excludes them and others where it is not. They may be both, or neither, or both inside and outside of them – thereby giving rise to the seemingly contradictory but phenomenologically real status of existing in more than one space.

Trans-inhabitation thus refers to gender-variant embodiment as a journey (across), a home (within), a haunting (between, both without and within) as well as a dwelling in multiple bodies or social locations. What implications does this have for narrative, and especially first-person narrative? As I show in the thesis, the I of trans-inhabitation is multiple and mutable, but always embodied – both seeking some location from where to speak and partially resisting it, both fleshing itself out as character and flitting at the borders of the narrative as narrator. Hayward conceives of the body as "pliant to a point, flexible within limits, constrained by language, articulation, flesh, history, and bone" ('Starfish', 74). Transformability, flux and flexibility are present in this formulation together with d wholeness, boundedness, and fixedness. A queer emphasis, as I have

discussed, would be on the first set of terms, as it hinges especially on crossing boundaries or incessantly destabilising. What 'trans' names, as in my notion of trans-inhabitation, is the addition of the second set of terms to be kept in tension with the first. I move on now to unpacking the implications of this in the context of narrating this trans-inhabiting I. In what follows, I show how metaphors like the journey, the home and the ghost structures are narrative forms that are both taken up and written against by texts about gender-variant identity.

Re-narration: Narrative and Time

In thinking through the term 'reassignment' as it refers to the medical interventions on the body that are required to 'transition' from one sex/gender to another, Hayward interrogates the connection between "trans–" and "re–" ('Starfish', 66). Both prefixes imply a relocation of the body beyond a certain bounded space and are central to descriptions of gender-variant embodiment. I have discussed the notion of trans-inhabitation as denoting a number of interconnected relationships with bounded wholes – movement toward, movement beyond, dwelling both inside and outside, dwelling within multiple wholes. As I move on to discuss how gender-variant embodiment is presented in narrative, I use this related prefix, "re–", to propose the notion of *re-narration*, as a mode of representation of trans-inhabitation. With the term re-narration I designate how narrating gender-variant embodiment always consists in a reworking of a canonical narrative of transition even when it deviates from it or attempts to avoid it altogether. As I have indicated, a certain metaphorical understanding of gender-variant embodiment as a journey from one bounded space to another is inevitably present whenever considering gender that is other than binary or fixed. Although many contemporary authors endeavour to tell a different story, and imagine alternative metaphorical structures, a linear and unidirectional movement with a beginning and an end point is a form that haunts most (if not all) representations of gender-variant embodiment. As I will show, re-narrating gendered bodies thus conceived involves mobilising narrative form in specific ways – from ways of selecting and arranging *what* is narrated (events, characters, the beginning and ending of the story) to ways of manipulating *how* this is presented (narrative voice, temporality, focalisation). Narrative

form becomes inextricably linked to the representation of a certain mode of embodiment. After explaining the term re-narration, I explore how gendered bodies have been linked to narrative form in the narratological approaches I draw on for my methodology. I then outline the canonical narratives, structures and temporal patterns that are 'returned to' in trans re-narration, and the modes of temporality that are employed to resist a trans normativity linked to these canonical narratives. The texts I discuss in my thesis illustrate how re-narration, as the representation of trans-inhabitation in narrative form, often takes place as a negotiation between normative structures and resistant temporalities.

The term re-narration aims to capture a mode of returning to or repeating, with a difference, a certain story. The word 'renarration' is used by Stryker in her introduction to the first *Transgender Studies Reader*. In noting that "transgender phenomena haunt the entire project of European culture" ('Knowledges', 15), she explains that trans studies aim to "renarrate" these phenomena by telling "new stories about things many of us thought we already knew" (13). I have described how a shift from a feminist or queer perspective to a trans perspective at times entails a rereading of certain texts as representing gender-variant identity rather than (only) queer desire or feminist resistance. This is the sense in which Stryker uses the term: the formation of trans studies as a discipline entails a refocusing of knowledges in light of gender-variant experiences. My use of the term maintains this connotation, implying that writing or reading narratives with an understanding of the lived experience that trans studies has foregrounded (or that is the experience of specific authors or readers) often entails a new focus on previously overlooked elements.[33] In addition to refocusing, re-narration is also linked to a notion of repetition. As I have noted, Stone argues that autobiographical narratives repeated both in the clinic and in published books, of which trans subjects appear to be the authors, are themselves repetitions of narratives of which they first were readers, like the case studies in Benjamin's *Transsexual Phenomenon* (155). This repetition of a prior narrative (which is always difficult to trace as an absolute origin) is also a connotation that I want to maintain with the use of the term re-narration.

[33] This refocusing leads me, for instance, to read for trans-inhabitation in texts where the gender of the narrator is unknown (as I do in Chapter Four), or for ways in which narrators and characters reveal or withhold knowledge through current trans and intersex perspectives on the ethical handling of knowledge in the clinic (as discussed in Chapter Six).

Keeping in mind re-narration as a refocusing and a repetition, I intend the term as denoting a reworking of specific narrative features that convey temporality. Re-narrating canonical texts that hinge on the journey metaphor will inevitably entail reckoning with a linearity that "informs, shapes, shadows and *haunts* trans lifeforms and discourses" (Fisher *et al.*, 3; emphasis added). Re-narration therefore implies a co-habitation with ghosts of linear form. A teleological forward movement from a designated beginning to a designated end is not only the mode of operation of a trans normative temporality (which I continue to explore below) but also part of a conventional understanding of what it means to order events into a narrative. In feminist narratology, the ideological implications of linear plots are central to discussions about how gender is linked to narrative. Page argues that a "binary opposition" has been set up by feminist analyses of narrative structure: on the one hand there is "the 'male plot'", which is "linear, with a trajectory of rise, peak and fall in narrative tension ending with a defined point of closure", and, on the other, "the 'female plot'" which is "non-linear, repetitive and resistant to narrative closure", "contains multiple climaxes or none at all", or "is likened to the lyric form which is organized by pre-oedipal timelessness" (22). As I analyse texts that represent alternatives to gender as binary and fixed, this simple opposition cannot work. Instead, I re-examine how temporal elements like linear trajectories, climaxes, closures, repetitions, stalling, etc. are linked to various experiences of gendered embodiment. As with trans-inhabitation, one single experience, or text, will often present a coexistence of different – and sometimes opposing – modes. Generally, canonical forms, like the linear transition plot, remain as ghostly traces in attempts to deviate from them, haunting narratives of gender variance.[34]

[34] The term plot, which I have been using so far to designate the causal and temporal structuring of elements of the story, is closely related to aspects of narrative temporality, especially 'order' (to use Genette's category). While noting the difficulty of pinning down a general definition of "plot", Karin Kukkonen identifies a tension is narratology between viewing it as "a fixed, global structure" (a "configuration of the arrangement of all story events, from beginning, middle to end") and "as progressive structuration" (highlighting "connections between story events, motivations and consequences as readers perceive them") (par.3). The former is the sense in which I use the term most often, especially in this discussion of re-narration; for instance, when I refer to canonical transition plots, I am referring to a fixed pattern that begins with unhappy childhood, moves through surgical and endocrinological interventions on the body, and reaches gender confirmation surgery as its telos. Aspects of the latter definition – progressive structuration – are also important, as I take into account how the arrangements of events in the story, together with elements of discourse such as narrative voice and focalisation, shape readers' expectations and retrospective understanding as the narrative progresses.

Narratological discussions of 'male' and 'female' plots and temporalities set a precedent for a practice of linking narrative dynamics with modes of embodiment, which I expand by considering trans studies' insights into gender and narrative. One model that Page recognises as representing the 'male plot' is Peter Brooks' in *Reading for the Plot* (1992). Brooks argues that plot consists in a forward thrust occasioned by the "arousal of an intention" (beginning of the narrative), kept in "tension" through a repetition (middle) and ending in "terminal quiescence" (return to non-narrative) (103). Brooks' linking of plot and sexual desire has prompted feminist narratologists to question the kind of body onto which this model is mapped. Susan Winnett views Brook's configuration as "vulnerably male in its assumptions about what constitute pleasure" (506) and she argues that "another set of experiences might yield another set of generalizations" (508). She identifies pregnancy and birth as embodied experiences that could lead to viewing narratives as not ending in quiescence, but rather as being "radically *pro*spective, full of the incipience that the male model will see resolved in its images of detumescence and discharge", thereby configuring the "end" as "beginning itself" (509; emphasis in original). By focusing, as Winnett does, on the fact that "[t]he existence of two models implies […] the possibility of many more" (508), my aim is not to show that there is such a thing as 'the plot of gender-variance', but to argue that canonical trans plots (like the transition narrative as a progression from point A to point B) are mapped onto a specific set of experiences that excludes others. Because of this, they are often re-narrated as coexisting – in texts about, authored by, or read by gender-variant subjects – with temporal modes that disrupt them.

A transition from point A to point B is central to canonical representations of gender variance as they are codified in news articles and broadcasts, and in trans autobiographies in the second half of the twentieth century. A narrative of change from one state to another –from male to female, from unhappy to happy, or from 'wrong body' to 'right body' – can take different routes while maintaining this basic shape. Echoing Stone's critique of the implausible sudden transformation from a presumably unambiguous gender to its presumed opposite, Carroll notes a shift in the imagined temporality of trans embodiment exemplified by the replacement, in the 1990s, of the term "sex change" – which "has acted to imply an irrevocable rupture effected by medical intervention" – with "transition" – which "foregrounds a durational experience" (4).

Dominant understandings of gender variance may have evolved from a sudden shift to a gradual one, but they maintain a sense of forward progress. Laura Horak, in an analysis of YouTube videos that document transition, notes that they are characterised by a "linear and teleological" time – "directed toward the end of living full time in the desired gender" – which she terms "hormone time" (580). Hormone time is dictated by the slow but progressive changes made by hormones on the body, which are usually documented with photographs presented in chronological order through a time lapse. Horak notes that this "insistently affirmative structure is powerfully enabling to trans youth trying to imagine a future" even as it is sometimes at odds with the "temporal multiplicity" experienced by the video creators (580). Her analysis shows that the linear temporalities that shape or haunt contemporary representations of gender variance can be vital for those whose survival depends on imagining a fixed and stable gendered home at the end of the journey. In the texts I discuss, re-narrations of 'hormone time' and 'sex change' at times take the form of challenging forward movement altogether, but more often reproduce these patterns while engaging in cautious negotiations with them, demonstrating that not only the movement of 'trans' but the dwelling of 'inhabitation' are at stake the project of self-determination inherent in first-person narrative.

In these negotiations, the end of the narrative – also central for narratologists like Brooks, Winnett, DuPlessis, and others – is an especially contested site: it can become the place where a certain ideological meaning is secured and can control the text as a whole, disciplining the body represented within it. I have noted that there is a connection between the notion of 'arriving' into a gendered home and the normative values that marginalise the experience of some.[35] Bodies that may not properly assimilate after the supposed end of transition show that this ending (the arrival home) is the crucial moment

[35] To add to the normative values represented by the end of transition that I have already noted, such as whiteness and gender coherence, Dan Irving argues that social recognition for trans subjects hinges on the ability of their body to "constitute a productive working body, that is, […] capable of participating in capitalist production processes" (40). The assimilation into 'normality' that awaits the trans subject at the end of their 'narrative' is inextricably linked to the productivity that all subjects are expected to perform. Juliet Jacques' memoir, which I discuss in Chapter Two, describes how living as a woman at work, and thereby proving to be capable of holding a job after transition, is an essential test required by clinical authorities in order to allow her to proceed in her transition. Jake Pyne also notes, that "[o]n the list of the costs" of post-transition assimilation, "the demand for normativity could be reread as an incitement to able-mindedness" ('Autistic Disruptions', 344). He notes that "for trans subjects, this requirement of citizenship is key: one may be permitted a 'wrong' body on the condition it is inhabited by a 'right' mind" (344). Neuronormativity and participation in capitalist production are then part of the characteristics of the 'ideal' trans subject, to be secured at the 'end' of the narrative.

in which 'citizenship' is (or is not) awarded to the previously deviant trans subject (sometimes through the literal possession of the proper papers recognising one's gender). The time of transition is figured as a "transgression" which is a "necessary but momentary lapse on the way to a proper embodied belonging, a proper home and full social inclusion" (Aizura, 'Borders and Homes', 293). This *necessary but momentary* time occupies the place of the narrative middle, which is in tension with an ending that will sanction it as such: necessary in order to have reached this ending, but momentary because eventually superseded by it. This description of transition maps onto Brooks' argument that "narrative […] is in essence a retrospective mode, tending toward a finality that offers retrospective illumination of the whole" (77). In this formulation, the conclusion of the narrative is the moment on which "the beginning and middle depend for their […] meaning" (66). In analysing re-narrations of canonical trans temporalities, I focus on how this teleology coexists with attempts to resist it. In order to illuminate what these attempts are, I turn to studies of queer temporality, which analyse modes of living time that sit in tension with a linear and forward-moving plot.

In describing the demands of the canonical trans plot, I draw on Elizabeth Freeman's notion of "chrononormativity" as an imposition of "forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege" (3). I understand the plot of the homeward journey, of the body that detaches from one fixed and bounded gender space to be ultimately assimilated unproblematically into another, as a form of trans chrononormativity. This normativity is also linked to "a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality" (Halberstam, *Queer Time*, 4). Halberstam highlights how both queer and trans subjects can experience a "queer" time that opens up as the "potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing." (2) Long periods of stability, a time of maturity following adolescent unruliness, the unidirectional timeline of marriage, and reproduction, and the participation in economic structures that value the progressive accumulation of wealth to be handed down to future generations represent some of the patterns and sequences that can exclude gender-variant and non-heteronormative subjects. While queer subjects experience homonormativity as a pressure to conform to models of gender expression, desire, coupledom, and childrearing displayed by privileged groups, trans individuals can also face other chrononormative demands, such as the imperative to express a coherent and stable self once transition is

considered finished (in the gaze of the medico-legal authorities who are given the power to assess this). While this model allows for transition as a period of flexibility, unruliness, and exploration akin to normative notions of adolescence, the official sanctions of gender-confirmation surgery and legal approval of one's gender are meant to signal an end to this period. Therefore, subjects who are not seen as having completed these steps are at risk of being read as dwelling in a time of precariousness and unpredictability. Temporalities like 'hormone time', the 'journey', or the definitive 'end' of transition are codified in narratives of identity such as the trans memoir, which, as Amin notes, "produces an experience of healing and empowerment for certain trans subjectivities and one of fragmentation and invalidation for others" (220). It is the exclusionary effect of universalising these temporalities, rather than the judgement that they are inaccurate or false representations of gender variance, that renders them an object of critique for some.

Trans chrononormativity is both an underlying narrative that structures understandings of gender variance and a set of patterns that can be expressed in individual narratives through the arrangement of plot. Daniel Punday's theorisation of the relationship between body and plot, although it does not specifically consider gender, can be re-narrated from the standpoint of trans theory. Punday argues that plot can be conceived as the relationship between an "overarching body image", *i.e.* a culturally intelligible and narratable body, and an "unruly body that resists that overarching body" and endeavours to become the former over the course of the narrative (99). In many of the texts I discuss, the narrator is up against a medico-legal timeline that is supposed to culminate in an 'overarching' trans body (the home/end of the narrative) while finding that their own body is perceived as 'unruly' if and when it fails to conform to this promised ending. Plot, for Punday, "emerges at the moment that these two bodies are imagined as related to each other" (99). In trans narratives, the unruly body is seen as deviating from a status quo (the gender assigned at birth) and as being in tension with the socially sanctioned body that it strives to become (the overarching body, or the gender of 'destination'). While the body is in between these two states, narrative (the movement of transition) occurs. The chrononormativity of this model consists in positing the transitioning body as necessary but momentary, rather than sometimes a destination in itself. The transitioning body is the 'unruly' body, a deviation needed for there to be anything to narrate in the first place, but the demand is that it becomes the 'overarching body' and

re-assimilates into social normality – normality being, among other things, the choice between two distinct, binary and fixed genders.

The chrononormative model of a status quo interrupted by the unruly body and resolved into the overarching body has more specific steps variously situated along the way. Although not specifically discussing transition, Freeman draws attention to how chrononormative demands require life to be understood in a "novelistic framework: as event-centred, goal-oriented, intentional, and culminating in epiphanies or major transformations" (5). Over the course of the thesis, I examine how the events, goals, epiphanies, and transformations that are supposed to characterise life in general, and gender-variant life more specifically, can be re-narrated. Some of the most insistently repeated steps of the journey are: crossdressing in childhood and in 'pre-transition' moments, denial of one's 'true' gender, realisation, confession, rupture with one's previous life, hormone replacement therapy, surgery, and self-actualisation in various aspects of life. Anyone who identifies as a gender other than the one assigned at birth (and/or would seek medical intervention to embody it) is continually expected to conform to this pattern. J.R. Latham describes the language that medical authorities (still) use to enforce this normative timeline and punish deviations from it. He presents a narrative of his own experience of transition reconstructed from clinicians' reports and his own personal records. The psychiatrist's report indicates that they have sought a second opinion on whether Latham should be allowed to undergo a double mastectomy because "his transgender treatments are likely to fall outside the *usual trajectory* for most trans-men i.e. testosterone therapy preceding chest reconstruction" (190; emphasis in original). The perception that there is a deviation from the expected consecutive stages of transition (hormone replacement therapy preceding surgery) stalls the progress that Latham himself wishes to make: being referred to a surgeon. When this finally happens, although the surgeon ultimately agrees to perform the mastectomy, he states in his report that "*she* seems rather reluctant to consider [testosterone] and I really wonder what her *final aims* are" (198; emphasis added). Tellingly, the uncertainty of the ending (the unknowability of the subject's so-called final aims) leads the surgeon to misgender Latham, implying that male pronouns can only be earned at the end of the (correct) journey. The difficulties encountered by Latham are evidence of chrononormative effects: only those who experience the temporal dimension of their gender in a specific way are

allowed access to ways to embody, and be recognised as, their actual identity. Otherwise they remain unruly, uncertain, stuck in the middle of the narrative.

Trans re-narration can shift the emphasis away from the expected 'final aims' – reconciling the self with the overarching body – and towards modes of inhabitation associated with the middle, proving that these are as valid expressions of gender variance as the ones that follow the usual trajectory, the right chronological order, and strive to leave the middle behind. Brooks' description of the middle of the narrative as "a kind of divergence or deviance" (103) implies that the middle has potential to resist the normative demands of the end. Judith Roof's queer critique of theories of narrative makes this explicit: Brooks' equation of the sense of satisfaction afforded by the end of the narrative with male ejaculation is for Roof one example of how narrative is pervasively conceived as "a metaphorically heterosexual dynamic within a reproduction aegis" (xxii). She argues that in order to overcome the divergence and deviance of the middle (on which it nonetheless depends), narrative needs to resolve it into a "child/product" or its "countless analogies" that can "occupy the satisfying end of the story", such as "knowledge, mastery, victory, another narrative, identity, even death" (xvii). Canonical trans narratives indeed aim to secure identity as a product of their unfolding, but this identity is conceived in narrow terms, as it is predicated on a 'completed' transformation, permanence in the gender of 'arrival' and integration into society. Like Roof, I argue that there are possibilities afforded by the "narrative middle" as "the scene for doubt, risk, and uncertainty" that resists the imperative to produce an ending (xxxiv). While Roof shows that this is the site of non-heteronormative desire, I argue that this middle – especially in narratives of transition – is also a moment of trans-inhabitation that opens up the bounded spaces of bodies and gendered categories, so that the home/end always remains haunted by the ghost of the middle. Rearranging the consecutive order of the canonical trans plot elements, stalling 'hormone time', and other strategies for anachronically juxtaposing temporal moments that are supposed be separate, or disorganising those that are supposed to be successive, are the ways is which this sense of trans-inhabitation as embodied coexistence of past, present, and future can be achieved in re-narration.

However, and this is where my approach diverges from a queer emphasis on continual disruption and moments of unruliness, I also stress that a lack of closure, or a perpetual

dwelling in the middle is seldom a solution for narratives of gender-variant experience that ultimately seek, in one way or another, to secure a liveable identity – even when they want to expand the notion of what this identity can be. Therefore, in re-narrations of canonical transition plots, the ending cannot be avoided altogether, and it is instead re-opened, re-worked, re-turned to, without foregoing 'inhabitation', dwelling, stopping (or at least pausing) somewhere bearable. Emily Grabham's analysis of the language of the UK GRA helps illuminate how a sanctioned end to the legal timeline of transition presents both opportunities and challenges. Grabham notes that the GRA allows an individual to change one's legal gender but does so with "the injunction to demonstrate a 'secure' and permanent gender identity 'until death'" and therefore it "does not admit gender becoming post recognition", presenting "arrival into citizenship as gender closure" (163). While pointing out that designating a moment where gender must be fixed marginalises those for whom this is not a possible or desirable situation, Grabham also argues that alternatives to this permanent end cannot be based on advocating for a perpetual "gender indeterminacy" (167) or "gender flexibility" (163) – essentially, an 'endless middle' – since for many recognition of a legal binary gender is a crucial step for a liveable existence. Throughout the thesis, I focus on endings (especially as, in first-person narration, the ending can be conceived as the place where the narrating-I comes into existence) to show how they maintain or resolve (to borrow DuPlessis's words) "the contradictions that animate the work" (3). Grabham also notes that the linearity of transition is itself a departure "from dominant understandings of sexed physical maturation and the normative life course" (164). Therefore, a non-linear, non-teleological temporality and resistance to forward movement do not need to be the only ways of narrating trans-inhabitation, as the recognition of an existence across multiple linear narratives, without foregoing all possible 'endings', can achieve a similar aim.

Linearity and teleology are not the only chrononormative and narrative demands for the construction of an intelligible gender-variant identity, and therefore not the only forms that are 'resisted' in re-narration. Prosser notes that the narrative through which trans subjects make sense of themselves for clinicians and – sometimes – audiences, needs to present the canonical trans plot not only in the proper order but also "clearly and coherently", and also "carefully supported by appropriate episodes presented in an orderly manner, sufficiently but not overwhelmingly detailed" (108). In essence, "the

subject must be a skilled narrator of his or her own life", a narrator who does not "falter, repeat, disorder, omit, digress" (108). This formulation highlights the narrator's role not only in the ordering of events, but in their selection: the matter of 'omitting' and 'digressing' and the imperative to include what Freeman calls "major epiphanies and transformations" (5). Many texts I discuss use event selection and the weight that the narrator gives to these events as a strategy for representing marginalised identities. Re-narrating gender-variant lives often includes choosing different elements of story: for instance, avoiding surgery or conflict with family and community, in favour of showing an acceptance of seemingly contradictory embodied experiences, or a connection with other gender-variant subjects in one's community or history, or indeed plots that do not centre on gender or the body. At the same time, a first-person voice – as well as focalisation through the experiencing-I, the narrating-I, or both – can alter what constitutes an epiphany, a transformation, an 'appropriate episode', and which affects are associated to certain embodied experiences.

Narratives of gender variance, or of transition, can direct readers' expectations if the topic is known in advance – this can happen through paratextual clues, knowledge of the author's other writings, or if the texts are autobiographies of previously known individuals. Because of the relatively small canon of narratives of gender variance and the need for their repetition in order to gain legitimacy, the canonical trans plot has recognisable elements. Certain steps of the plot, affects or attitudes can therefore be anticipated as the narrative progresses. Whether or not the narrator reveals (through prolepses) that transition, surgery, or 'epiphanies and revelations' about gender identity will occur at some point, some passages might be read with the expectation that they yield meaning in relation to this (for instance, assertions that the narrator 'felt different from other girls/boys'). Freeman argues that in a normative temporality of productivity that reads time as progress, or a life as a meaningful life, "the past seems useless unless it predicts and becomes material for the future" (5). Brooks argues the same for narrative, albeit without theorising alternatives: "we are able to read present moments […] as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot" (94). Even if gender identity is not already anticipated as a theme or ending of the narrative, depending on familiarity with previous texts, some scenes – for

instance, a crossdressing child – can be read as clues that predict the development of the plot. These scenes are expected to be selected for their potential to prove or corroborate the plausibility of a certain ending – in the same way that, as Stone, Prosser and others note, a narrative of 'authenticity' needs to be constructed for clinicians. Trans re-narrations can thus choose to play with these expectations by including 'useless' events (to use Freeman's term), or by delaying the revelation of what their 'use' will be.

The possibilities afforded by first-person narration play a part in selecting, anticipating, and emphasising certain events at the expense of others. Canonical autobiographical narratives, or fictional narratives that adopt their style, tend to have a retrospective narrator: a narrating-I who looks back on a past self. This narrator can work to reinforce or disrupt the notion that the ending confers a fixed meaning on what comes before it by employing (or not) direct intervention and addresses to the reader, or by focalising either through the experienced self or on the still unknowing self. A first-person narrator can amplify or smooth over contradictions in the narrative by being more or less authoritative, or reliable, and can signal their investment in certain events through their duration (relative length of discourse time with respect to story time). A non-retrospective narrator, who 'speaks' in the present tense, can delay the interpretation of events and therefore emphasise multiple possible futures.[36] These choices convey the nuances of trans-inhabitation and represent disavowed embodiments that are excluded by canonical trans plots, disjoining lived moments (supposed steps of the journey) from their expected consequences to show that the journey may lead somewhere else, or there

[36] I discuss the effect of such present-tense narratives at various points during the thesis, for instance in my reading of Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie* (2008) in Chapter Three and of Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) in Chapter Four. I do not theorise any overarching function of present-tense narration, however, as the effects of tense vary depending on the text. In Chapter Two, for instance, I argue that present-tense statements in autobiographical narratives often make reference to the narrating-I at the expense of the experiencing-I, thus either challenging or reinforcing a narrative progression in which the latter becomes the former. In novels like Smith's, present-tense narration is employed as a strategy to juxtapose past and present, showing their simultaneity in memory and phenomenological experience. While a full discussion of the uses of present tense is beyond the scope of this project, my remarks could be productively put into conversation with recent works such as Carolin Gebauer's *Making Time: World Construction in the Present-Tense Novel* (2021). Gebauer argues that present-tense narration is a "narrative strategy which can fulfil a wide range of different functions in narrative fiction, most of which are not related to the aspect of time" and theorises a number of these functions (301). She suggests that an analysis of present-tense narration through the lens of feminist narratology might "open the way to an examination of how the fictional present contributes to narrative themes like transgender, sexual orientation and sexual identity, as well as ethnicity and race" (308). While I cannot undertake this examination here, I would add that the use of tense in narratives with gender-variant narrators has implications for how identity itself is understood as a relationship with time.

may not be a journey at all. Further, in the case of this autobiographical (or fictionally so) voice, a form of re-narration occurs *within* the text – the narrator 'repeats' in some way what has happened outside the text, or, in the case of fiction, what is constructed as having already happened to the narrator. Therefore, there is scope for a retrospective narrator to make it clear that a certain interpretation of events is the result of explicit selection and ordering, as I argue is the case in Juliet Jacques' *Trans* (2015) or in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2002). This can lead readers to suspect that a perfectly coherent meaning (and gender) may be the result of distortions and exclusions.

Even if the retrospective narrator's interventions manage to successfully overcome the unruliness of the middle, and secure a fixed and coherent identity, over-emphasising coherence can have another effect that challenges the temporality of the journey from A to B. For instance, the ending can become so anticipated that it effectively makes the journey unnecessary. In that case, there is no unruly body that detaches itself from the social order and needs to be assimilated back into it, but instead a body that 'always was' the future one. Bettcher's description of the "two versions" of the "wrong-body model" of trans identity is useful here ('Wrong Theory', 383). In the first version, the individual "through genital reconstruction surgery, *becomes* a man or a woman", while in the other "one affirms that one has always really been the woman or man that one claims to be" (383; emphasis in original). I see these two senses of *becoming* versus *being* captured in the terms *gender reassignment* and *gender confirmation* respectively, both describing the same process but the former as a narrative of relocation and the latter as one of recognition. The second model can yield a certain narrative 'staticness' – if the point of 'always having been' is stressed enough, it can significantly stall narrative movement.[37] The smaller the gap between unruly and overarching body, experiencing-I and narrating-I, and the more the narrative of transition lacks a clear beginning and end. This staticness can be employed to show that perhaps a journey is only necessary if genders are seen as separate and bounded spaces positioned at a distance from one another and only inhabitable one at a time. An extreme version of this re-narration would be to affirm that

[37] There are development narratives that one can tell about the 'always having been' model, for instance a progressive struggle to make others understand gender in the same way as the protagonist does from the start, and of seeking acceptance as the gender one has always known oneself to be, but I focus here on the lack of movement of this kind of narrative relative to the 'becoming' model.

there is no narrative at all, because there is no difference between the starting point and the destination – therefore, one way to re-narrate would be to not narrate.[38]

Aside from non-narration, re-narration can take the form of halting or stalling, dwelling in the middle, rearranging, juxtaposing, multiplying, beginning or ending somewhere else, presenting elements irreducible to a unified narrative, going backwards, narrating 'useless' events, and more. Re-narrating can be performed both by authors and by readers – indeed, I re-narrate some of the texts I analyse in the sense that I re-read them in the context of trans studies. Ultimately, the goal of re-narration is to work toward securing more liveable embodied identities. This is done by articulating and legitimising phenomenological experiences of gender that are obscured by canonical models, but also by revealing how these models are instruments of social regulation, discipline, and violence. As Snorton and Jin Haritaworn put it, the "universalized trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization largely remains uninterrogated in its complicities and convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist, and imperialist projects" (67). Some of the texts I discuss aim to precisely uncover these complicities and convergences, while others remain caught up in them. Ultimately, re-narration as I intend it is a tension between the queer time of the unruly body and the trans chrononormativity of the (ideological) overarching body. Like the different facets of trans-inhabitation, this tension is never to be resolved, as narratives of gender-variance emphasise alternately (or simultaneously) inhabitation and crossing, identity and multiplicity, coherence and fragmentation.

Timelines and Territories

The methodological encounter between trans studies and narrative studies allows me to attend to the spatio-temporal models of identity that are both adopted and reworked in narratives about gender-variant subjects. Through my mapping of the relations between feminist, queer, and trans theories and politics at the beginning of this chapter, a complex spatialisation of gender has emerged. As Halberstam describes it, a "cartography" of gender-variant identities can take the form of "two territories of male and female, divided

[38] Indeed, this is the option that many writers take when they choose to narrate something other than gender variance, for instance by including a trans character without discussing the emergence, development, or consolidation of their identity. The texts I focus on do include some degree of narration of identity, but it is important to note that this does not have to be the case.

by a flesh border and crossed by surgery and endrocrinology" or, alternatively, it can be "a charting of hybridity" which results from "a recognition of the dangers of investing in comforting but tendentious notions of home" (*Female Masculinity*, 164). These two spatialisations (hybridity and separate territories) coexist in discourses about genders that are other than binary or fixed. The question of what exactly is in between, or outside, (or indeed inside) bounded gender spaces continues to be asked and (partly) answered in all the texts I discuss. Categories and distinctions from narrative studies help to show how gender is conceived in each of them. For instance, narratology's descriptions of the I as being in between diegetic levels can be re-imagined (re-narrated) as a trans-inhabitation: the I inhabits both the world of the narrative act and the world of the characters, and it does so simultaneously and/or ambiguously. The tension between narrating-I and experiencing-I, the focalisation through one or both, the distance between them, their occasional indistinguishability, are also matters of trans-inhabitation: coexistence of multiple selves, succession of one self to another, selves being at the borders of them-selves. Conventional metaphors are also employed and re-worked in order to convey these trans-inhabitations. In texts with gender-variant narrators, homes and journeys – like all metaphors – entail exclusions, and ghosts are rem(a)inders of these exclusions. Ultimately, all these metaphors point to the violence inherent in the mapping of social spaces through categories as territories, as the tracing of borders cuts through and around subjects. The elimination of metaphors (or indeed borders and categories) is never envisioned as a solution, however; instead, each text presents its own negotiation with this spatial system. The multifaceted term trans-inhabitation names all these movements and dwellings at once, the back-and-forth of belonging and resistance.

By asking the question that feminist narratology is persistently asking (how is narrative form linked to gender?) with a new emphasis on trans, non-binary and non-conforming genders, I not only focus on the spaces inhabited by the I, but I also show that formal choices related to temporality indicate trans re-narrations of established models. The duration of scenes, the ordering of events, omissions and emphases, all have ethical and political implications outside of texts. The end of the narrative – the moment in which the experiencing-I supposedly matures into the narrating-I, in which the papers of gender citizenship are awarded to those who have undertaken the correct journey, and in which the normative overarching body reabsorbs the unruly, trans-inhabiting, 'temporary' body

– is a key site of negotiation with these models. Re-narrations – like ghosts – exist ambiguously in between the narrative that is reworked and the one that is produced. They shape notions of identity from within, outside and/or the margins of canonical narratives by adopting and reworking their temporal operations. In the chapters that follow, I analyse space and metaphors, plot and temporality, voice and focalisation, charting how narrative form encodes conceptions of gender, ethical positions, strategies to redress marginalisation. As I focus on embodiment (trans-inhabitation) and temporality (re-narration), other key questions about gender-variant narrators emerge, which I have anticipated in the Introduction. What does it mean to write/speak in the first person as someone whose authority and ability to articulate a discourse about themself has been historically denied? How do gender-variant identities become visible both in the text (as characters who see or are seen by others) and in the world in which these narratives circulate? These questions of voice and visibility, to which I come back in the Conclusion, can again be best approached through a methodology at the intersection of trans politics – with its focus on social dynamics of speaking and seeing – and narratology – with its focus on textual dynamics of speaking and seeing.

CHAPTER TWO

The Autobiographical I and the Temporalities of Transition[39]

> "I don't just mean the difference in how long trans people live. And I don't just mean in the sense that we have two kinds of age. But the difference with transsexual age is what can be expected from you. Cis people have so many benchmarks for a good life that go by age."
> "You're talking about the wife, the kids, the dog," Wendy said.
> "More than that. Also yes, that. It didn't stop being important," said Sophie. "Cis people always have timelines."
> […]
> "I wonder if cis people think about their past in the same way we do," Raina said suddenly.
> "How do we think about our past?" said Wendy.
> And Raina said, "Hmm."
>
> ~ Casey Plett, *Little Fish* (2018)

In this epigraph, in which trans women discuss time, a number of patterns and timings are evoked: being out of synch compared to the 'timelines' of 'cis people', having 'two kinds of age' (one in relation to one's birth, one from the start of transition), premature death, and the question – left open – of how trans people 'think about their past'. These concerns about the temporalities of trans life, and their encoding in narrative, are the focus of this chapter. While here they are raised in dialogue, as if readers were eavesdropping on a private conversation between members of a community engaged in a collaborative negotiation of what their identities mean to them, the texts I discuss in this chapter focus on singular narrators attempting to articulate for others the embodied timings of their transition, the medico-legal timelines that act to shape it from the outside, and the narrative forms that allow them to order this experience. Since the early 1990s, a number of gender-variant authors have sought to resist the canonical trans narrative produced in diagnostic manuals, encounters with clinicians and trans autobiographies. This is the moment after which the texts I discuss in this chapter were published: by this

[39] An earlier version of this chapter was published in *a/b: Autobiographical Studies,* vol. 34, no.1 (2019).

point, the trans memoir had acquired, as one of its authors argues, the status of "a genre, with recognizable cliches and conventions" (Jacques, 'Forms of Resistance', 359). In Chapter One, I have discussed some of these conventions, such as the 'magical switch' brought about by surgery, scenes from childhood anticipating a disidentification with the gender assigned at birth, and the "chronological progression from a 'terrible-present-in-the-wrong-body' to a 'better-future-in-the-right-body'" (Fisher *et al.,* 2). This chapter examines the *autobiographical I* of gender-variant life writing as a site of re-narration. As I have outlined, I intend re-narration as a re-imagining of canonical trans narratives and a re-configuring of formal elements that convey temporality. This operation always maintains a relationship with what it writes against. Therefore, I discuss how gender-variant life writing often effects a negotiation between existing conventions – a linear progression from unhappy childhood to the 'epiphany' of gender identification, to bodily modification, to surgery, to happiness, which sees all the elements as participating in the creation of a final and fixed identity – and a resistance to them. I refer to the protagonist of each autobiographical narrative by their first name, as I would do with any character. I use their surname when I refer to them as authors. Inevitably, however – just as the boundaries between the narrating-I and the experiencing-I are blurry in first-person narration – a clear-cut distinction is not always easy to make.

I discuss here autobiographical texts from different moments in the last three decades: Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (1994)[40], Juliet Jacques' *Trans: A Memoir* (2015) and narratives from Katrina Fox and Tracie O'Keefe's collection *Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity* (2003). What these texts have in common is a suspicion of the canonical trans narrative, its function for conferring intelligibility to the subject, and its chrononormative effect of denying validity to experiences that deviate from it. As Sarah Rondot argues in her discussion of the development of the trans memoir, there has been a shift in the last three decades from seeing texts in this genre as following a fixed structure, purported to represent a "universal trans* story" (531), to witnessing a proliferation of "trans* life narratives" contributing to a "multivocal conversation" (547). The narrators I discuss in this chapter indeed see their own narrative of identity as differing both from the 'universal trans story'

[40] I use the 2016 edition, which was updated, and I address the changes in my discussion of this text.

and from other possible alternatives to it. As Jacques puts it, trans subjects who use the *autobiographical I* are "forced to walk a difficult line" as they are put in a position where, in representing themselves, they have to "make sure [they] don't *misrepresent* anyone" (*Trans*, 231; emphasis in original). Instead of simply *repeating* a 'universal trans story', the awareness that such a story is based on the experience of some while it excludes others results in the *autobiographical I* finding itself trans-inhabiting (being simultaneously or alternately inside, outside and at the borders of) the 'we' of the gender-variant community. As Bornstein puts it: "Our stories all tie together, our stories overlap" (*Gender Outlaw*, 16). In these texts, the author's narrative of gender variance gestures toward a multiplicity of others: sharing a space but never fully coinciding with them.

Despite their commitment to not universalise their own gender-variant life narrative, the authors I discuss, and many other trans writers who write autobiographically, continue to find value in telling their stories publicly. This is linked to a need to assert agency against a history that has filtered gender-variant voices through the authority of medical professionals or publishers. Prosser argues that the authorisation of the clinician, as in the case of Benjamin's preface to Jorgensen's *A Personal Autobiography* (1967), "'grants' the autobiographer a narrative voice, vouching both for its representationality (authenticity) and its representativeness (exemplarity)", while the life narrative itself "affirms the success of the clinician's work" (126). The voice of the medical professional, in early trans memoirs, legitimises the very existence of the gender-variant subject as transsexual, intersex, or what they have otherwise been diagnosed to be, by validating their claim to their own gender. This situation, like any encounter with clinicians, limits the scope of what can be included in the narrative, and places greater pressure on authors to conform to the supposed universal trans story which is created in the feedback loop between learned narratives, repeated narratives, and published narratives. Therefore, it remains crucial for the self-determination of gender-variant subjects to continue to write as *autobiographical I*, partly in order to articulate a more ambivalent relationship to the medical authorisation of trans subjectivity – either by telling another 'side of the story' or by narrating gender-variant identity as it exists outside of psychopathological definitions. I have discussed how Latham achieves this by examining and questioning his own medical records, subverting the dynamic of 'authorisation' of a trans voice: rather than medical professionals introducing and commenting on his own writing, he introduces and

comments on theirs, regaining authority over his own narrative. As is the case with Latham, the self-determination narratives that I discuss here re-narrate the temporalities of transition – the expected order, duration, beginning and ending of gendered 'becoming'.

There are two functions of the clinician's preface identified by Prosser, and I have touched on the issue of 'exemplarity' – the guarantee that the story one is about to read is an instance of the universal trans story – and indicated that the authors I discuss explicitly decline to make this guarantee. The other function, that of granting 'authenticity', needs some more discussion because of its relationship with the perceived ability of individuals who are marginalised because of their gender to tell the 'truth' about themselves. The clinician's preface has been needed because of a tendency to see gender-variant patients as unreliable. As Bettcher argues, individuals who transition are often seen as "deceivers" – when they are (perceived to be) "discovered to be 'really a man or woman', 'disguised as a woman or man'" – and as "pretenders" – when they are (perceived to be) "engaging in nothing but a kind of pretence" of gender ('Wrong Theory', 391). If a gender-variant author is believed to be a deceiver or a pretender in the first place, a life narrative that affirms their expression and the embodiment of a gender that they were not assigned at birth will be seen as inauthentic. This perception may in turn find itself at odds with the act of writing autobiographically, which is distinguished from writing fiction through a vouched relationship to truth. Linda Anderson notes that influential scholars of autobiography like James Olney or Philippe Lejeune insist on an "'honest' intention" that "guarantees the truth of the writing" as the defining feature of autobiography (2). Anderson argues that, because "we [have not] necessarily believed all subjects in the same way", autobiographical writing becomes the prerogative of those whose honesty and ability to tell the truth about themselves is not questioned, thereby excluding marginalised subjects (3). In the context I examine, writing as an *autobiographical I*, without medical or other authorities legitimising the account, is an important step in asserting the validity of gender-variant subjects' knowledge about themselves.

Given the fraught relationship to truth that haunts trans life writing, the *autobiographical I* as a mode of narration is characterised by an uneasy promise of authenticity, as well as an equally uneasy adherence to conventional linear structures of transformation and

growth that would make one's 'truth' intelligible. Both characteristics signal a re-narration (repetition with a difference) of not only trans autobiographical forms, but related patterns of maturation and change, such as the *Bildungsroman*. The 'two kinds of age' referred to in the epigraph hint that transition can be viewed as a sort of adolescence – both periods being characterised by physical and psychological transformation in the midst of hormonal changes and the consolidation of a sense of self. These times of change occupy in narrative the place of the unruly body (to use Punday's term) which detaches itself from (and troubles) a status quo, undertakes a journey, and finally finds its proper home in the social world. If transition is a "second puberty" (Jacques, *Trans*, 223), it is perhaps unsurprising that the trans memoir form would partly overlap with the structure of the *Bildungsroman*, as the latter traces "the journey from youth to maturity" of a protagonist whose "sense of self is in flux" and who "striv[es] to reconcile individual aspirations with the demands of social conformity" (Graham, 1). The process of maturation or change that I have discussed as covering the distance between the experiencing-I and the narrating-I is, in the *Bildungsroman* as well as in the trans memoir, a process by which a younger protagonist gains progressive knowledge of themself and the world as their body and mind transform, eventually learning both to recognise their desires and to fit them within social norms. At the end of this process, the experiencing-I has become a narrator, who then retrospectively revisits and orders the events leading up to this becoming. The texts I discuss in this chapter work to re-narrate this general structure together with the specific normative trans temporalities that are associated with it.

Together with the questioning of whether a progressive transformation and linear growth have occurred between the younger character and the narrator, what characterises the trans *autobiographical I* is a relationship of identity between the I inside the text and the person of the author, about whom the text ambiguously promises to tell the truth. Laura Marcus's discussion of "women autobiographers" anticipates some of the modes of engagement with this 'truth' that also apply to the texts in this chapter, as she notes that women often "subvert the 'autobiographical pact' by including problematic or ambiguous signals which trouble rather than confirm the distinction between

autobiography and fiction" (280).[41] In an interview with myself, Jacques discusses how an awareness of narrative structure is what enables her to talk about herself autobiographically: "The very early drafts of writing were very difficult because I did not know what to include and what to leave out, and it was only when I treated myself *as a character* […] that I could work out which anecdotes contributed to that and which ones did not." ('Interview', 109; my emphasis). Event selection is implied here to be guided not by what would be the most 'authentic' expressions of the self, but by what would make sense as a story: what sustains a "narrative arc" (109), what adheres to a *Bildungsroman* structure, what may or may not fit with audiences' expectations about trans lives. The question of troubling the 'distinction between autobiography and fiction' not only pertains to acts of life writing in general, but takes on distinct meanings for gender-variant authors. The extent to which the canonical trans narrative is constructed for a specific audience, and for specific purposes, is raised by Stone's 'Posttranssexual Manifesto', which sees event selection in trans self-narration as the act of "*constructing a plausible history*" that is at odds with "authentically represent[ing] the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience" (164; emphasis in original). In this formulation, plausibility – which I have argued is connected with formal techniques for conveying an intelligible narrative, such as appropriate beginnings and endings and a progressive movement toward an ultimate goal – precludes authenticity. If constructing a plausible history is tantamount to subverting the autobiographical pact (not telling the whole truth), then it is important to acknowledge that this misrepresentation can be necessary to access what is needed for a liveable life (obtaining a diagnosis, becoming intelligible to others, avoiding harm), at the same time as it is a habit that some writers, committed to revealing what Stone calls the "complexities and ambiguities of lived experience" (164), may want to break.

As a result of this tangled relationship with what constitutes a true or authentic narrative, the authors I discuss here find themselves having an ambivalent attitude toward

[41] The 'autobiographical pact' is a reference to Phillippe Lejeune's seminal but contested definition of autobiography: "Autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author) supposes that there is identity of name between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story, and the character who is being talked about" (Lejeune, 12). This 'supposition', an agreement between author and reader that this identity exists (here tellingly posited in reference to a masculine subject), becomes more difficult to sustain in situations where trust is attributed unequally, as Marcus and Anderson have both noted and as I argue here in the context of the gender-variant *autobiographical I*.

autobiographical writing as the act of telling the truth. Bornstein's second memoir is explicit about this, as it addresses readers: "I promise you I'll be telling lies in this book – little lies, to make the story more fun. […] I got real good at lying because of the great big lie I told day and night for nearly twenty years – that I was a boy" (*Queer and Pleasant Danger*, 7). Bornstein's relationship with the act of 'lying' subverts the notion of gender-variant individuals as deceivers and pretenders by noting that it is precisely in order *not to be seen* as a deceiver or a pretender that one has to lie: because her being a woman is considered a lie in cis environments, she has to lie by agreeing that she is a boy. Trans-inhabitation of multiple gendered 'spaces' reveals that the truth is matter of perspective, as language takes on different meanings in different circumstances: "when a trans woman says 'I'm a woman' and her body is precisely the kind of body taken to invalidate a claim to womanhood (in mainstream culture), the claim is true in some trans subcultures because the meaning of the word 'woman' is different; its very meaning is under contestation" (Bettcher, 'Wrong Theory', 390). The texts I examine show an awareness of how being authentic (and a trustworthy *autobiographical I*) is a matter of which 'truth' one is able or willing to tell – and how scepticism, silencing and violence may result from, and constrain, what is told. This awareness, however, exists alongside a commitment to establishing a speaking position from which one has the authority to present knowledge about the self against how one has been defined by others.

Inhabiting the Achronous Present: Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw*

Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* is representative of the early 1990s commitment by an emerging trans activism and scholarship to represent what Stone calls the "complexities and ambiguities of lived experience" (164). Bornstein reports: "I was told by several counsellors that I would have to invent a past for myself as a little girl" (*Gender Outlaw*, 76). Since it would feel inauthentic to construct a story that would make her gender coherent throughout her life, she refuses to construct a plausible history and instead reveals the contradictions, inconsistencies and implausibilities of her own gender, against the demand to identify with a fixed, binary and internally cohesive category. I consider *Gender Outlaw* as an instance of *autobiographical I* but the text trans-inhabits the genres it both is and is not: it dwells at the intersecting borders of memoir, essay, performance script, interview, and more. As the narrator reflects – in the present tense – on marginal genders and sexualities, queer and trans writing and art, or the history of

gender-variant identities, a narrative of Kate's transition can be partially reconstructed as episodes from her life are used to illustrate these reflections. This personal narrative is presented in a strictly non-linear manner. At times, these episodes can be placed in a re-constructible chronology – as they begin with "[a]bout five months into living full time as a woman" (46) or "when I was no more than seven or eight years old" (29). At other times – for instance if they start with expressions such as "I remember one time" (49) – they are simply instances of "achrony", which is what Genette calls "an anachrony deprived of every temporal connection" (*Discourse*, 84), "unplaceable" with respect to other events occurring in the story (83). By eschewing a linear chronological order to the extent that it is impossible to identify a main timeline from which to label other events as analepses or prolepses, the text prevents a full illustration of the 'steps' of transition, as well as questioning its ending or goal. The unhappy childhood, the early clues of gender-variance, the epiphanies and revelations about gender, the specific medical timeline of bodily transformation, and the happy ending after surgery are not entirely missing but are scrambled, distorted or re-interpreted. In Bornstein's re-narration of her life, the canonical trans plot is not absent, but it is evoked, negotiated and re-signified.

For instance, Kate's gender confirmation surgery is discussed in Chapter Three of *Gender Outlaw* rather than being positioned as the climax of the narrative. The bulk of the chapter reproduces parts of an interview that Bornstein gave in the early 1990s where the interviewer refers to surgery as the process of "men becoming women" (Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw*, 29), and the chapter ends with a photograph of young Kate at her *bar mitzvah* with the caption: "Today I am a man" (24). The ironic juxtaposition of two moments that are supposed to be the culmination as well as the beginning of a process (the surgery as the final step of 'becoming a woman' and inaugurating life as one, and the *bar mitzvah* as the end of boyhood and the beginning of male adulthood) creates a multiplicity of non-linear temporal effects. Firstly, both becomings occur early in the book without being preceded by a narrative leading up to them; further, they are juxtaposed despite occurring at different moments in Kate's life; finally, they are incompatible with a canonical understanding of transition as movement from male to female identity. The choice of placing the *bar mitzvah* photograph bearing the caption "Today, I am a man" (24) in the place where a conclusion of the chapter could have been 'Today, I am a woman' challenges canonical understanding of trans identity as a progressive movement between

two separate genders. This juxtaposition also implicitly links surgery to a convention that determines, somewhat arbitrarily, where one stage of life ends and the other begins, and it evokes the narrative of adolescent unruliness, growth and eventual maturity that is supposed to characterise both one's youth and one's transition. The beginning, the destination and the trans journey itself are difficult to locate in Chapter Three, as Bornstein questions whether and when precisely one 'becomes' a specific gender. Kate's *autobiographical I* trans-inhabits different identity spaces over the course of a few pages: the self that speaks in the interview, the self that comments on it, the self that 'becomes' a woman, the self that 'becomes' a man, and whatever selves exist before these becomings.

If there is a journey, a movement from A to B, foregrounded in the text, it is not medical transition but it is the transformation of Kate's view of gender. The narrator refers to a past in which "I was convinced that the only way I could live out what I thought to be my true gender was to have genital surgery" (58) – this stemming from a belief that "I had to be one [gender] or the other" and, through surgery, needed to be "placed neatly into one of two categories" (79). I have noted that the demand to be neatly placed in bounded and mutually exclusive categories leads some gender-variant writers to use metaphors of haunting or otherwise inhabiting space ambiguously, partly within and partly without, across borders. Bornstein similarly looks for alternative modes of inhabitation and movement. The narrator refers to this past as a time when she was part of a "group", that of "the gendered" – comparable to a cult – which she had to leave when she "embraced" her "nonbinary gender identity" (133). In a sense, then, there is a journey that starts from a bounded category: not a specific gender but a broader category of 'the gendered'. The destination of this journey is not an equally bounded space, but an ambiguous middle ground that the narrator calls "the 'third'", the space for one who "regularly walks along a forbidden boundary or border" (126) and an identity category for "anyone who cares to own their own gender ambiguities" (127). Instead of a narrative leading from one bounded space ('man') to another ('woman'), *Gender Outlaw* traces the evolution of the self as progressing from a desire to fit into bounded spaces to a commitment to blur and traverse boundaries. Spatial metaphors that form the basis of canonical understandings of gender variance are mobilised and re-narrated in the text to reflect this different kind of journey.

In *Gender Outlaw*, cartographies of gender are transformed as the narrator envisions her 'destination' – the place from which the narrating-I writes – as being characterised by in-between-ness and crossing boundaries. Instead of tracing a movement from A to B, where A and B are fixed and binary genders, the text continually blurs, juxtaposes, and multiplies A and B. In a sense, A and B together are seen as the starting point for a journey that leads nowhere else but toward the questioning of itself, to a space that is not fixed, unified or clearly definable – the space of the 'third'. I read Bornstein's use of metaphors as aiming to both erase a space between A and B *and* create one. The erasure of the space occurs, for instance, in establishing *the gendered* as a unified category. The narrator also often sees man and woman as separated by a collapsible border, for example as she imagines the moment of the invention of gender: "once upon a time a time, someone drew a line in the sands of a culture and proclaimed […], 'On this side, you are a man; on the other side, you are a woman'. It's time for the winds of change to blow that line away" (26). Man and woman therefore become mixed – what distinguishes them is 'blown away' and those who use those distinctions are put together in one group, the gendered, from which others (like Kate) move away. At the same time, the text posits the existence of an in-between place*, the third*, where one was not recognised before – thereby opening up a gap between man and woman. The incompatibility of these metaphors (a space erased and a space created) reveals a contradiction in the conventional understanding of gender that Bornstein aims to challenge. In fact, in the culture that Kate describes, man and woman are seen *both* as separated by a space (to be traversed with transition) *and* as allowing no space between them (and therefore no genders other than unambiguous man and unambiguous woman are possible). Therefore, in order to critique two spatial arrangements that are at odds with each other, the contradictory gestures of erasing space and creating space are undertaken at the same time.

The opening of a space between genders challenges a trope that exists alongside, but somewhat in contradiction to, the gradual becoming of 'hormone time': the sudden transformation of the 'sex change'. This is often described as taking place in the moment of waking up from gender confirmation surgery. Stone notes a trend in popular trans autobiographies of establishing, after surgery, "a specific narrative moment when their personal sexual identification changes from male to female" (156), making "invisible" any

"intervening space in the continuum" (159). *Gender Outlaw* re-narrates the moment of waking up as specifically functioning to make 'visible' this 'intervening space'. In one of the passages in which the narrator addresses her gender confirmation surgery, she reports: "I died a virtual death, not only on the operating table but in terms of a key aspect of my identity, and then I was reborn into the world" (123). This apparent reiteration of the moment of sudden transformation is undermined by a disturbance, as the narrator reports: "I woke up once during the procedure: I felt a sharp pain in what had once been my left testicle" (122). This interim waking is characterised by the trans-inhabitation of an ambiguously material body, in the process of being reconfigured; the 'rebirth' is disturbed by a ghost of what has died. As a consequence, after surgery is completed, Kate carries with her an awareness of this "in-between place" (123). Instead of a moment when identification changes from male to female, her transformation consists in a shift between the notion that one is neatly placed into one of two genders to the understanding that there is an alternative to this. The ghost-pain in the moment of waking up from surgery is selected by the narrator as a convenient illustration of her change of view, but this choice appears to be motivated less by a commitment to representing the 'true experience' of the past self at that specific moment in time, and more by a wish to maintain the focus of the narrative on Kate's ongoing efforts to challenge binary and fixed genders – which has in fact begun before surgery instead of being a sudden epiphany on the operating table.[42]

Indeed, the narrating-I continually grounds episodes from the past in a present where they can be used to illustrate her arguments, implicitly or explicitly re-interpreting them for specific aims. For instance, whenever there is a passage of life narrative, Bornstein draws readers' attention not to her discomfort or desire to change her body, but to society's policing of her gender expression. This happens with a description of a man laughing at her on the street, where the emotional state and thoughts of the experiencing-

[42] The way in which I can infer that the possibility of non-binary identity is not a sudden epiphany that Bornstein experiences on the operating table, but it is instead a negotiation that has started earlier in her life, is partly by comparing this book with the more linear narrative of Bornstein's memoir *A Queer and Pleasant Danger* (2012), from which I quoted earlier in reference to Bornstein's stance on 'lying'. The fact that this narrative does not exist for readers when *Gender Outlaw* is first published but it does by the time its second edition appears complicates the very notion of a re-narration. If re-narration is a reworking of a *previous* model, then only to an extent is Kate's life story in *Gender Outlaw* a reworking of the linear account of the same in *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*, though it could always be a reworking of how she has told the story to herself and to others before.

I are omitted (113), and again when Kate describes her banishment from the communal work bathrooms after starting her transition (108). The latter episode occasions an intervention of the narrating-I, who incorporates it in a present-tense reflection on what can be learned from this moment: "Isn't it amazing the lengths we'll go to in order to maintain the illusion that there are only two genders, and that these genders must remain separate?" (108). Declining to dwell on the negative feelings of the experiencing-I can be read as part of Bornstein's refusal to contribute to the image of gender-variant people as "long-suffering" (15). This move shows how re-narration takes place not only as event sequencing and event selection, but also as focalisation: the feelings of the experiencing-I are omitted because they are not the starting point of this story, they are not there to fuel a narrative of change tracking how experiencing-Kate's suffering is transformed in narrating-Kate's happiness. Instead, it becomes difficult to pinpoint who the experiencing-I is, because – as I have argued of the moment of waking up from surgery – her feelings and thoughts are continually being re-written and re-interpreted by the narrating-I. The refusal to provide a clear starting point in a past self, in addition to the ambiguity of the destination reached, contributes to a further distortion of the trajectory, direction and centrality of the journey of transition in this text.

In addition to playing with the conventional beginnings and endings of the trans memoir and with the tension between progressive change and sudden transformation that characterises narratives of gender variance, Bornstein also introduces hints that 'journeys of change' are multiple and ongoing. While her shift in identification – from woman who attempts to 'fit neatly' into the category to 'gender outlaw' – is the major autobiographical narrative that underlies the text, Bornstein suggests that this be viewed as only one in the potentially limitless succession of "identity crises I have experienced" (150), further extending the temporality of any 'destination' moment into a limitless future of change and growth, and emphasising that the narrating-I is not the end point of Kate's identity. The narrator explains her habit of, first, "question[ing] an identity", then adopting "what seems to be a new, more pure, more unshakable identity—maybe […] my authentic self", only to inevitably start the process "all over again" (150). Any 'authentic' self, for Bornstein, is contingent and provisional. The coexistence of multiple instances of the text's I – not only the narrating-I who focalises autobiographical episodes, but the I of interviews and performance pieces reproduced in the book – blurs the linear and

progressive dimension of this process of questioning. Instead of being presented as a narrative of successive steps, this pattern emerges discontinuously from multiple points in the text. This trans-inhabitation of versions of the I differently located in time is amplified by the 2016 edition of the text, which expands (without clear boundaries between what was in the original text and what is added) the 1994 edition. As a result, not only the I but any other deictic with a shifting referent, like 'now', is unanchored from a specific time. For example, in a chapter that reprints a talk written for a 1990 conference, adapted for a collection in 1991 and reproduced in both editions of the book, Bornstein asserts, "people try to write about transsexuals and it's amusing it's infuriating it's patronizing and it's why I'm writing about transsexuals now" (184). This 'now', which is reiterated in time as it appears in all versions of the text, challenges the notion of a progressive temporality of gender-variant visibility and acceptance, suggesting that the work of gender, both at the individual and collective level, is never over.

At the same time as she creates an achronous temporality, always in flux, Bornstein does use metaphors that view the body as a home – thereby anchoring the self somewhere in a stable present – or at least as a container that is capable of permanence, of keeping the form in which she feels most comfortable. The last chapter of *Gender Outlaw* reproduces a spoken word text originally performed in 1993, in which the speaker reflects on the idea that body cells are completely renewed every seven years. This ensures both continuity and movement away from the past. The I (an autobiographical version of Bornstein) notes that, after her surgery, the "cells remember to re-form themselves into a vulva and vagina" instead of re-membering a more distant past: "you'd think if they'd once formed a penis, they might want to recombine into another penis after seven years" (283). The cells' ability to remember simultaneously evokes and challenges the notion of sudden transformation into a woman: while the cells will never 're-form' a penis – meaning that an irreversible change has occurred – the post-surgery body is not a fixed destination – it is a body that changes, that works on itself, that reforms itself. *Gender Outlaw* indeed ends with the speaker who, like a snake, has been "shed[ding] […] skin year after year after year" (291), concluding with: "And by the time the next seven years have come and gone / I'm gonna be new all over again" (292). At the same time as the body can sustain itself in its form – its current material existence never 'undone' – it is also figured here as having a renewable outer layer, shed as one's inhabitation of

categories shifts (at the time of writing this piece, for instance, Bornstein is questioning whether 'lesbian' is a category that still applies to her). Bornstein's multiplied *autobiographical I*, across identity categories and moments in time, in a continually renewable achronous present tense, is ultimately anchored somewhere: a speaking voice that, though it does not neatly fit anywhere, produces a discourse of self-determination. If in this book Bornstein does not explicitly deny that she is 'telling the truth' about the self (therefore honouring the autobiographical promise of the identity of author and character), it certainly productively plays with the spatial and temporal location of this self, trans-inhabiting contradictory spaces of gender and re-narrating the conventional timelines of transition and of maturation toward a final narrating-I.

"Going Nowhere, Slow": Juliet Jacques' Resistant Memoir

Jacques's *Trans* pushes against the boundaries of the canonical trans memoir, mainly through its use of narrative temporalities. I have argued that Bornstein's text multiplies the *autobiographical I* as it reproduces other texts. Jacques' book, in a similar manner, is not only a re-narration of canonical transition plots in general but it is also a specific repetition of an already existing text. The memoir is partly based on Jacques' column *A Transgender Journey*, which ran in the *Guardian* between 2010 and 2012. *Trans* therefore explicitly re-narrates an understanding of transition based on the journey metaphor and challenges it by rearranging the temporality of the original articles as well as by including an increasingly self-conscious narrative about writing the column itself. When the narrator describes her feelings about writing for the newspaper, she implies that readers should be alert to the contexts in which her life narrative is produced: "I tried to write about my transition as if doing so hadn't affected my life, but even before it started running, the series added a layer of complexity to every social exchange" (Jacques, *Trans*, 226). The layer of complexity is produced by how Juliet's story stands in relation to (and re-narrates) already existing trans narratives, and to the expectations of publishers and audiences. *Trans* is a text about a historical moment characterised by the visibility of gender variance in the media and a public negotiation of gender identity as much as it is about an individual's experience of transition. What Stryker and Aizura describe as the "new imperatives and opportunities for 'transgender normativity'" (3) that emerge in the twenty-first century can be seen in the context of Jacques' writing, which has to contend

with a social world that sees gender-variant identities as legitimate but only if they conform to specific models.

Jacques is also explicit about her ambivalence toward the prevalent view in the publishing world that the memoir should be the privileged form to explore trans identity, explaining that – while she initially intended to write a history of trans identity in Britain – she encountered "the familiar demand that I make my writing more personal" ('Interview', 108). In an interview that concludes *Trans*, she clarifies that: "having written my life story once already, I found it incredibly frustrating […] [to] cannibalise myself a second time before I could do anything else" (*Trans*, 299). This reference to memoir writing as repurposing parts of oneself toward producing something new is, in some sense, analogous to my notion of re-narration. In expressing her frustration with this, Jacques indicates her desire to narrate something new, to break with existing forms, instead of *re*-narrating (re-working these forms). In addition to this reason to resist writing, I have noted that suspicion toward the formal demands of the canonical trans memoir stems from an awareness of the narratives they exclude, and from a desire to challenge specific steps or processes seen as indispensable for narrating an intelligible gender-variant life. On the other hand, the trans memoir can also be seen as a tool for self-discovery, legitimisation, and community building – for creating a habitable 'home' in an identity category. Indeed, while Jacques appears to share all the reservations I have mentioned, she also recognises the importance of these positive outcomes. At the same time as she articulates her frustration with the autobiographical form, she also admits, referring to transphobic writers being given a platform in the media, that texts like her memoir have an enduring function: "Every time I think there's no further need for this sort of writing, the situation changes" (299).[43] The need for narratives conveying a lived knowledge of gender variance remains as misunderstanding and ignorance continue to lead to marginalisation and violence. In this sense, Jacques's 'every time' can be compared with Bornstein's 'now' across the decades, affirming that the knowledge of the trans *autobiographical I* continues to be key in challenging stereotypes, misrepresentations, and objectification.

[43] In the Introduction, I mentioned that TERF and gender-critical viewpoints have gained traction in the UK over the past decade. At various points in the book, Jacques discusses transphobic journalism in UK newspapers in the early 2010s, and her reluctant but inevitable involvement in the "trans culture wars" (286).

Trans: A Memoir does, therefore, belong quite straightforwardly to the canon its title announces, especially as compared to Bornstein's genre-blending text. The book covers Juliet's life in a mostly linear manner from her youth in the early 2000s to April 2013, shortly after her gender confirmation surgery. However, the narrator is self-reflexive throughout, often explicitly discussing and countering the tropes and temporalities of canonical transition plots. A first gesture of defiance towards the memoir reader's expectations is placing the account of the gender confirmation surgery at the beginning of the book. This section reprints an article from Jacques' *Transgender Journey* column, which originally occurred in its 'proper' place in a chronological sequence and has now been deliberately moved. Through this prolepsis, Jacques defuses the climactic potential of the surgery and refuses to let it pull the narrative forward in order to show that, in her life, it has not been the "be-all and end-all" (252). Long Chu argues that *Trans* replaces a notion of transition as "going places" with "going nowhere, slow" resulting in "making transition *boring*" (143; emphasis in original). Long Chu views this as a valuable characteristic, signalling a desire from the trans community to read narratives that convey intelligible identity outside of chrononormative demands for a good life story. *Going nowhere, slow* is part of the process of reconfiguring canonical temporalities of transition that I call re-narration. The chronological unfolding of *Trans* indeed ends with an anticlimactic last visit to the gender clinic, designed to deny readers a satisfying closure – it is an uneventful visit, in the midst of a regular work day, followed by a return to the office, ending with the words "letting the day go by" (Jacques, *Trans*, 293). The ending of the narrative is followed in the text by the interview in which Jacques expresses her ambivalence toward writing the memoir, thereby retrospectively sealing the meaning of the text not as a journey of transformation but as a narrative struggling against the demand to be one.

In addition to rethinking the function of endings, and re-signifying the memoir as a critique of itself, Jacques challenges other canonical trans temporalities that I have outlined, including the tension between progressive and linear transformation (hormone time) and sudden change (the waking up from the surgery). The text shows uneasiness with both patterns by refusing to represent change as an abrupt shift or, alternatively, as a single, smooth path from A to B. When Juliet decides to begin transition and first

articulates her wish to her doctor, she imagines it as a monumental step – "You've thrown yourself off that mountain, YOU'VE SAID IT" – but this climactic moment is interrupted by the doctor's reply: "Oh yes. […] We spoke about this before" (150). As this is not a revelation for the doctor, it is not one for readers either, as the narrator has been reporting her thoughts. Instead of the 'epiphany' that the experiencing-I builds this revelation up to be, the moment turns out to have been anticipated by other participants in the narrative, deflating its function as a narrative climax or twist. I have mentioned that the surgery is similarly voided of its climactic power by being placed at the start of the narrative. In the chronological place that the surgery should have occupied according to conventional trans narratives, Jacques inserts a short reflection, entitled 'Before and After', on sensationalistic media coverage of transition as a sudden transformation. Following this, a new chapter begins in which Juliet returns to her childhood home to recover from the surgery, viewing her life as "a huge, traumatic circle" (272) which, in time, becomes "a newfound sense of peace with my past" (276). Instead of a break with the past, surgery in the story (while it is missing from its 'proper place' in the discourse) turns out to be the starting point for a connection with the past – a trans-inhabitation – initially traumatic but ultimately restorative, rather than inaugurating the belonging into a 'new' body or identity that is severed from its other forms.

As the 'Before and After' reflection suggests, Jacques mixes life writing with information about, and commentary on, gender-variant history and trans representation in the media. In between chapters that follow the chronological unfolding of the life narrative, sections organised around a specific topic – such as 'The History of Sex Change' (65) or 'The Birth of Transgender Theory' (103) – place Juliet's own story in a broader historical context. These sections are still narrated by an *autobiographical I* but they are self-sufficient and detached from the primary timeline of the text. For instance, the first of these sections, 'Home Movies' (31) is Juliet's account of discovering gender-variant identities in film and television and is focalised through her experience of these texts. In other sections, such as 'The Birth of Transgender Theory', the *autobiographical I* is almost entirely absent, as she describes the development of trans studies in the United States occurring "unknown to me as a teenager" (103). The presence of these sections has the effect of pausing and denaturalising the otherwise smoothly running life narrative, by recounting episodes 'out of order', repeating material that occurs in the main chapters, or momentarily veering

away from the subject of the memoir – the self. Like the interview that concludes the book, these sections also help contextualise and achieve a critical distance from the story presented in the chapters of life narrative. For instance, Jacques concludes a chapter about her mental health with the decision to visit a therapist and explore her gender, and the chapter ends with her sitting down in the counselling session just before she begins to speak. Before the next chapter starts, the section on 'The Birth of Transgender Theory' begins, and the narrator discusses Stone, Bornstein and other writers actively engaged in countering canonical trans narratives. Before readers can witness Juliet discuss her gender identity with a therapist for what is the first of many times, and utter what will later become "the well-rehearsed narrative of my gender variant youth," (218), the story is interrupted as readers are actively encouraged to reflect on the venue in which this narrative is produced.

In addition to the disruptive effect of having the autobiographical material presented in isolated sections as well as in a main plot, the overarching transition is shown to be a disunified journey. The experience of living full-time in one's gender is called by gender identity clinics the "Real Life Experience" (153): its success determines the speed and the smooth running of the official process of transition. At her second appointment at the gender clinic, Juliet explains that she is already living full-time as a woman and is told, "You're rare in sorting all of these things so early" (218). At that point, she has come out at work and to her friends and family, has changed her name on her documents, and is taking measurable steps to pass, such as starting hair-removal treatment and speech therapy. This is met with approval, as in an earlier appointment during which the doctor was "ticking boxes" as she spoke: she is certified as being on schedule, even early (197). While these kinds of steps may not be accessible to or desirable for all trans subjects, the clinic's approval highlights that only a specific trajectory is permitted in order to proceed to the successive stages. The type of reassurance that medical authorities look for is in line with Dan Irving's argument that the medico-legal process of transition focuses on producing successful members of neoliberal societies, possessing a "productive working body […] capable of participating in capitalist production processes" (40). Juliet indeed faces the kind of "real-life test" that Irving describes, which has "a facet of economic rehabilitation" consisting in obtaining "employment while living full time in their self-identified sex/gender" (Jacques, *Trans*, 45). Jacques's encounters with doctors, their

suggestions for taking steps to pass, and their requests that she prove to be well-adjusted in her work and social life represent such a demand to become a subject who (to borrow once more Punday's terms for the narrative body), after a period of "unruly middle", is reconciled with the "overarching" social body (99).

While *Trans* exposes the persistence of the clinicians' demands, it also shows that Juliet's experience – the real-life experience, without capitals – is characterised by a constant feeling of being early or late for medical milestones, and her difficulty in adapting to the schedule of the clinics is presented as a disruption of the apparently smooth progress she is making. Twice she describes rushing to appointments with doctors and therapists, afraid of missing them (Jacques, *Trans*, 102; 235). As the surgery approaches, Jacques describes alternating feelings of "just want[ing] it over so I can get on with my life" (252), and of the date seeming "terrifyingly soon", since she does not feel "at all ready" (237). The unfolding of the official process of transition is lived with unease, always too fast or too slow, and ultimately simply not synchronised with her own body. The text also explicitly links the pace of transition with the economic status of the transitioning subject. Juliet is forced to conform to an external timeline partly because of her reliance on the UK National Health Service (NHS). As she "can't afford private" healthcare, she is warned by her doctor that the process "will be slow", showing that limited financial resources correlate with reduced agency in shaping the temporality of one's transition (150). The 'boring' quality of the process that Long Chu notes is in part the result of this, as well as of Juliet's precarious employment, which contributes to the temporal effects of the narrative. As Jacques describes her book as "about being stuck in boring jobs" ('Interview', 112), the day-to-day routines of 'boring jobs' are not only selected as elements of story – against the demand for sensationalistic or exotic accounts of gender-variant identity – but they also influence narrative structure by determining the pace at which the plot of transition is allowed to progress. The sense of disjuncture experienced by Juliet is therefore ultimately the result of the overlapping temporalities of neoliberal structures (precarious employment and NHS waiting lists), as they interact with narrative understandings of trans identity and medico-legal timelines of transition.

In addition to what feels like an externally imposed pace, the forward movement and the permanent conclusion of the medico-legal process of transition are narrative demands

that the reality of the gender-variant body cannot meet. In *Trans*, progressive steps toward increasing happiness and comfort are not a wrong description of the experience of transitioning, but they are a simplistic one. Juliet realises early on that the "journey [will not] be as simple as moving from A to B" (Jacques, *Trans*, 175). After deciding to transition, she waits to come out at work because her contract has almost ended, but she explains: "going to work in my old shirt and trousers after coming out as transsexual proved to be one of the most dysphoric experiences of my life" (163). She feels even worse when, now living full-time as a woman, she concedes to wearing male clothes at her brother's wedding. This reminds her of when, before identifying trans, she had an androgynous look, which was desired at the time but now it is forced to occur anachronistically: "Looking back, I saw that time as a step towards transition, but returning to it felt like regression, even though I knew it was just for a day" (208). However, at the wedding, she has positive experiences with her family, who express support for her transition and acknowledge the sacrifice that abandoning her usual clothes must be. Jacques's relationship with time is always expressed as a challenge to what it is supposed to be according to canonical trans narratives: gradual change instead of 'before and after'; progress not as linear, but as made of steps backward and forward; connection with her youth rather than a break with the past. These temporalities can be seen as conventional aspects of autobiographical forms in general, if not of trans representations: they are attempts to close the gap between a narrating-I and an experiencing-I, describing a gradual process of becoming and lending retrospective significance to the past. However, these temporalities in *Trans* are always conceived as specific re-narrations of normative ones, designed to show the latter's exclusionary effects.

In line with other ways of challenging the canonical timeline, pace, and structure of the trans memoir, throughout the final chapters the plot of transition starts being displaced by other concerns, as the narrator explains: "I let myself wonder if, even before my surgery, the transition might cease to be the dominant aspect of my life" (245). (Re)narrating transition, rather than transition itself, indeed appears to be the real subject of the memoir. Juliet's self-conscious acts of narration accumulate throughout the text, from the 'well-rehearsed' story repeated to doctors and therapists, to articles she writes about queer and trans politics, to letters and emails to explain her transition to

friends and co-workers, to the *Guardian* column and, finally, the memoir itself. This multiplicity of narratives can be read as leading up to the one aspect of the text that I see as its actual 'epiphany' or climax: Juliet's realisation that her memoir is not a narrative of gender becoming but a narrative of becoming a writer. In the interview that closes the book, Jacques gives this interpretation:

> When I think about who I dreamed of being […] it wasn't that I had a certain conception of my body, because I was still figuring that out, but I had an idea of what sort of person I wanted to be—a writer […] and in a weird way I have become exactly that person. […] I ended up taking such a circuitous route that I barely recognized my destination once I arrived. (308)

This statement re-narrates the beginning (desire for becoming, for transformation), the middle (a circuitous route) and the end (the 'barely recognised' destination) of the memoir as being about something other than, though not unrelated to, gender identity. If there is a process of maturation, a *Bildungsroman*, its resolution is brought about after a significant amount of misdirection. In this way, Jacques' re-narration maintains a relationship with what it deviates from. Transition is still central to the memoir, but this is in part due to it being what allows Juliet to begin her writing career. The resistant gesture of 'going nowhere, slow' coexists, in the book, with a 'going somewhere else, at various paces'. If Jacques' text maintains a linear movement that is easier to track than Bornstein's, it nonetheless shows that this movement is a complex negotiation of progression that includes detours, reversals, repetitions, stalling and acceleration. The foregrounding of acts of narration, additionally, represent not an outright refusal to write autobiographically but an invitation to consider *why* and *for whom* this is done.

Re-Narrating the 'Journey' Metaphor: The *Finding the Real Me* Collection

The tension I have discussed between an attachment to recognisable trans narratives because of their legitimising power and a desire to challenge them because of their exclusionary effects characterises the autobiographical narratives collected in *Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity*. For this volume, the editors solicited new short contributions by gender-variant individuals recounting their "journeys to be their true selves" (Fox and O'Keefe, xvii) and received a variety of responses from a number of different countries, some by prominent trans activists or writers, some by first-time authors. The use of the journey metaphor in the preface of the volume (and in the titles

of four of the twenty-six stories) prefigures how this metaphor serves as an unquestioned structuring principle for some narratives and as a trope to be challenged by others. All stories are divided into titled sections, and the titles at times explicitly outline narrative steps – 'Realization' (254), 'An Epiphany' (21) 'Crisis Point' (249), 'The Big Decision' (121), 'Resolution' (100) – and at others either give no clue toward, or explicitly stall, these steps – 'Paradox' (5), 'A Third Gender' (206), 'Thoughts' (177), 'United We Stand' (74). The matter of truth and authenticity (which I have argued is central to the relationship between the *autobiographical I* and its narrative) is also foregrounded twice in the title – the 'real me' and the 'true tales'. On the one hand, the fact that the stories are collected by editors who declare their veracity could be understood as reproducing the 'authorising preface' in which experts vouch for the narratives' authenticity. However, the editors assert that they decided to "not analyse or comment on the stories in the book, but simply to let them stand in their own right" (xvi). This gesture is different from a guarantee that the stories are authentic expressions of a particular type of gender-variant identity: to use Prosser's terms, they fulfil the criteria of "authenticity" simply because they reflect the author's reality, and of "exemplarity" (meaning that they give an accurate picture of a broader phenomenon) because their quantity and, especially, their difference from one another, ensures that a wide range of possibilities is presented (126). The volume exemplifies the shift identified by Rondot from a notion of "universal trans* story" (531) to a "multivocal conversation" (547). While I focus here on a few narratives that most explicitly challenge, rather than conforming to, the structure of the canonical trans memoir, I also see the collection as a whole as an instance of re-narration, as it consists of repetitions and variations in tension with existing models as well as with one another.

One of the narratives in the collection that most reflects on its structure is 'The Second Transition' by British trans rights activist Christine Burns. The focus of this short autobiography is the "second and most profound transition in a life" (Burns, 'Second Transition', 189): her growth as a person *after* gender confirmation surgery. Like Bornstein and Jacques, Burns questions the conventional endings and beginnings of canonical trans narratives. She does not argue that a trans *autobiographical I* should *not* tell a story of becoming and transformation (a journey), but she indicates that the departure and destination have been confused: "Other people's biographies don't stop at the point when they pop out of the womb or celebrate their coming of age, it's usually

when they begin!" (188). In the first section of the story the narrator covers her childhood, her decision to transition and her surgery – conventionally, the full extent of a narrative of gender variance. At the end of the section, she reports that, after surgery, "something didn't *feel* right still" and immediately reveals: "the 'something' that didn't feel right was the way in which I had learned to 'know' myself through a medical label" (192; emphasis in original). The 'second transition' is the self-exploration that follows, which goes hand in hand with Christine's activism for trans rights. The second transition is also a linear trajectory of growth (the 'maturation' of the experiencing-I into the narrating-I), but the narrator self-consciously suggests seeking alternative models for its structure, with "no set place for it to begin, no right or wrong speed or direction for it to proceed, and no reason to suggest that it should have to end" (189). Burns' story therefore does not subvert the chronological order and linearity of transition itself, but it re-organises the narrated to include a re-narration (the second transition) which in some ways repeats the first one but seems less bound to representational conventions. Burns indeed suggests that there is an opportunity for greater variation and inclusivity in telling this second narrative, and positions her own version of it as one of many possibilities.

While Burns' story mostly repeats the model of a linear journey, albeit questioning its beginning and end, other authors in the collection explicitly dwell in the unruly middle of in-between genders, categories, or stages of transition with no signal that the narrative will resolve this into inhabitation of a final and fixed location. In 'Paradox is Paradise to Me' (the narrative that the editors chose to open the collection), Cynthia BrianKate refuses to provide either an origin or a destination for their gender-variant self. A linear account of childhood and youth, starting with the narrator explaining that they "didn't feel like" the "little boy" they were "expected" to be and they also were not "raised to know how be a little girl" (BrianKate, 2), ends in the middle of the story with a statement from the narrator: "OK, I think that's enough of the 'journey to where I am' for now" (5). The chronological unfolding of Cynthia's life stops here, and the rest of the story reads similarly to *Gender Outlaw* – statements in the present tense together with achronous references to the narrator's past. As the narrator identifies as "not exactly a man or a woman" but "somewhere in between, a bit of both and neither at the same time", there is no clear gender of departure and gender of destination (1). Therefore, even if the unfolding of the 'journey' had not been stopped by the narrator, it was already both

starting and leading 'somewhere in between'. In addition to these ambiguous spatial coordinates, the formulation of being 'a bit of both and neither' conveys a trans-inhabitation of gender categories. Cynthia's own gendered home requires partitioning existing entities into *bits* – since no whole can be inhabited neatly. Simultaneously, the narrator inhabits the spaces of *both and neither*, revealing that binary and fixed genders are seen as something that one can simultaneously be and not be. As I have noted with Bornstein, trans-inhabitation is made possible by the meanings of 'man' and 'woman' being multiple, ambivalent, and contradictory even before one starts to disidentify with either category.

BrianKate's stalling of the 'journey' is especially illustrated by the narrator's relationship with their sex. This reveals the middle of the narrative not only as a site of progressive movement but, as Roof would put it, "the scene for doubt, risk, and uncertainty" (xxxiv). In a section entitled 'Paradox', the narrator explains: "I'm not even sure if I'm male, female or what" (BrianKate, 6). They were "born with a penis, and don't feel like having anything done to it" but have also "started growing breasts" in a way that was not "expected" (6). The question of Cynthia's "biological sex" is eschewed as the narrator declares that "[t]he jury is still out as to which sex I am, because I could care less [*sic*] about supplying evidence" (77). In this formulation, the narrator implies the existence of an external evaluating entity that is supposed to determine which sex they 'are'. The operation of *supplying evidence* links this jury with medico-legal authorities, who require documents, narratives, and visual proofs in order to provide the subject with a label that would fit them better than the one originally assigned by the same jury. The narrator of 'Paradox is Paradise' instead refuses to provide data – in this narrative and, reportedly, in their life – that would allow them to be named by others. Readers are indeed denied answers as Cynthia declines to make their 'unexpected breasts' into either a turning point or a resolution of the narrative – they neither produce the relief of finally grounding in the body a previously felt in-between-ness, nor prompt a quest to confirm this in-between-ness in medical terms (for instance, as intersex status). This re-narration indeed comes close to non-narration: there is no becoming, no mismatch of wrong body and right gender to be resolved at the end of a process of change. This gesture, a firm rejection of any external authorising body, runs the risk of making the narrative unreliable, as the narrator makes clear that they do not wish to make themselves intelligible through

reference to existing models and provide an explanation for the co-presence of penis and breasts. Ultimately, this indicates that BrianKate seeks to claim for themself a gender that cannot be confirmed as authentic by anyone but themselves – one that dwells in the space of a middle, that is made of 'bits' of others, that is *both* both and neither.

I have noted that a self-conscious challenging of the trajectories and goals of a narrative of growth in general, and of trans narrative in particular, can take the form of re-arranging chronological steps, displacing these steps from their 'proper' place, stalling them, or questioning where they lead. Often, in *Finding the Real Me*, the existing narratives that the author is engaged in re-narrating are discussed explicitly by the *autobiographical I*. In Kam Wai Kui's 'Time for a Good Transgender Story', the narrator mentions having "read and seen many classic transsexual narratives" (Kui, 136) and considering his "own life" as a "transgender story that *came out of* a classic transsexual narrative" (127; my emphasis). This spatial relationship of partial coincidence and partial deviation exemplifies my notion of re-narration: a narrative where repetition and variation of a pre-existing model are kept in tension. The term 'coming out of' simultaneously suggests the carving of a new path emerging sideways from a previously existing linear one as well as it evokes the gesture of making oneself visible. Kui's explicit aim in telling a 'good' transgender story is to expand the canon of classic transsexual naratives, drawing attention to what it excludes – to recall Thom's words, those who do not fit the mould of the suffering "brave and good patient (and rich and white)" (2). Kui suggests that most of these canonical narratives are "appearance […] oriented in their search for happiness" (136) and he notes exactly the point in his own story where the "classic transsexual narrative […] starts to lose significance for my current situation" (135). The 'epiphany' or 'revelation' of his own narrative is, in fact, the realisation that he does not wish to modify his body. Because of this, the *autobiographical I* loses its orientation toward appearance and moves toward acceptance of a body that is not the imagined future body of the destination of transition, but the one Kam Wai started with. Therefore, the 'departure' body is not shed as a wrong container, but it is made into a destination in itself, which both is and is not the same as the starting point. While the narrator is aware that this is not possible or desirable for everyone, the presence of this story among others in the collection creates the cumulative effect of mapping a diverse range of paths for gender-variant identity.

Kam Wai's identity indeed seems to be based on an acceptance of deviations and gaps from a straightforward becoming or fixed embodiment. Toward the end of the text, the narrator describes his periods as "monthly painless 'interruptions' [that] are too short to cause me any real identity crisis" (135). This formulation articulates identity as being a (sometimes discontinuous) process, inhabitation 'in' oneself being subject to 'interruptions' that can be compatible with a unified sense of self. At the same time, the narrator clarifies that other aspects of his identity, such as "being a good Chinese person" have been "more important" (127) or even "distracted me from my own negotiations with my gender" (128). This implicitly indicates another exclusion of the trans narrative canon – intersections with race and nationality – facilitated by their authors being mostly Western and white. I have noted how attention to these intersections results in a re-narration of conventional steps, affects, goals, and progressions. Kam Wai reports that, as a child living in the Netherlands, he did not want to change his Chinese name "into a Westernized name" (129), partly because this name "initially caused confusion for my classmates" and, together with his androgynous appearance, "prolong[ed] the perception that I wasn't a girl" (131). As changing one's name is often a central gesture of self-determination on the part of gender-variant protagonist, Kui makes visible the conditions under which choosing to *keep* the name one is given at birth might be what allows one to best inhabit their gender, highlighting how the demand to choose a Westernised name, male or female, constituted an attempt to erase his difference. A connection with Chinese language and culture is an integral part of Kam Wai's definition of his own gender, revealing that the spatio-temporal trajectory of gender exploration intersects with other paths of identity.

While Kui describes 'stepping off' from the conventional trans journey by way of his desire to avoid hormones and surgery, other authors in the collection suggest that they have followed this journey beyond a point where they would have wanted it to stop. norrie mAy-welby's 'A Journey to Androgyny' employs the well-known metaphor but re-narrates for it a destination that was not expected when they started transitioning. norrie initially follows the expected steps from gender-variant youth to female identification, to hormones and surgery, but movement along this path appears to be partly prompted by the belief that this is the only way to identify with the "feminine aspects of my character"

(mAy-welby, 35). The narrator indeed reports the advice of another trans woman: "If you don't want it cut off, you're just wasting your time" (35). In order not to 'waste time' or – as I read this term – to avoid dwelling in an unspecified middle, norrie proceeds with the steps of transition. Shortly before surgery, however, they begin to realise that it might be possible to accept their own identity as "both male and female" (37). At this point, the narrator reports a feeling of inevitability with respect to the unfolding of the process that has been started: "The psychiatric approval had been obtained, the payment had been made, and the momentum was unstoppable now" (37). An anticipation of the progression of transition is considered by the narrator as being part of what brings it about, making it difficult to 'turn back'. However, turning back is precisely what happens after the process has been 'completed'. norrie concludes: "not enough options had been known to me when I chose surgery" (39). They begin a "grieving process for the maleness that I had lost", collecting "photos of myself as a boy and as a young gay man" (40). The demand to enact a cutting off of the past (together with a precluding of different paths) leads norrie to establish a contrary movement to the supposedly unidirectional journey of transition – against cutting off, they look back at reincorporating what they have lost.

I have described this difficulty of fitting neatly into bounded and fixed gender categories as trans-inhabitation. Maintaining a relationship with the past one is supposed to disavow is a form of trans-inhabitation, as it takes the subject beyond the boundaries of the 'gender of destination', questioning the extent to which anyone can belong there without ghostly traces of other selves. The actual destination of norrie's becoming is indeed not a fixed and binary gender but the androgyny of the title. This point of arrival affects what is included in the narrative leading up to it, and the narrator's efforts to connect with 'the maleness they have lost' is enacted in the process of event selection. The narrative of their childhood not only gives clues to norrie's disidentification with masculine identity, but also to their *identification* with it, as the narrator reports: "I did not […] dislike my own small male body. I remember being quite comfortable with my 'naughty bits'" (31). The formulation of this feeling through the expression "I did not dislike" (31) seems to anticipate an expectation that they would. Indeed, while disidentification with the gender assigned at birth is part of the recognisable conventions of gender-variant narratives, the inclusion of a feeling of comfort with body parts which are then modified by surgery is not. In a sense, although mAy-welby's story exists in this

version only, the narrator signals that this published text is a re-narration of a story of their past that existed in different forms at different points in norrie's life. The narrator describes that, in the moment of choosing surgery, the "memories of enjoyment I had experienced with my male genitals" had been "completely blanked" (35).[44] However, revealing these memories does not necessarily constitute a 'truer' version of the story. This text ultimately shows how a narrative of the past self is shaped by a present notion of what the destination of the journey has been, indicating that an autobiographical narrative of gender-variance will be filtered through the specific point at which the narrating-I is situated. Since this location changes, and becoming is not stalled after reaching a 'final gender', the narrative leading up to it is also always open to re-narration.

The effect of a retrospective *autobiographical I* selecting material from their past and directing readers to interpret it according to a specific ending is what leads the memoirs discussed by Stone to erase anything that does not fit with medical descriptions of transsexual identity. At the same time, the re-shaping powers of the retrospective narrator can be, as in the case mAy-welby's story, a starting point for countering these very descriptions. On the one hand, a known ending, embodied by the narrating-I, lends coherence to the narrative as it allows the steps toward it to be read – to use Brooks' words – in "anticipation" of its "structuring power" (94). On the other hand, retrospective narration, precisely in order to seal the story's meaning, entails a backward movement that, as in the norrie's recuperation of the past, runs in a contrary direction to the linear and progressive journey that is the object of this narration. This doubling back shows that the straightforward temporality of transition that I have discussed so far is already complicated by its presentation in narrative. While the experience of the journey from A to B might be expected to be linear, the act of narrating already counters this linearity even when apparently reproducing it, as B is its starting point. In order to disrupt a progressive and unidirectional journey from one fixed gender to the other, narrators can

[44] Stone addresses how, in canonical trans memoirs, patriarchal notions of womanhood as the binary opposite of manhood result in the narrative of a switch from "one pole of sexual experience to the other" (159). She notes that "nobody *ever* mentions wringing the turkey's neck" (masturbation before the penis is surgically removed) (159; emphasis in original). mAy-welbys's blanking of the 'memories of enjoyment' with 'male genitals' implies that identification as a woman, and movement along the trajectory of transition, is seen as incompatible with genital pleasure in what is supposed to be the wrong body, details of which have to be expunged from a coherent narrative.

therefore foreground and expose this process of retrospective reconstruction. The narrator's operations of selecting, ordering and interpreting autobiographical events are explicitly exposed in the last story I want to focus on, Vera Sepulveda's 'Confessions of a She-Male Merchant Marine'. The narrating-I presents Vera's life story as measured up against an implied temporality with respect to which she is 'late'. This comes up specifically in relation to a missing epiphany or realisation: she calls herself a "late bloomer" and "env[ies] all the people who were caught trying on their sister's underwear when they were nine years old" (Sepulveda, 147). This seemingly missing step is what, according to the narrator, precludes a proper start of a timeline of realisation, transition, and resolution.

Sepulveda shows an awareness that the activation of these clues as being clues *of* something is often an effect of retroactive interpretation in conformity with a known ending. This re-interpretation is indeed shown as being in progress during the act of narrating, as the narrator at times declares that there was not "the slightest clue as to my real identity" (147) but at other times admits: "Looking back now, I can see that there were signposts" (146). These traces are explicitly numbered and listed in a section entitled 'Figuring Things Out', and the narrator mentions Vera beginning to "assemble the little clues" or beginning to "see in what direction she was going" (151). Still, an outright epiphany, the one that is supposed to be brought on by 'trying on one's sister's underwear', never actually takes place, or at least not as much as statements about the *lateness* of this epiphany do. By directly comparing her own story with that of unspecified others, and by showing how her own past does not fit neatly into these models, Sepulveda's *autobiographical I* is shown in an active negotiation of canonical trans temporalities, presenting both a desire to conform to them as well as an understanding that something will always exceed them. This 'failed' reconstruction of a coherent and expected story is another instance of how, in the narratives of *Finding the Real Me*, the selection and ordering of past events is sometimes enacted against specific expectations: Burns declares that she wants to include usually erased post-transition experience, BrianKate refuses to supply evidence to those who would assign them a binary sex and gender, Kui deviates from 'classic' trans narratives by not modifying his body, and mAy-welby explicitly recovers details from their past that they previously blanked. The journey model is often explicitly invoked for these purposes, and partly re-narrated to

call into question whether and when the *autobiographical I* acquires knowledge of where it is going (or cares to find out). In these examples, by self-consciously foregrounding their active shaping of the narrated to provide an alternative to existing models, these narrators are able to regain agency over defining their gender.

Forming Body Truths

The temporalities of transition that emerge from the life narratives I have discussed are modelled on the journey metaphor, but they are multiplied, re-worked, and repeated. The I trans-inhabits different versions of itself as narrator and character (and as 'author'), sometimes successively, sometimes simultaneously, and sometimes ambiguously. As *autobiographical I*, the narrator self-consciously shapes a narrative of the past, reflecting on the extent to which it is possible or valuable to be read as telling a reliable and coherent truth. At the same time as these narrators' operations challenge a canonical narrative of growth that is specific to a trans normativity (the unidirectional, linear and final journey from one binary gender to another), they also re-narrate a *Bildungsroman* structure of 'maturation' from the experiencing-I to the narrating-I. These forms are seen as necessary to enable the articulation of identity in a manner that is intelligible to an audience, but they are critiqued as excluding and occluding what does not fit within them. In *Gender Outlaw*, transnormative models are disrupted through a collection of achronous scenes and through the use of deictics ('I', 'now') which are increasingly disanchored from specific spatiotemporal locations, as the text is a layering of multiple narratives. Focalisation through the narrating-I pulls the focus away from the experiencing-I, rendering the latter difficult to identify as a character, and the use of metaphors further hinders the production of a coherent and delineated identity by revealing the contradictory cartographies of gender within which Bornstein's I is supposed to find a place. While Jacques' narrative in *Trans* has more identifiable steps, starting points and destinations, its narrator self-consciously crafts a story that insists on acts of writing and on occasions in which the I is explicitly asked to narrate itself. Even if a linear progression is present, it is often stalled or made 'less entertaining' (by repetitions, by extra chapters, by scenes out of chronological order) and shown to be both produced and constrained by the institutional structures of neoliberal Britain and the perpetuation of mediatic tropes like the 'transgender journey' or the 'sex change'.

Finding the Real Me also reflects on, distorts, and nuances the canonical trans memoir narrative by showing how specific individuals, their intersectional identities, and their diverse desires cannot be accommodated by an overarching model. In the collection, both retrospective narrators and narrators referring to their present (both looking back or dwelling in the middle) can achieve the same questioning of a model where a temporary wrong body becomes the normative 'right body'. Temporal modes like the second transition, the monthly menstrual interruptions, the previously blanked memories, and the clues without solution emerge instead. The collection values these deviations (which resemble the ones enacted by *Trans* and *Gender Outlaw*) as representing the 'true' tales of gender variance, the very difference between each story and the next revealing, to use Stone's phrase, "the complexities and ambiguities" of real-life experience (164). The 'truth' of the gender-variant *autobiographical I* – the pact by which readers would view the experiences of the narrator as being the ones of the author – does not then always function according to the criteria of externally verifiable objectivity (which is employed by authorities that police the borders of gender categories). Telling the truth is instead a matter of first-person authority: individuals' 'expertise' about themselves. I have noted Bettcher's argument that first-person authority – a "superior epistemic position" ('First Person Authority', 98) – should be ethically attributed to trans individuals when they make statements about their gender, as they have been historically dispossessed of their "capacity to avow" (114). Not supplying evidence, not resolving supposed gender paradoxes, and emphasising the impossibility of telling the truth are strategies that are used to claim the capacity to avow and reject the demand to construct a plausible story that would be judged as such by an external guarantor.

Over the course of the thesis, and particularly in Chapter Six and in the Conclusion, I return to discussing the stakes that are involved when a gender-variant subject speaks *for* and *of* themself, as an *autobiographical I* whose capacity to tell the truth has been questioned and whose acts of avowal have been silenced. The question of re-narration – the reworking of a certain temporal structure that persists as a model, an echo, or a ghost – is also returned to at different times in the chapters that follow. So far, I have shown that the demand for a universal story of transition can be denounced directly in a text that re-narrates it, but it can also be referred to obliquely. While Bornstein and Jacques more explicitly address the conventions of the trans memoir that they write against, the

short narratives of *Finding the Real Me* mostly take these conventions for granted as they invoke them through negative statements: 'I did not dislike my own male body' (implying that one should); 'this is not a classic transsexual narrative'; 'I could not care less about which sex I am' (implying that one should); 'I was not caught wearing my sister's underwear'. These re-narrations make reference to an archetypal story that is external to the present narrative but haunts it as a contested model. While the model on which I have focused here is that of the linear, unidirectional and final journey of transition, in Chapter Three I discuss trans-inhabitations that make little or no reference to 'transition' as a movement from A to B, in texts which I term as characterised by a *haunted I*.

CHAPTER THREE

The Haunted I and the Co-embodied Self

> When Amy detransitioned herself, she promised never to let anyone see her as she had seen William that night. Never to pant for inclusion from trans women. Ames wanted no pity and rejected their disgust. But despite Ames's rigid need for dignity, for all the careful lines he drew to respect the differences in how he lived and how trans women lived, they called to him in a siren song. […] The obvious answer to keeping other girls' pity and disgust at bay had been the hardest – the addict's moment of clarity: Cut off those girls cold turkey. Because a single indulgence, and you're William.
>
> The past is past to everyone but ghosts.
>
> ~ Torrey Peters, *Detransition, Baby* (2021)

This ambiguous reference to ghosts in *Detransition, Baby* closes a paragraph in which Ames, whose thoughts are articulated by a third-person narrator, reflects on the impossibility of being included in groups of trans women now that he is no longer a trans woman himself, by making reference to William, another 'detransitioner' who cannot let his past go. A character who has detransitioned (stopped the 'process' of transition, gone back to its supposed starting point) introduces a different temporality from the *Bildungsroman* journey structure that I have noted characterises canonical representations of trans identity. In detransition, the past is returned to (with a difference, as Ames does not adopt his pre-transition name again), but a more recent past (that of Ames as a trans woman) needs to be disavowed. In this passage, 'cutting off' trans girls and 'drawing careful lines' between different versions of the self is shown as emotionally and materially difficult. Where 'cutting off' – and staying inside clearly marked borders – is unsuccessful, ghosts emerge: the subject trans-inhabits past and present, they are haunted by what does not fit in the bounded space they are currently occupying. In this chapter, I focus on a mode of first-person narration that I term the *haunted I*. I discuss Jennifer Finney Boylan's *I'm Looking Through You: Growing up Haunted* (2008), Paul B. Preciado's *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in The Pharmacopornographic Era* (2008) and Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018) in order to show how metaphors of haunting enable gender-variant authors to articulate ways of

(not) fitting in the space of the body and the conventional cartography of gender.[45] Crucially, as the *haunted I* trans-inhabits temporal and spatial locations, the language and sentence structure used to articulate this multiple, fluctuating, and ambiguous status are affected. In the passage from *Detransition, Baby*, the narrator has to contend with Ames's complex identity: 'Amy' and 'she' shift to 'Ames' and 'he' in the space of a sentence, and both of them 'promise', 'want' and 'reject' in the same past tense, raising the question of the extent to which they differ or coincide. In what follows, I show how linguistic features of narrative such as pronouns and tenses are used creatively to convey the trans-inhabitations of the *haunted I*.

In Chapter One, I discussed metaphors of haunting that imagine either the gender-variant individual as a ghost flitting through gender categories or the gender-variant body as haunted by past and future versions of the self. These metaphors are logically consistent with seeing either these categories or this body as homes to be reached at the end of the 'transition journey'. At the same time, metaphors of haunting effect a critique of the notion that the journey's destination is an unambiguous belonging, a fitting neatly into one body and one category. As I argued in Chapter Two, challenging the temporalities of canonical trans narratives can reveal that this belonging is, for many, a trans-inhabitation: a dwelling in desired gendered spaces that nonetheless contain traces of moving across, moving between, dwelling between, traversing borders and being in two places at once. This status can be seen as either an affect to be resolved, produced by the boundaries of 'man' and 'woman' being delineated by others in exclusion of gender-variant subjects, or an empowering position from which the I can partly resist the demand to shape itself to fit conventional moulds. The texts I discuss in this chapter articulate trans-inhabitation as both imposed and liveable. They conceive of the space of the body (and the homes inhabited by the body) as shared with (ghostly) others, moving beyond the notion of the ghost as simply the future imagined body that awaits one at the end of transition or as a trace of the past – both meant to vanish once the 'right body' has

[45] *Testo Junkie* was initially published in Spanish and in French in 2008. The English version was translated by Bruce Benderson from the French and published in 2013. I discuss below the multilingual status of the text as constituting a trans-inhabitation, and I view Preciado's translated words as illustrating one of the ways in which his I is 'inhabited' by others. When I cite the English text, the discussion is limited to aspects of it that are (at least partially) translatable: the metaphors, tenses, and pronouns to which I refer are analogous across the three translations unless otherwise indicated. The edition of *Testo Junkie* that I use has been published with the author's former first name.

been obtained. Since not all the texts I discuss here refer to these others as ghosts, I have used the term 'co-embodied' in the title of this chapter, to clarify how ghosts in this context represent the presence of others in the body/home. Notions of haunting, co-embodiment, containing others or not fitting into spaces are used in *I'm Looking Through You*, *Testo Junkie* and *Freshwater* as creative distortions of existing metaphors. In this way, the *haunted I* effects a critique of the spatiotemporal conventions of canonical trans narratives: not only the unidirectional and linear transition journey (on which I focused in Chapter Two) but also an undisturbed belonging in the home of the 'post-transition' body.

Notions of haunting in trans writing have an affinity with Jacques Derrida's hauntology, a mode of existence of the past that calls into question "the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity […]" (39). Being in between, being both or neither, never being fully one of the other, having a trace somewhere else, or *of* somewhere else, characterise the modes of trans-inhabitation that I discuss in this chapter. What is important to acknowledge in the wake of Derrida is that ghostliness can characterise not only the dead but those who have material existence in the world. In a book that discusses ghost metaphors in contemporary culture, Esther Peeren addresses "living ghosts": "those people who, already in their lifetime, resemble dispossessed ghosts in that they are ignored and considered expendable, or […] become objects of intense fear and violent attempts at extermination" (14). While Peeren does not specifically examine gender-variant individuals as part of this category, her appeal to "[r]ecogniz[e] and tak[e] responsibility for the way these ghosts *of* the present are created, perceived and treated" (14; emphasis in original) is also an important goal of my project, as I examine how power imbalances can be redressed and how ghosts can gain agency in a world that makes them ghosts. Peeren also notes that, for Derrida, ghosts are always othered: "we" are "the haunted ones", looking at ghosts who are external to us and disavowing the possibility that "one may be the ghost one moment and ghosted or haunted the next – or both at the same time" (27). As I examine how gender-variant individuals are conceived in narrative as both ghosts and haunted, the flitting between the two positions should be understood as calling into question how even those who are seen as 'properly' inhabiting abstract and concrete spaces always have the potential to become ghosts and haunted.

Being both ghosts and haunted affects the temporal relations between the experiencing-I and the narrating-I, the former never fully being superseded by the latter. In Chapter Two, I discussed the role of a retrospective narrator in actively ordering, shaping and lending significance to past events in anticipation of the final identity of the narrating-I. While the texts I discuss here also have to some extent a retrospective narrator – *Freshwater* and *I'm Looking through You* are written in the past tense and the latter has a narrating I who explicitly reflects on crafting the narrative – there is a sense in which texts with a *haunted I* dwell in an unruly middle, the conventional ending of canonical trans narratives never being fully anticipated or secured. This is most explicit in *Testo Junkie*, in which Preciado's bodily transformation and crossing of gendered spaces is narrated in short episodes in the present tense resembling diary entries but not dated, the choice of tense reflecting the fact that the destination of transition (being a man) and the starting point (being a man 'in the wrong body') are absent.[46] Similarly, Emezi's novel never mentions 'transition', and its temporality is complicated by multiple narrators who are embodied together and attempt to bring about conflicting resolutions. Boylan's autobiographical narrative is structured in a non-linear manner, with the co-presence of different time periods being connected by the motif of ghosts. Unlike the memoirs I have discussed in Chapter Two, it does not cover the process of transition. The pre-transition I and the post-transition I are ghosts of each other, and an account of the journey between them is missing. This is reflected in the metaphor used by Boylan as she refers to "the process that would take me from the world of men and eventually leave me washed up on the shores of womanhood, blinking and half-drowned" (213). This formulation spatialises gender as territory but conceives of the 'crossing' as a disorienting shipwreck rather than a controlled trajectory. The journey is not only not described, but it is implied to have gone differently than expected, the original trajectory perhaps hijacked even though the 'right' destination appears to have been reached. An omission of the middle creates an unresolved tension between the point of departure and the destination, which are simultaneous rather than successive in the narrative. As 'transition', insofar as it resembles a journey, is omitted in all three texts, the temporality of gender variance is spatialised as haunting and co-presence of multiple selves.

[46] The first entry, which opens the book, is the only dated one, and reads: "October 5" (Preciado, 15).

This co-presence is expressed differently by each instance of the *haunted I* but it is more often formally conveyed through the use of pronouns. I have argued that the deictic nature of the I occasions a trans-inhabitation of diegetic levels, as the referent shifts between the narrating-I and the experiencing-I – thereby moving across and being in multiple 'spaces' at once. Additionally, when the gender of one or more versions of the I is shifting, unknown or different to the gender of others, trans-inhabitation between not only diegetic levels but identity categories is possible, and the subject is temporarily suspended beyond the demand to fit into a fixed gender (he, she, or even they). While this is the case for every text I examine, in this chapter I also focus on how 'you', 'we' and 'she' are used, respectively, by Preciado, Emezi and Boylan to convey the connection between the *haunted I* and its ghosts – others that inhabit it or parts of the self that are imagined as standing outside of it. The latter is the case in *I'm Looking Through You,* in which 'she' is used to refer to the ghost of a woman that the protagonist sees as various points in her life before transitioning, and which is eventually revealed to be the future self of the experiencing-I, glimpsed before she was a fully acknowledged possibility. In a sense, 'she' is the narrating-I, flitting through diegetic levels and subject positions: both narrating the story (as I) and 'visiting' the experiencing-I *within* the story (as 'she'). The use of 'she' for the ghost who is revealed to be an I maintains a separation between two temporal embodiments that cannot be integrated, and render the protagonist/narrator haunted.

While Boylan's text presents different selves as externalised from the main narrating-I or experiencing-I through the use of a third-person pronoun, multiplicity and fragmentation of the self are conveyed in Preciado's text through the use of the pronoun 'you'. Fludernik notes how the second person allows for "fluid shifts of inclusion and exclusion" that "bridge the boundary between intra- and extrafictional reference" ('Category of "Person"', 113). Indeed, Preciado's text has a narratee, addressed in the second person, but also uses the generic 'you' to mean 'one', and sometimes addresses readers outside the text with the same 'you'. A confusion between which 'you' is being referred to is heightened by the text's English translation, where a plural and a singular 'you' cannot be distinguished. I argue that the extent to which different subjects (the narrator, other characters, or readers) fit the 'you' that is being used to address them is related to their mode of inhabitation of a particular subject position: sometimes they fit the position, sometimes

they remain partly outside of it, haunting its space. A similar ambiguity is afforded by the pronoun 'we', prominent in Emezi's text. As Fludernik notes, even when 'we' does not include readers and narratees, "the precise reference of *we* is often unclear in exclusive *we* narratives, since at any given point *we* may refer to a different set of individuals" ('Category of "Person"', 116; emphasis in original). As I argue, the sections of *Freshwater* narrated by a 'we' alternate between containing and not containing the ostensible I (and protagonist) of the narrative: at times, the I is made up of 'we', at times it is one of them, and at times it is separate from them. Ultimately, the use of second- and third-person pronouns in these texts contributes to the representation of a *haunted I* that can never be one unified self, but is instead multiple, trans-inhabiting others (or other selves) and trans-inhabited by them.

Mirrors and Mutual Haunting in the 'Home' of Jennifer Finney Boylan

In *I'm Looking Through You*, the metaphor of haunting and the doubling of the self that it implies – splitting the protagonist into past I/future I or narrating-I/experiencing-I as ghosts of each other – is reinforced through the motif of the mirror. Prosser notes that "mirror scenes" are pervasive in trans life writing and are often used to convey "the definitive splitting of the transsexual subject" at the beginning of the narrative, the divided self recognising a mismatch between inner gender and outward appearance (100). At the same time, Prosser comments on the presence of mirror scenes *at the end* of a narrative of transition having the opposite effect, as recognising oneself in the mirror "heals the split" (99). In addition, mid-transition mirror scenes, in which the subject styles themself to approximate a desired embodiment, function as "autobiographical and transsexual prolepsis", anticipating the moment of healing (102). By functioning to pinpoint the beginning (the split), the ending (the healing of the split) and the journey (punctuated by prolepsis) between experiencing-I and narrating-I, the mirror scene as described by Prosser is consistent with the metaphor of a unidirectional path toward the self at home. In Boylan's memoir, mirror scenes often accompany sightings of ghosts, to some extent functioning as a prolepsis for Jenny, the narrator/protagonist. However, the ending of the narrative – when what once was the proleptic ghost of a woman has become materialised as the actual identity of the *haunted I* – does not feature a subject who is less haunted: if past Jenny is haunted by a future self functioning as prolepsis, present-day Jenny is haunted by a past self, who manifests as analepsis or the need of the narrating-I

to 'look back' on her past life. I argue that the continual movement in the text between looking back and looking forward, exacerbated by the absence of a journey of bodily transformation, heals the 'split' of identity only to an extent, and it shows that neither past nor present embodiment is 'un-haunted', or represents a neat inhabitation of a gendered home that has successfully superseded or excluded its others.

The majority of Boylan's narrative focuses on her youth in her family home, Coffin House, the site of many ghost sightings over the years, as she deals with her partly disavowed identification as a woman which later prompts her transition. The haunted house and Jenny's self as a haunted space are immediately linked as the narrator notes: "I haunted that young body of mine just as the spirits haunted Coffin House" (Boylan, 25). In this formulation, the shifting referent of the first-person pronouns yields either the interpretation that adult Jenny is the one haunting the past 'young body' or that young Jenny is haunting herself. In each case, the I is multiplied and divided into different selves – one who haunts and one who is haunted. The ghosts in Coffin House are more than one: while the main ghost on which the narrative focuses is a woman who is revealed to be future Jenny (or an embodiment of Jenny's inner identity) other spirits who are not Jenny, for example her father (who dies in the time period covered by the main narrative) make an appearance. It is adult Jenny's acceptance of all ghosts, and not only the one who is herself, that constitutes coming to terms with her identity. Indeed, when the experiencing-I discovers, at the start of the novel, that there are ghosts in Coffin House, it is "the ghosts" (plural) that Jenny sees as "one more thing that I needed to keep hidden, an aberration that needed, at all costs, to remain classified" (88). Together with her female identification, it is the phenomenon of hauntedness – of being haunted – rather than a specific ghost that Jenny feels like she needs to hide, and therefore it is the fact of hauntedness, and not just the ghost of a female self, that needs to be accepted by the growing experiencing-I. The multiplicity of ghosts hints at the fact that Jenny will not cease to be haunted when she finally embodies her 'real' self: the supposed destination of transition does not chase away all ghosts.

While the ghosts are "one more thing" (88) that Jenny needs to keep hidden, she feels like there are other secrets that she needs to keep, as she explains: "I'd have to become something like a ghost myself, and keep the nature of my true self hidden" (25). In the

same way as the presence of ghosts is facilitated by the layout of the house, which has numerous remote rooms and an attic where ghosts can hide, Jenny's crossdressing, which she does not want her family to know about, is aided by the house's "abundance of hidey-holes and secret panels" in which she can keep her clothes (40). A direct parallel is established in the text between the haunted self and the haunted house, both having 'hidey-holes' in which part of the life of the house, and the life of Jenny, can unfold away from the eyes of the rest of the family. In addition to Jenny and the house being linked as haunted spaces, a kinship between trans subjects and ghosts is established, so that Jenny is both ghost and haunted. The narrator states: "I do not believe in ghosts, although I have seen them with my own eyes. This isn't so strange, really. A lot of people feel the same about transsexuals" (107). Although the supernatural aspects of the story are implied to be partly motivated by their metaphorical value, the narrator risks being read as unreliable by speaking of her sightings of the ghosts as real even though she does not believe in them. Recalling Bettcher's notion of trans subjects as "deceivers" or "pretenders" ('Wrong Theory', 391) and the fraught relationship of trans memoir authors to truth, Boylan's refusal to settle this paradox can be seen as a refusal to explain, to 'supply evidence' in order to be believed, in the same way as she implies trans subjects should not be put in this position when faced with those who require proof of the validity of their identity.

The first appearance of a specific ghost in the text occurs in the mirror, consolidating the reading, later made more explicit, of the ghost as proleptic self for Jenny. The mirrors of Coffin House, unlike the ones described by Prosser, do not reflect a self with which Jenny disidentifies before transition, or one with which she identifies *after* transition, but they instead reflect what initially appears to be another. The ghost in this scene, Jenny reports, is "behind me in the mirror" and she is "an older woman with long blond hair" – just as adult Jenny is described at other points in the text (Boylan, 47). The confirmation, at the end of the text, that the ghost is Jenny herself occurs as a mirror scene that is more in line with the moment of recognition described by Prosser. When present-day Jenny looks in the mirror, she realises that she is the ghost that she has been seeing when she was younger: "I looked up, and *there she was* […] Except that, as I stared at her, I realized that it was no ghost. After all this time, I was only looking at my reflection [….] From the very beginning, had I only been haunting *myself*?" (249; emphasis in original). I read this

equation between being haunted/being a ghost and being trans, which is revealed here as the interpretative key of the text, as hinted at in the choice of the word to describe ghostly embodiment: "translucent" (25; 37). The mode of presence of the ghost is a visibility (a shining, being 'lucent') that comes from an elsewhere, a beyond, through or across something else: from the inner through the outer body, from the future across time. How *trans*lucent young Jenny feels correlates directly with how much she is seeing herself as *trans*; instead, being "solid" represents being firmly in place, being seen and not being split (25). As with my definition of trans-inhabitation, translucency is a state of being in between bounded spaces (male/female, past/present) in multiple places at once, or outside and at the borders of them.

The ghost of Coffin House (or signs of ghostly presence such as noises or changes in lighting or temperature) manifests numerous times in *I'm Looking Through You*, usually in moments when young Jenny is connecting to her female identity, such as when she crossdresses (97). Jenny growing up and leaving for university coincides with the house being partly rebuilt after a flood: as the ghosts in the house are chased away by the renovations, Jenny's identification as a woman seems to temporarily be put aside as she consolidates an identity as a boy. The narrator notes that she arrives "at school half-translucent" (125) – a formulation that I have argued can be read as 'trans' – and after a couple of years it feels like she is "turning out to be a solid person after all" – a solid person being one who belongs firmly in a (gendered) space (126). At this point, the narrator reports: "all that haunting seemed like a crazy memory, something I'd imagined or invented out of boredom or confusion" (140). The haunting here refers to both spaces, Coffin House and Jenny's body. Many years later, when Jenny is back in the house after marrying and having children but before transitioning, she feels the "old familiar feeling" announcing the presence of a ghost once more: instead of a ghost manifesting, this time, the house is "silent" and it is "a voice inside her" that says: "*You know you're still a woman in your heart"* (210; emphasis in original). The temporality of the 'still' retroactively frames young Jenny as always having been a woman, rather than simply being haunted by one. As the ghost fails to manifest, this time, it is what the ghost represents – Jenny's future (and past) as a woman – that is revealed instead. In the metaphor that runs throughout the text, trans subjectivity is both haunted and doing the haunting. While "transsexuals" and "ghosts" are equated (many "do not believe" in them even when they

have “seen them with [their] own eyes”) (107), the trans protagonist of this story is not only the ghost but also the space being haunted by a ‘woman’, and thereby equated with the house. A conceptual metaphor of the self as divided makes this haunting possible.

Young Jenny is fragmented and refracted not only through mirrors and ghosts, but also through the ambivalent double represented by her sister. When she first sees Coffin House, the experiencing-I imagines “the years ahead” which include “the day of my wedding”, when she sees herself throw “my bouquet toward my bridesmaids” and “my father wipe[] the tears from his eyes, his little Jenny all grown up at last” (17). This narrative includes both a hypothetical prolepsis (Jenny’s wedding, which will instead take place with her as the groom) and a hypothetical analepsis (‘little Jenny’, whom her father never actually knows as girl). Instead, it is Jenny’s sister who gets married at Coffin House a few years later and this occasions hostile feelings from the experiencing-I, who tells herself, through an imagined dialogue with her dog, “*you resent her getting to have a life*” (152; emphasis in original). These thoughts coincide with the reappearance of “footsteps” above “in the attic”, which are “tentative at first, as if the walker had been asleep for a long time” (154). At this point, Jenny has been disavowing the desire to embody her female self for some years, and a comparison with the life trajectory of her sister coincides with a resurgence of this desire, which, like the ghosts, has been ‘asleep for a long time’. After the celebration, Jenny tries on her sister’s wedding dress and sees “in the mirror […] the reflection of a young woman with long blond hair” – herself this time, and not a ghost (173). Hearing someone approaching, Jenny further becomes the ghost as she hides in the attic, noting “this time the haunted, hidden thing was me” (176). However, the narrator here explains: “After all, it wasn’t my sister’s dress, or for that matter, her life that I wanted. It was my own” (173). Ultimately, it is a disidentification with her sister, as well as with the imagined version of life where everyone has always seen her as a woman, that will lead Jenny to finally materialise the vision of herself as a woman with long blonde hair in a way that suits her real circumstances.

However, as I have anticipated, Jenny as the woman with long blonde hair achieves neither a complete ‘healing of the split’ nor an end to all haunting. The narrator’s I remains divided between one before transition and one after, without the transition itself being described. Because of the missing account of how one becomes the other, the

experiencing-I and the narrating-I remain separated by an unmeasurable and unbridgeable distance, equally haunted: young Jenny by the ghost of the blonde woman and present-day Jenny by "young James" (242). In the framing narrative occasioning the long analepsis that constitutes most of the text, present-day Jenny is at a hotel which reminds her of Coffin House, making her wonder how "some people manage to integrate their lives" while "others become stuck", "haunting their own lives like ghosts" (12). Jenny sees her pre-transition life as haunting her, not fully 'integrated' with her present self, and the text is itself an attempt to perform this integration. However, the narrative declines to provide the transition journey, the path that would bridge the two selves.[47] The fact that the haunting is mutual is evident from the first ghost-in-the-mirror scene, where the ghost with the long blonde hair "seem[s] surprised to see" young Jenny, as if the latter was "the ghost" (47). In these moments of trans-inhabitation, different temporal versions of Jenny are ambiguously present next to each other, almost touching, ghosts *of* and *for* each other. Later in the text, as present-day Jenny visits her old school, she sees "young James" and imagines saying: "*Hey kid. Wait a second. I have to tell you something*" (242; emphasis in original). The focalisation then shifts to 'young James', who is talked about in the third person: "He thought he'd heard something, but he wasn't sure what" (242). Shifting focalisation here grants each ghost the equal role of being both the one haunted and the one haunting, but both remain distant from the I through the use of the third person.

Boylan's ghosts are therefore both 'I' and 'she/he', both stuck and mobile, bound to their spatiotemporal coordinates but able to temporarily travel elsewhere, preventing the narrative from delivering a unified, present and fully solid Jenny. While I have noted that the mirror images as well as the ghosts described by Prosser are functional to the movement of the autobiographical narrative – either representing a past from which to move away or a future toward which to proceed – the ghosts of *I'm Looking Through You*

[47] Boylan's previous memoir – *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders* (2003) – covers the more conventional steps of the transition narrative: gender-variant childhood, struggle to admit one's identity, hormone replacement therapy and surgery, social acceptance, and so on. The fact that Jenny's transition is published 'elsewhere' means that *I'm Looking Through You* is haunted by this linear narrative even as it does not present one itself. This intertextual tension can be described both as a trans-inhabitation (the story inhabits two locations, it is multiple, fragmented, and haunts/is haunted by other spaces) and a re-narration (the memoir reworks an existing model for ordering the same events in time). This is a similar relationship as the one existing between Jacques' *Trans* and her column, and between Bornstein's *Queer and Pleasant Danger* and *Gender Outlaw*.

do not exist along the linear and unidirectional path of transition but are governed by a different type of movement. When Jenny joins a Paranormal Investigators Group to make sense of the ghosts in Coffin House, she encounters a man who describes the practice of "astral projection" – a form of travelling where "you send your spirit wandering around while the rest of you stays put" – and explains that "[s]ome people think that's what ghosts are […] It's just people who have projected themselves out in space and time" (230). This notion of ghosts as versions of oneself that are differently placed in space and time, bound to a specific location but able to 'project' themselves elsewhere, conveys the mode of trans-inhabitation that also pertains to Jenny's selves. The ghosts' mode of existence, partly *wandering around* and partly *staying put*, counters a narrative about the trans body as capable of a complete transformation that cuts the past off. I have noted that a combination of changeability and fixedness, crossing and belonging – or, to use Hayward's words, the insight that bodies are "pliant to a point, flexible within limits" ('Starfish', 74) – characterises many gender-variant narratives. Here, all versions of Jenny in the text are both partly bound to their circumstances *and* partly able to transcend them. This tension also pertains to the materiality of the ghosts: they are incorporeal enough that both adult Jenny and young Jenny can at times disavow them, but not enough to be completely reabsorbed by the current I and thereby ignored.

Ultimately, while Jenny feels the pain of not being able to 'integrate' herself, the phenomenon of hauntedness, which is also the unifying subject of the memoir, provides consistency between the different parts of her life. The memoir ends with Jenny seeing the ghosts of several characters in the novel who have died, including, finally, "a boy" who is her younger self. She asks him if he is "*mad*" about her "*doing away with me*", to which he replies: "Do I look done away with to you?" (Boylan, 265; emphasis in original). Throughout the text, Jenny is fascinated with the notion of oneness and indivisibility, which I read as connected to her attempt to 'do away' with her ghosts. There are mentions of her interest in Gottfried Leibniz's monads (121), a short story called 'All at One Point' (195) and a book written by her uncle which begins with: "No more shall all be two. Now comes all one, all soul, all heart" (174).[48] What helps Jenny to let go of the fantasy of

[48] Monads, in Leibniz's metaphysics, are entities that constitute the substance of the universe and collect together to make up objects. When discussing a university assignment on Leibniz with a friend, Jenny points out that monads are "indestructible", each an indivisible entity (Boylan, 121). It is this indivisibility, in my reading, that holds fascination for the character, since she views her own divided self as a problem. 'All At

indivisibility and try to "connect my male history with the reality of my female present" is a narrative that sees the different selves ('he' and 'she', narrating-I and experiencing-I, ghost I and haunted I) as equally haunted by each other (258). This mutual implication of selves at different points in time is a form of trans-inhabitation (being in multiple spaces at once, traversing boundaries, moving across and back) that stalls the forward movement of the 'transition journey'. Therefore, even when the memoir's retrospective narrator covers past events in a linear manner, this temporality is not (entirely) a progression from male to female self, or from divided to healed self, but a co-existence of them. The texts that I discuss in what follows similarly map for their *haunted I* a space-time that defies linear movements and bounded spaces. They do so by showing how others exist beside and inside the self, multiplying it and moving through it, being – like Jenny and/as her ghosts – co-embodied with it.

"Traversed by What Isn't Mine": Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie*

Preciado's *Testo Junkie* deviates from canonical narratives of transness by documenting, through a mix of autobiographical accounts and historical/political essays, the author's self-administration of testosterone outside of a clinical setting. I argue that the text ends up, like *I'm Looking Through You*, conceiving of the I as a sort of haunted house. *Testo Junkie*, like the memoirs I discuss in Chapter Two, disturbs linear temporalities both through event selection and ordering, and through the blend of autobiographical narrative with an analysis of what counts as an intelligible subject that can say I in such a narrative. Observing the changes to his body, Preciado notes that testosterone "wouldn't be effective in terms of masculinization without the previous existence of a political agenda that interprets these changes as an integral part of a desire […] for sex change", or "the project of being in transit from one fiction of sex to another" (143). The 'masculinisation' produced by hormones therefore depends on the journey metaphor as

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One Point' is a short story by Italo Calvino that Jenny reads. It is described by her as "a nostalgic narrative written from the point of view of the beings who had all been together at the beginning of the universe, back when everything was connected, and all men and women were part of a single entity" (195). When Prosser argues that the drive of the trans narrative is "nostalgically toward home" (177), he describes a similar feeling to the one experienced by the beings in this story: an aching for a wholeness irreparably lost in the past, which, for Prosser, one tries to recreate in the future. Jenny implicitly moves on from this idea when she realises that this wholeness cannot be attained, that her ghosts cannot be fully 'connected' in a nostalgically imagined space where 'men and women [are] part of a single entity'. The words from the book written by Jenny's uncle echo a similar wish – 'two shall be one', whole, indivisible – which the narrator is never able to see fulfilled.

a linear progress – which Horak indeed calls "hormone time" (580) – from 'femaleness' to 'maleness'. Thinking of the individual taking testosterone as a traveller going somewhere is necessary for interpreting the change in their body as indicators of a progressive masculinisation. The resistance to hormone time is also effected by the text's use of the present tense in passages of achronous autobiographical narration, and by how the autobiographical 'path' is temporally and spatially distorted by the insertion of increasingly longer chapters that focus on the history of the pharmacological disciplining of bodies. My reading focuses on how the destabilisation of the journey metaphor, in this text, works together with a critique of the 'body as a home' metaphor, and with a notion of the self as haunted and inhabited by what is supposedly external to it.

The use of the present tense to narrate autobiographical scenes that are not dated and (could be) non-chronological reveals Preciado's desire to dwell in the middle of what is supposed to be the transition journey, which accompanies his refusal to assume a "predefined direction" for the "changes […] triggered by testosterone" (Preciado, 250). Indeed, suspending and stretching the present moment is the desire of the narrator in his first sexual encounter with his girlfriend, as he explains: "I take turns imagining myself with and without a cock […] But I know that the moment I get undressed, she'll see only one of these bodies. Being reduced to one fixed image frightens me. I keep my clothes on a few minutes more, so I can enjoy the double option a little longer (88). I have discussed doubling in Boylan's text as being expressed through the movement of ghosts in between past and future; it is clear that multiplicity is Preciado's desired embodiment for the present, a present that stretches to encompass all the autobiographical moments that are conveyed in this tense, and that aims to resist the forward movement through which the changes caused by testosterone would be interpreted as 'masculinisation' (a process taking him from one dreaded 'fixed image' to another). While Boylan's protagonist trans-inhabits different temporal locations by being made up of multiple selves that are bound to their circumstances yet can visit other spaces, Preciado's narrator stands still, thereby trans-inhabiting the present not as an unmoving location but as a stretchable space where different embodied selves coexist. While conceiving of the temporality of bodily changes not as process but as simultaneous coexisting of different possibilities, Preciado also sees the present moment as entailing multiple inhabitations: of the self in the body,

of the body in social spaces (both abstract and concrete) and of transforming substances 'in' the body and 'in' himself.

The modes of inhabitation that characterise the I of *Testo Junkie* effect a critique of the notion of home as a metaphor not only for the final destination of a transition process (because for Preciado there is no process) but as metaphor for the extent to which the body or spaces external to it are private. Preciado's approach to the body's locatability, and to the subject's locatability *in* the body, is influenced by an understanding of how most spaces are not self-determined destinations reached by an independent subject, but are pre-designed social coordinates that produce the very subject that comes to inhabit them. In finding a 'home', modes of embodiment that are not intelligible within this home's parameters – dictating what constitutes a male/female/trans body – are disavowed. Preciado also emphasises the role of an "architecture external to the body", such as clinical settings, as instrumental for the production and manipulation of bodies to conform to specific sexual and gendered norms (207).[49] He further argues that bodies are regulated not only through external architecture, but from within "the valuable enclave of the individual body" (206): through drugs, food, pharmaceutical and synthetic substances ingested and absorbed by the body so that "biopower dwells at home, sleeps with us, inhabits within" (207). The subject, therefore, "no longer inhabits disciplinary spaces but is inhabited by them" (79). The 'body is a home' metaphor is employed here to show that the normative sphere in which the body is supposed to find a 'gendered belonging' has a way of making the body itself into a home for supposedly 'external' norms: the body becomes a home for its 'homes' (the spaces that grant it intelligibility). In the case of transition, for instance, while surgery is performed *from the outside in*, occurring in a specific space to manipulate the body, hormones are ingested at home, activating *from within* changes that require to be read as bringing the body into conformity with a specific gendered destination.

Preciado therefore brings to the notion of home an awareness that private spaces, like one's house (where substances are administered to make the body more locatable) and one's body (where these substances become active) are regulated by pre-existing

[49] The function of this architecture external to the body is still noticeable, for instance, in the surgical 'correction' of intersex anatomy performed in hospitals, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

expectations that delimit what constitutes an intelligible embodied subject. His own literal home is used in some passages as a starting point for questioning the extent to which the body resembles a home. He describes being struck by the "fiction that my apartment, its fifty-five square feet, which can be locked with a key, is my private territory", and experiences a "slippage of paranoia from the sofa to my skin" thinking that his "body could be a lifelong center of imprisonment" (135). The home and the body are equated here not as comfortable, liveable spaces, but as disguised prisons. I have noted in Chapter One Samson's distortion of the journey metaphor (transition as a unidirectional, linear path with a starting point and a destination, chosen by the subject who embarks upon it) into a "conveyor belt", which maintains the same sense of linear and unidirectional trajectory but suggests that each subject follows pre-determined stages and ends up being one in a series of identical products (206). The prison in Preciado's writing becomes, like the conveyor belt, a distortion of, and challenge to, the conventional metaphor that it resembles: both homes and prisons are lockable spaces, bounded by walls, but in the latter space the agency of the subject is taken away. Imprisonment in the wrong body is a conventional metaphor for trans embodiment, which fuels a canonical narrative of transition as a journey, but for Preciado hormones are no vehicle to reach the freeing destination of a 'right body'. Hormones are themselves participating in the production of a narrow range of possible selves and homes. *Testo Junkie*'s metaphors thus consciously depart from those upon which canonical narratives of trans identity rely in order to question the promise of the transition journey that its destination is freely chosen.

As the homely comforts of the body are questioned, the locatability of this body is also addressed. I have noted how the body is both a space to be inhabited and a space that itself inhabits abstract and concrete locations (gender categories as much as apartments and countries). Preciado draws attention to the "multiplicity" and "blending" of the spaces that his body inhabits (133). Language and gender are conceived as assigned labels – "I was *assigned* the female gender; Spanish *was made* my maternal language" – that function as spaces – "I *travel among* three languages that I think of neither as mine nor as foreign to me" (93; my emphasis). Preciado is both "wandering from one language to another" and "in transit between masculinity, femininity, and transsexuality" (133). The text itself exists in between languages, and thus has multiple homes. Preciado argues

that language homes, like gender homes, do not possess "any ontological density" but that "there is no other way of being a body. Dispossessed from the start" (134). This dispossession, rather than the search for a true self as a home-destination, is what drives the journeying, and, if there is any journeying at all, it is not a linear and unidirectional path but a being in 'transit', a travelling 'among', a 'wandering'. The dispossession implies that healing the divided self, finding a place to match the mind and the body, is impossible for Preciado. There is no place where the body 'is', but instead there are multiple spaces that are trans-inhabited. However, comparing this dispossession with the condition, described by Peeren, of those who "resemble dispossessed ghosts in that they are ignored and considered expendable" (14), reveals that having no 'ontological density' may mean being materially deprived of life or a voice from which to speak. The fragmentation of self that occurs in Preciado's text, while for him it becomes at times a productive resistance to medical narratives of gender, is not liveable for everyone; as I argue in the Conclusion, those who are forced to be 'in transit' between geographical, linguistic and bodily spaces may produce strategies that are different from dispossession, as dispossession is what poses a threat to their survival.

Moving away from a state of dispossession can consist in the need to find a home where one can be whole, a need that still appears in gender-variant writing. Preciado, however, expresses the desire to remain haunted by what cannot temporally or spatially fit in conventionally bounded categories, and to find there a position from which to speak. Hale's description of the gender-variant body as haunting the homes of intelligible gender categories is echoed here: Preciado's text and body are in transit between languages and genders, 'dispossessed from the start'. However, like in Boylan's text, the gender-variant self not only 'haunts homes' but is itself a haunted home. An analysis of *Testo Junkie* offers multiple answers to the question of what exactly haunts the house-body. At the start of the text, the narrator states that he is only interested in his "emotions insomuch […] they are *traversed by what isn't mine*" (Preciado, 11; my emphasis). The writing is occasioned by the death of Preciado's friend GD, who is referred to as a "ghost" (15; 242) and occupies the position of the narratee in most of the text. The narrator lets himself be traversed by GD, wanting to design "an image of myself as if I were [GD]", to "cross-dress into [him]"

(19) or to be "possessed by [his] spirit" (238).[50] The 'you' of the text then starts to shift toward all the friends "who are dead" (20). Preciado urges this plural 'you': "take over my body […] [r]eincarnate yourselves in me; possess my tongue, arms, sex organs, dildos, blood, molecules; possess my girlfriend, dog; inhabit me, live in me" (20).[51] The I invites the 'you' to inhabit his body, which is here partly material flesh (tongue, arms, blood, molecules), partly prosthetic (dildos), partly others connected to the self (girlfriend, dog). Preciado's home-self, already dispossessed by trans-inhabiting genders and languages, already transformed by the effect of hormones that are designed to place him on a path to a destination he has not chosen, is here being opened up to be further traversed by *what is not his*.

The shifting referent of the 'you' of the text contributes to convey this inhabitation of the *haunted I* by others. The 'you' is sometimes a specific narratee – GD, or GD and the other friends "who are dead" (20) – sometimes extra-textual readers, sometimes a generic 'you' which includes the narrator himself. The latter is also the case when other texts with a generic 'you' are cited, and the narrator reflects on the extent to which he can count himself as addressed by this you. *Testo Junkie* reproduces the user's instructions for the testosterone substance that has been obtained by the narrator without a prescription or medical recommendation. The disidentification with the 'you' of the instructions therefore begins as they state, "[t]his drug has been prescribed to you for your own use and must not be given to others" (58). A confusion of subjects begins as Preciado is supposedly the 'other', who is not the one whom the instructions are addressing. After it becomes clear that the product is intended for men (either trans or cis), the narrator notes that "in order to legally obtain a dose of synthetic testosterone, it is necessary to stop defining yourself as a woman" (60). Those who do not *stop* defining themselves as women can only trans-inhabit the 'you', remain at its borders, haunt it. At the same time, there are passages in which the narrator emphasises the deictic pronoun to mark the notion that the self does not belong to the individual 'I' but it is traversed by substances and norms which render it legible in specific social structures, such as the following: "the

[50] "Possessed" is feminine in the Spanish and French versions, and Preciado normally uses the masculine. This cannot be marked in English with the first person, which I have argued in the Introduction is the reason why the latter is a fruitful narrative strategy to convey gender-variant identity: the sliding between genders that occurs in different languages becomes a genuine suspension in English.
[51] In Spanish and French, words for the plural 'you' are used to mark this shift.

province of sex (and I mean *your* sex) is not the individual body (your body) or the private domain (your private domain) or any domestic space (your domestic space)" (273; emphasis in original). Here, readers are interpellated as 'you' at the same time as they are being told that their 'yous' are not 'theirs'. The dispossession that narrator uses to describe himself and the inhabitation of spaces that are not fully 'his' (homes, bodies, gender categories) is extended to the 'yous' of the text – together with the I, we/they trans-inhabit one another.

Therefore, being haunted by others, dispossessed from the start, and traversed by what is not self are modes of embodiment that are both explicitly sought by the I of *Testo Junkie* and at the same time shown to be unavoidable. Preciado's argument is that mechanisms for disciplining subjects are "technologies that can be injected, inhaled – 'incorporated'" (77), the body being contaminated by what is supposedly 'other'. As the narrator self-administers Testogel, a gelatinous substance to be applied directly to the skin, the testosterone molecule contained in it "dissolves into the skin as a ghost walks through a wall" (67). In this formulation, the body becomes a haunted house, whose walls are traversed by ghosts. This is rendered possible by the permeability of the body, its capacity to absorb transformative substances. For Preciado, the susceptibility of the body-home to be 'haunted' and the ghostly quality of the technologies it incorporates not only renders the body vulnerable to being shaped without the subject's control but also engenders the possibility "for political agency and critical resistance to normalization" (348). I have noted how, because it is "necessary to stop defining yourself as a woman" (60) in order to legally obtain Testogel, there is a confusion between the proper 'you' addressed by the user's manual and another possible 'you' that may find itself in its place. Even if this 'you' was the man intended by the laboratory, however, the permeability and malleability of the body-home and the ghostly quality of the gel make it impossible to keep this 'you' confined to 'male' spaces. The instructions indeed warn that women, and specifically the "female partner" (59), should be protected from accidentally absorbing the gel through the user's skin. The normative understanding of binary genders as bounded regions in space is threatened by testosterone's ghostly capacity to traverse the (literal and metaphorical) boundary between male bodies and female bodies. The "transparent demon's sliding from another's skin toward mine" (65) is a phantasmatic presence that enters the body and, in Preciado's illicit use of it, alters it in uncontrollable ways: what is

manufactured to secure maleness and femaleness as separate can be employed, in Preciado's experiment, to challenge this very purpose.

Additionally, the transforming effect of the testosterone 'other' is only possible because the body already contains potential other-selves. Preciado explains: "Testosterone existing externally is inserted into a molecular field of possibilities that already exists inside my body" (141). Like the ghost-body of future gender that is materialised with transition (and sometimes glimpsed in the mirror), the 'differently' sexed other materialised with testosterone was already in some way present in the body. In the canonical transition journey toward a whole self, the destination of transition (surgery) substantiates the ghost of possibility into material reality. This final materialisation, in turn, gives rise to the demand "to rewrite [one's] history, modify all the elements in it that belong under the narrative of being female" (257). Instead of 'rewriting' the self to make it consistent with its final home, Preciado describes a reconfiguring of elements that are already written in the body, as the body trans-inhabits past, future and other possibilities. In a drag king workshop, the narrator is instructed to fashion facial hair from his own head hair and he notes that this is a revelation of the "possibility already existing in my genes" (367). What already exists does not need to be 'rewritten'.[52] Differently from a retrospective re-narration of the past that sees the experiencing-I as being *en route* to its destination (which sometimes is anticipated by proleptic ghosts), a coexistence of past and present appears in Preciado's text as the simultaneity of the trans-inhabiting and trans-inhabited self. As the narrator describes the text not as a "memoir" but as an "intoxication protocol" (11), it does not constitute a travelling toward a whole self, but it is instead a document of contamination by others who, by traversing and co-habiting one space, reveal or trigger the plurality within the one.

Spatialising the Narrating-We of Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater*

Freshwater also provides alternative spatialisations to the linear journey, the body-home and the ghost-possessed self. The text is a novel about gender-variant identity that exists in an ambiguous relation to autobiography – just as the gender identity it narrates cannot be easily categorisable, neither can its genre. Emezi defines the text in an interview as an

[52] The French and Spanish versions of this passage indeed use verbs that can be translated into 'already inscribed' rather than 'already existing'.

"autobiographical novel – a breath away from being a memoir" ('I'd Read Everything'). The human protagonist, Ada, shares biographical details with the author in the way that their transition and gender identity are experienced – they both feel to be neither men nor women, both choose to have a hysterectomy and a breast reduction, both eventually identify as ọgbanje, spirits from Igbo cosmology.[53] Misty Bastian, discussing the role of ọgbanje in Nigerian literature, argues that "to be *ogbaanje* is to be categorized as other and to bring alterity home in a way that transcends the more ordinary bifurcated 'otherness' of gender" (59; emphasis in original). 'Bringing alterity home' introduces the notion of other inhabitants haunting the home of the human body: the mode of embodiment I have discussed in this chapter so far. Bastian argues that, by eschewing a human gender binary, the incarnated ọgbanje can be considered as inhabiting a "third gender category, that of the human-looking spirit" (59). The appearance of the spirit as a sexed child "may, indeed, be seen as a sham – yet another promise that the *ogbaanje* is likely to break in its refusal to act according to human norms" (59; emphasis in original). Ọgbanje defy the legibility of the human body through a conventional lens, and their otherness disrupts societal ('human', including gendered) norms. They are incarnated in a body that feels false, or wrong, or does not match with their reality; therefore, their mode of existence is resonant with experiences of gender-variant identity.

Ọgbanje have an ambivalent way of occupying space which, I argue, is akin to other ghostly embodiments I have discussed – they exist in multiple spaces at once, or *as* multiple spaces, or they destabilise the notion of bounded space altogether. The ọgbanje's typical movement is described as "running back and forth" – they are "unstable, 'unsettled' spirits who can never be at home in this world" and have a "mobile, boundary-transgressing quality" (Bastian, 61). The conventional metaphors of 'transition is a (linear, unidirectional) journey' and 'gender is a (stable, bounded) home' therefore have

[53] There are different spellings of ọgbanje in English; I use the one from the text. In the Nigerian Igbo tradition, ọgbanje are spirits who are repeatedly born as human children in the same family, causing grief as they strive to return to the spirit world by killing their human incarnations. The figure of the ọgbanje represents "metaphysical and political discomfort with life, aggravated by the instability of coming from the otherworld to frequent this world" (Ogunyemi, 664). In this novel and in scholarship about this concept, ọgbanje is both singular and plural, and describes both the spirit(s) incarnated in the human and the human themself, thus troubling – like the novel as a whole does – the boundary between haunting spirit and haunted subject, plural 'they' and singular I. The ọgbanje's role as tormenters of families who want to return to death is invoked in *Freshwater* to explain the protagonist's actions toward their mother and their drive to end their life, but I focus here on the role of the ọgbanje in the text's negotiation with gendered embodiment.

the potential to be challenged by conceiving of trans embodiment together with ọgbanje. Emezi's experience is characterised by the coexistence and always partial blending of different worlds. The author explains how, by reading their embodiment as both ọgbanje and trans, they came to "inhabit simultaneous realities that are usually considered mutually exclusive", although initially they report: "it was difficult for me to consider an Igbo spiritual world equally" (Emezi, 'I'd Read Everything'). The book is also between worlds: it takes place between Nigeria and the United States, mixes Igbo and Christian references, and is multilingual, using Igbo words in the narrative. The novel's protagonist, Ada, finds that "[r]eality [is] a difficult space […] to inhabit" because, being ọgbanje, she has "one foot on the other side" (Emezi, *Freshwater*, 27). This can be read in relation to not only non-binary gendered identity, but other forms of displacement that are equally central to Emezi's text. As Chikwenye Ongunyemi argues, the ọgbanje often "emerges as a trope for the writer writing in a European, instead of a Nigerian, language" in a way that has "socio-political and metaphoric implications for Africa and the diaspora" (69). The ọgbanje's displacement from their home, according to Ongunyemi, mirrors the alienation of the Nigerian writer from their "emotional language" (69). I have noted in Chapter One that ghostly in-between-ness can be an overdetermined metaphor, conveying the inhabitation not only of gendered but of racial, national and other spaces. The ọgbanje in *Freshwater* function to indicate a multiplicity of ways in which the *haunted I* exists in between places, dispossessed of a home.

Though never named as such, the ọgbanje in the novel can be likened to ghosts in the way that I have described them so far: haunting a body-house, trans-inhabiting spaces, living 'in' or 'beside' the I. Emezi themself has referred to this mode of co-embodiment not quite as haunting but as possession. Crucially, however, they only mention possession in the negative, to explain that the protagonist of *Freshwater* "is *not* possessed by spirits": "people think in binaries a lot, so that *one thing has to be possessed by another.* But with ọgbanje, these things are collapsed" (Emezi, 'I'd Read Everything'; emphasis added). Emezi does not deny that ọgbanje embodiment is a form of possession, but what they deny is that *one thing is possessed by another*. While Preciado urges the ghost of GD, and the ghosts of all the dead friends, to possess *him*, *Freshwater* does not begin with the I but with a 'we' (as the ọgbanje narrate the first third of the novel). Therefore, the one (I) 'being possessed' and the 'other(s) possessing it' are collapsed as there is never one

without the other. There is a sense in which the not-being-possessed that Emezi insists on can be linked to Preciado's 'dispossession'. As others inhabit the body, this is possible because the 'I' was never the owner of the house in the first place. What Emezi establishes with this model is the difficulty of separating a primary 'one' and secondary 'others', which would entail placing these subjectivities in a binary and hierarchical model of self/non-self, human/non-human, possessed/possessing. Difficulty to separate, however, does not mean that the one and its others coincide, as there is always a "stretch of emptiness between" the I and the 'we' (Emezi, *Freshwater*, 36). They are never integrated, like the two versions of Jenny that haunt each other in *I'm Looking Through You*. The spacing between and within the 'we' and the human is shifting and difficult to delineate, but it is impossible to erase it and make the self one.

The human and the 'we', who speak *in* and *of* her in the first part of *Freshwater*, are entangled from the moment of birth. The 'we' initially "flit", like ghosts, through the walls of a uterus – partly within and partly outside the body – but after their human incarnation (Ada) is born and is "no longer flesh within a house but a house itself", they are "locked into" and "trapped" in the (house-like) body (4). Like the other texts I discuss in this chapter, this novel views the body both as a house and as housed, relying on a notion of the self as divided that allows for metaphors that are common in gender-variant writing, such as being 'trapped' in a body. The situation is complicated here by the multiple subjectivities involved: the narrators insist throughout the novel that they both *are* Ada and "yet not" (5). On the one hand, the ọgbanje call Ada their "vessel" (27) or "she (our body)" (5). This could be understood in light of the conventional metaphor of the divided self: the true self (mind) is trapped into the false self (body). However, the text works precisely to destabilise and question the location of Ada's self, as the distinction between inner and outer is collapsed. As she grows up, the ọgbanje exist "inside the marble room of her mind" and interact there, sometimes materialised as specific personalities (41). At the same time, the first person plural occasionally expands to contain Ada as well, in passages such as: "We (the Ada and us) do not remember our mouth's sounds" (23). Here the mouth is 'ours', and 'we' refers to 'the Ada and us'.[54] Owing to the shifting referent of

[54] The ọgbanje refer to Ada as 'the Ada', as if to say, 'the child'. In some parts of my discussion, such as this one, I refer to Ada as 'she', as this is how the ọgbanje refer to their human incarnation. However, as the novel progresses, Ada is consolidated as a subject with agency to identify as neither male nor female, and

the deictic 'we', it can never be said with certainty that Ada is included in the 'we'; because she is sometimes contained in this we and sometimes contains them, distinctions between container and contained (and thus possessed and possessing) are collapsed. It is *with* this 'we', and not against it, that the I of Ada will ultimately be able to find agency and a voice.

The first I of the novel is not Ada, but Asụghara. Asụghara is a spirit that becomes individuated, separated from the "larger we" (69), when Ada is sexually assaulted at university. Asụghara's function is to protect Ada: she inhabits and animates Ada's body so that the latter can become absent when confronted with traumatic circumstances. This spirit describes Ada as an external vessel: she is "locked into her flesh, moving her muscles" (75), thus being able to animate Ada from the inside, "running Ada's fingernails" through someone's skin, using "Ada's face" and "practic[ing] smiles on it" (74). Asụghara gradually attempts to erase all spaces within Ada so that she can gain as much agency as possible: "I expanded against the walls, filling it up and blocking her out completely. She was gone. […] I was here. I was everything. I was everywhere." (64). Maintaining the spacing within the 'we', remaining multiple, fails at providing Ada with a way to process emotions or a place from which to act and therefore Asụghara taking over as 'one' becomes necessary. At the same time, the very existence of multiple others is what protects Ada in the first place, as that means they *can* take over. Asụghara's dominance has a negative side, as she becomes selfish and self-destructive, and prevents Ada from intervening. Speaking as a narrator, Asụghara notes that Ada is trying to speak too: "she was saying something but her voice was small and tiny, and I was pressed up against the walls of her mind, growing and growing until she was a dot in a corner and I couldn't hear her voice anymore" (145). Ada has been referred to as 'the body' or the 'vessel' before, but here she is also an *inner* I, capable of being crushed by Asụghara within the space of the mind, continuing to subvert the container/contained relationship of the human and the ọgbanje. By taking up space, Asụghara becomes the main self, so that Ada's 'small and tiny' voice becomes a voice 'inside' Asụghara. By becoming a full I in the narrative before Ada does, Asụghara cannot be said to possess her, as there is no individual subjectivity to take hold of yet, just the space of a 'we'.

therefore I use 'they' to refer to this character at different points in the novel. Once again, as I continue to make these distinctions, the texts I discuss continue to defy them.

Although Asụghara endeavours to take up all the available space, the 'we', and therefore a space beyond the boundary of the I, still exist, allowing "something else" to stand "beside" her (121). The location of this other, named Saint Vincent, is ambiguously 'beside' Asụghara – even though she is seemingly everywhere, and even though she fills Ada up (Ada continues to be both the body and 'a dot in the corner' of the mind). Although this other spirit (this time from a Christian tradition, though the significance of this particular saint is not discussed in the text) represents a masculinity that is part of Ada, it becomes clear that the gender-variant identity that Ada eventually comes to embody is neither a trajectory from female to male nor a perfect symmetry of the two. Saint Vincent never speaks in his own voice in the novel and remains in Ada's mind "because he [cannot] survive her body" (121). This asymmetry is partly due to the coexistence and simultaneous inhabitation of different spaces by different characters. Describing Saint Vincent, the 'we' explain that he moves "inside the Ada's dreams, when she [is] floating in our realm, untethered and malleable" (122). While most of the text describes a human world in which the spirits are visitors, Ada here is the one who visits an 'other' realm – although it is hers ("her dreams"), the "we" claim it as "our" (122). Adding to this ambivalent inhabitation, there is an ambiguous mode of embodiment: in Ada's dreams, Saint Vincent has "molded her into a new body […], a dreambody with reorganized flesh and a penis", and he "use[s] the dreambody as his" (122). The spirit has made the body for Ada, but then uses it as 'his'. This overlapping of the two conveys a transit between identities that is akin to other ghostly embodiments I have discussed. Saint Vincent is indeed described by the 'we' as being "soft as a ghost" (122). The *haunted I* of *Freshwater* is therefore ultimately a haunted/haunting I/we, and trans-inhabitation occurs without settling *who* is inhabiting *whom/what/where*.

The existence of a multiplicity of others in the space left open by the 'one' (the space beside it) becomes something that haunts Ada, as she is "pursued by space, gray and malignant, cold as chalk" (36). However, it eventually becomes clear that getting rid of spaces, and thus achieving a situation where Ada can be one, and fully in one world, is impossible. As is the case with Boylan's Jenny, a form of co-embodiment that does not do away with multiple subjectivity must be found. In *Freshwater*, this inevitability is explained through Igbo cosmology. The ọgbanje clarify that the dislocation of the I from

the 'we', the reason why they are not "synched" is owing to a failure to separate spaces: "When transition is made from spirit to flesh, the gates are meant to be closed. […] Perhaps the gods forgot" (5). An openness – notably, occurring during a *transition* – where there should not be one creates "a distinct *we*" where there should be a "fully and just *her*" (5; emphasis in original). The empty space between these positions marks their multiplicity, makes them *not one*: the gates "infect with space, gaps, widenings" that cannot be closed (36). However, spacing does not always imply physical distance. The narrators admit that it would be "hard" to take "a piece of chalk and draw where she stops and where we start" (43). Delineating bounded spaces 'with a piece of chalk' recalls Bornstein's line in the sand that separates binary gender: in both cases the line of chalk/sand conventionally needs to be crossed (if the spaces are genders, through the journey of 'transition'). Once it is crossed, the I is allowed closure, can be matched, one with itself, and the metaphor of the ghost is what can allow a flitting in and out of the enclosed space. In *Freshwater*, the spaces themselves have been left open, and there is ultimately no bounded territory that can be haunted. While there is a distance between genders, between spirit and human world, the gates of the bounded areas are open, making the two spaces spill into each other.

As it is impossible to categorically distance the I from the 'we', gender-affirming medical interventions in the novel do not constitute a progressive emergence and materialisation of *one* true self, but a discontinuous coming to the fore of a multiplicity. In the novel, after Asụghara has dominated Ada's body for a long time, she lets "Saint Vincent step to the front a little more" (164) and this leads Ada to date women and adopt a more masculine appearance. The emergence of the male spirit, however, is never 'complete'. The ọgbanje explain that "[p]erhaps in *another world*, where the Ada was not s*plit and segmented*, she and Saint Vincent might have been one thing together" (122; emphasis added). The matched self ('one together') conventionally found at the destination of a transition journey could only be attained 'perhaps in another world'. Ada *can* inhabit other worlds, and is inhabited by them, but never fully, never neatly. The simultaneous existence of the 'we' in spaces that cannot coincide creates a similar effect to Preciado's reflection that the possibilities materialised by testosterone are already contained in the self from the start – none of the possibilities can become realised without trace of the others, without being haunted by the others. The 'we' of *Freshwater*, the collective 'we' who wants to transition,

is "more than [Asụghara] and […] more than the saint […] a fine balance, bigger than whatever the namings had made": this *balance* is that they want to "change the Ada into" (187). The spacing between 'we' and between worlds thwarts the linearity of transition, as the movement forward is continually disrupted by what opens the path up on the sides: the travelling is impeded by the fact the traveller is neither fully one nor fully there.

Perhaps then Ada can speak as a 'we' rather than as an I.[55] The first time that the I of Ada intervenes, almost halfway through the novel, they doubt that they "even ha[ve] the mouth to tell this story" and relinquish authority to the 'we': "whatever they will say will be the truest version of it, since they are the truest version of me" (93). In the chapter narrated by Ada's 'I' that concludes the text, the same dispossession and fragmentation of self is embraced as an identity, both by a singular and a plural first person: "I am here and not here, real and not real […] *I* am my others; *we* are one and we are many" (226; emphasis added). In order to find this liveable position, there is a return to the metaphor of the journey toward "wholeness", with surgery as a counterintuitive way to achieve it: "when a thing has been created with deformations and mismatched edges, sometimes you have to break it some more before you can start putting it back together" (210). The ọgbanje here explain that there is a sense in which a self is being 'put back together' by cutting it. By allowing the 'we' to show on the body, Ada can be whole because they can be multiple. At the end of the novel, Ada explains that "this thing of being an ọgbanje" is "the only *path* that brought me any peace" (218; emphasis added). When discussing the autobiographical elements of the novel, Emezi similarly comments that their own wellbeing has only become possible once "I began to look at my life through the lens of Igbo ontology and craft it as a story" ('I'd Read Everything'). Trans-inhabitation, in the sense of dwelling in multiple spaces at once (the human and the spirit world, Igbo and Western conceptions of identity, male and female gender) and never neatly belonging in any of them is in *Freshwater* a mode of being that can unify the self in its own way and be embraced as one's chosen embodied identity. Like the presence of others in the 'private' body in *Testo Junkie* and the mutual haunting of *I'm Looking Through You*, *Freshwater*'s

[55] There is a case to be made that the pronoun 'they' is particularly appropriate for Ada and the author themself, as they identify as a 'we'. The use of this pronoun for non-binary identity can then be linked to the multiplicity of genders that one is, or in between which one is – though it needs to be kept in mind that being haunted by others and being multiple are readings of the self that do not exclusively apply to subjects whose gender is non-binary.

co-embodied first person troubles the opposition between wrong body and right body, self and other, and ghost and haunted house.

I as We, She, You, They

The *haunted I* in gender-variant literature is a first-person narrator who troubles – like a ghost – the spaces it is supposed to occupy: experiencing-I, narrating-I, gendered I, and even simply 'I'. The texts I have discussed use metaphors of haunting, possession, ambiguous inhabitation, and self-multiplication in order to question the wholeness of the embodied self which is supposed to materialise at the end of the canonical transition journey. Complicating a linear temporality of transition, the I and its journey are revealed to be multiple, uncertainly located, and extended in multiple directions. In *I'm Looking Through You*, the experiencing-I is haunted by her future: the narrating-I (itself trying to make sense of ghosts of the past) visits her diegetic world, materialising as the ghost of the woman with the long blonde hair. The retrospective narration produces not a story of healing but one of splitting, of recognising oneself to be a 'haunted house'. This overarching metaphor blurs the boundaries between past, present and future that are supposed to anchor the movement of transition – a journey of maturation in which the experiencing-I becomes the narrating-I, and moments in which the ending is in jeopardy are safely left behind. *Testo Junkie* also emphasises what Roof calls the "risk" and "uncertainty" of the "middle" (xxxiv): Preciado stalls the linear movement from 'one' gender to 'another' that is usually re-narrated in the trans memoir, and dwells in the present, both in terms of gender and in terms of tense. He declines to provide a narrative of progress and expresses the desire to inhabit a space where simultaneous somatic possibilities have not yet (or perhaps will never be) resolved into a nameable gender embodiment. At the same time, in *Testo Junkie*, the home/prison/clinic outside the body enters the body, shapes it from the inside into a home that is not private and that dictates the terms of any individual expression of identity. Preciado embraces this dispossession of the body, further displacing the subjectivity that is behind the 'I' and the 'you' by showing it as traversed by multiple others. By showing that the body and identity are complex spaces, all three texts reveal the contradictions, ambivalences and multiplicities that are behind and beyond what might be simplified in narrative as a linear life trajectory (or a linear transition).

In *Freshwater*, the distinction between spaces, between outside and inside, and between subject positions is called into question further. If there are any spaces to be haunted, the borders of these spaces are impossible to delineate. The novel blurs the boundaries between container and contained by showing that a multiplicity of others exists not only *in* the 'I', but *before* it: the 'we' begins to narrate before the 'I' does. Because the human individual is only a temporary incarnation of the ọgbanje's timeless and otherworldly existence, a spatiotemporal 'elsewhere' haunts the novel, showing that the gender of the protagonist can never fit normative (medical, binary, Western) models. The 'we' in *Freshwater* is a key narrative feature through which the identity of the narrator is conveyed. Discussions of we-narration in narratology could be enriched by considering how the first-person plural pronoun functions in this novel, as these discussions largely assume the 'we' in we-narration to refer to distinctly embodied subjectivities.[56] I have noted that, in *Freshwater*, the I (who is sometimes Asụghara and sometimes Ada) both is and is not the 'we', as they mutually constitute and escape each other. This novel raises questions that (though they are beyond the scope of this thesis) deserve consideration, such as: What happens to categories and distinctions used to describe we-narration if we understand the 'we' as being *in* one body, which should conventionally express itself as an I? Ultimately, this illustrates my broader argument: the way in which gender-variant narrators make sense of their identities, against norms that would want to fit them within the boundaries of binary and fixed categories, can generate linguistic strategies that have not been accounted for in existing models.

The question of the boundary – which is challenged by the 'we' of *Freshwater* – between who speaks and who is spoken about continues to be central to the thesis as I explore how relations between subject and object are articulated in gender-variant narratives. If the narrator can in some way be seen as the subject (who has agency and control over

[56] When Lanser identifies forms of "communal narration" (a mode in which authority is shared by more than one narrator), these include both "a simultaneous form in which a plural 'we' narrates" and "a sequential form in which individual members of a group narrate in turn" (*Authority*, 21). In a sense, both could apply to *Freshwater*, as the 'we' narrate collectively but also alternate with more than one I (sharing authority to same extent). However, a situation in which a co-embodied 'we' narrates remains to be described. Similarly, Natalya Bekhta's definition of we-narration as being "unlike first-person singular narration in that it is based on the collective experience and agency of a collective body", and as "transcend[ing] the individual subject in the scope of its knowledge, temporal, and spatial limitations" (172), could be seen as both characterising and misrepresenting *Freshwater*, especially if we unpack the possible meanings of 'collective body' and of the spatiotemporal 'limitations' of the 'individual subject'.

the story, who can speak and who lets others speak), and everything in their narrative can be seen as the object (viewed from the outside, spoken about, at the mercy of the narrator's decisions), the double existence of the first-person narrator (narrating-I and experiencing-I, narrator and character) causes the boundary between subject and object to become porous. As I continue to explore below, especially in Chapter Five, maintaining the distinction between subject and object is crucial for gender-variant subjects who have been deprived of the right to be the former, but it is also shown as a simplification of embodied experience. In this chapter, I have shown that the self is both the subject and the object of haunting (ghost and house), as well as being not always an I but sometimes a 'she' or 'he' – not only the subject but the object of observation and narration. In this way, these narratives challenge Derrida's 'haunted we', critiqued by Peeren as taking for granted that ghosts are others than haunt 'us'. The fact that Jenny in *I'm Looking Through You* is both doing and receiving the haunting troubles the distinction of 'we' vs 'them', self and non-self – troubled also by the impossibility of keeping the 'them' outside the I in *Testo Junkie*, and by the 'we' in *Freshwater*, who is 'us' and 'them' and 'I' and 'she' simultaneously. In the chapters that follow, I argue that gender-variant narrators blur the boundaries between subjectivities, temporal locations, diegetic levels and metaphorical spaces, addressing first the *fluid I*, a type of narrator used by authors who are not trans to represent textual and gendered crossings and fluidity.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fluid I and the Narrator's Absent Body

> Via T, you've experienced surges of heat, an adolescent budding, your sexuality coming down from the labyrinth of your mind and disseminating like a cottonwood tree in a warm wind. You like the changes, but also feel them as a sort of compromise, a wager for visibility, as in your drawing of a ghost who proclaims, *Without this sheet, I would be invisible*. (Visibility makes possible, but it also disciplines: disciplines gender, disciplines genre).
>
> ~ Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)

Here Nelson addresses her partner, trans artist Harry Dodge, about the effects of T (testosterone). These effects are described without reference to 'masculinisation' or any notion of a journey from one gender to another. However, it is implied that the 'changes' are readable by others as signalling Harry's gender in specific ways – making them more legible as themself but also fitting them into an existing framework of intelligibility that may not accurately describe them. The 'I' of Dodge's drawing is invoked to negotiate the promises and the costs of this visibility. 'Without the sheet', a ghost would not be visible as one; through the effects of testosterone, the transitioning subject approximates gender categories by making them readable on their body, as if they were donning such a sheet. The ghost, as I have defined it so far, is the result of what is left out from trying to fit identity into temporal and spatial categories. However, in Dodge's drawing, the ghost is itself already subject to delimitation, made visible by its, albeit ambiguous, materiality – its sheet, which allows the subject to be read. The ghost and the trans subject, linked by Nelson, raise the question of what invisibility would look like. Is it possible to be a speaking subject without the sheet, without gender, without even a body? Although this is difficult to imagine when it comes to real individuals, it is not so in writing. In order to address this, I discuss in this chapter a gender-variant narrator that I call *the fluid I*: a speaking position that conveys a mutable embodiment between male and female through omissions of details about corporeality that could be read as gendered, or through a seemingly contradictory presentation of them. The refusal to give readers easily legible signs indicates a deliberate suspension of any easy attribution of binary gender to these narrators. Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) and *Frankissstein* (2019), and

Ali Smith's *How to be both* (2014)[57] use this type of narrator as a device to question the normative demands of fixed binaries, simultaneously raising the question of the extent to which the first-person narrator is an embodied position.

In this chapter, I link the question of the readability of gender with the role of the narrator, in conversation with narratological discussions about the corporeality and physical location of the narrator. The *fluid I* is a narrator that tends toward being invisible, non-gendered, mobile, and disembodied. The extent to which these are characteristics of a *heterodiegetic* narrator has been considered before in narrative studies. Lanser's category of queer voice, which I have discussed in Chapter One, indeed stems from reflections on how all heterodiegetic narrators have the potential to be what I would term a *fluid I*. A heterodiegetic narrator – one who is not, strictly speaking, a character – is more easily non-gendered and more ambiguously located in time and space, and its capacity for crossing, transforming, transgressing, and fluctuating can be read as 'queer'. I have outlined, in Chapter One, how a queer approach to gender-variant embodiment is seen as sometimes at odds with the desires of trans subjects, as it views identity, in Prosser's words, as "repetitious, recursive, disordered, incessant, […] unpredictable and necessarily incomplete" (30). This queer mode of existence describes some of the narrators I have examined so far (Bornstein's and Preciado's, for instance) more than it does others. However, I have crucially noted that 'trans' takes the emphasis of 'queer' on movement, change, and mutability and adds to it a concern with rootedness, belonging, and stability (inhabitation). Both sets of terms are kept in tension in gender-variant narratives. I am interested here in the extent to which fluidity, mobility, and ghostly immateriality can be characteristics not of a *hetero*diegetic narrator, but of a *homo*diegetic one – who is also embodied, rooted in the storyworld, materially present there. Smith's and Winterson's novels decidedly tend toward the 'trans' side and away from the 'inhabitation' side of *trans-inhabitation*, and the *fluid I* ultimately achieves its questioning of gendered binaries by becoming less visible, less material and less

[57] The 'both' of *How to be both* is not capitalised in the novel's title, implying that a noun is to follow. In my discussion, I address the novel's syntax as it produces ambiguity and suspension of meaning. Discussing two texts by the same author, which I only do in this chapter, offers the opportunity to explore how the author's reflections on non-binary gender are expressed in different historical moments, and to consider how historical context influences the representation of gender variance. Specifically, I see the increased visibility of trans identity in the time separating the novels as impacting the narratives' negotiations with textual visibility. I discuss this more fully in my reading of *Frankissstein*.

corporeal. The narrator of *Frankissstein* indeed describes themself in terms that recall Prosser's list of queer adjectives: "liminal, cusping, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 176). Seid notes that this reveal is "often highly sensationalized, dramatized, or eroticized, though it is also sometimes depicted as comic", and it ultimately strips trans subjects of their right to self-determination by suggesting that "living a transgender life involves concealing 'the truth' of sexed bodies" (176). In this case, therefore, representation of embodiment is linked to the notion of trans subjects as "deceivers" or "pretenders" (Bettcher, 'Wrong Theory', 391). 'Making visible' consists in enforcing a supposedly objective truth that runs counter to the truth that gender-variant individuals are expressing about themselves when they are not forcibly exposed. These tensions between legitimation and exclusion, visibility and truth, lead Gossett, Stanley and Burton to wonder "whether visibility is a goal to be worked toward or an outcome to be avoided at all costs" (xx). If visibility were to be avoided, one of the narrative strategies to confer agency and safety to the gender-variant narrator as a subject would then be the opposite of a 'reveal': a hiding of the body.

Winterson's *Written on the Body* seems to embrace this option, as its narrator declares: "I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes" (Winterson, *Written*, 89). The text represents this tension between the visibility and the invisibility of the gendered body by simultaneously focusing on embodied experiences and never gendering the narrator through language. The "rarity of such gender-ambiguous narrator-protagonists in Western fiction" has led Winterson's text to become the object of some narratological discussion already (Lanser, 'Queering', 930).[58] Lanser notes that in order to construct a non-gendered first-person narrator "a considerable degree of information might have to be omitted" (*Sexing*, 88). Among the texts I discuss in this chapter, only *Written on the Body* can be said to have a strictly never-gendered narrator; however, I argue that all three novels achieve ambiguity around the gender of the I by omitting information about corporeality as well as avoiding gender-specific language.[59] This means that readers are

[58] In addition to the critics mentioned in this chapter, other narratologists discuss *Written on the Body*, such as Michael Kearns in *Rhetorical Narratology* (1999; 138) and Andrew Gibson in 'Crossing the Present: Narrative, Alterity and Gender in Postmodern Fiction' (1999; 193).

[59] Smith's narrator Francescho identifies (or is identified) as a man, and it is implied (but not confirmed) that they have been assigned female at birth; the text's references to this, as I show in my reading, are always elusive. In *Frankissstein*, the narrator discusses their gender identity and details of their

left doing a considerable amount of guesswork if they wish to assign the narrator to an existing category (man, woman, trans, non-binary, etc.). Part of what prompts my re-narration of these texts is that discussions about this guesswork have often focused on whether the narrator is male or female, excluding the possibility of a gender-variant identity.[60] The purpose of constructing a corporeality for the narrator that is only visible in an ambiguous or veiled manner is precisely to suspend this kind of labelling. What I ask in my reading is whether this suspension can constitute a mode of trans-inhabitation in line with the embodied experiences described in trans studies: a combination of transformability and rootedness in the body. Ultimately, the *fluid I* conveys trans-inhabitation by negotiating the presence, visibility and legibility of the body, as well as movement between gender categories. This form of trans-inhabitation is expressed through a series of formal means, such as the relationship between direct and indirect discourse, non-standard syntax, the narrator's reliability, and, most importantly, omission of information.

Omission of information about the body of the narrator is linked to the question of the trap doors of visibility described in trans studies: if the narrator's body is absent, it cannot be objectified, used by others to 'reveal' supposed truths, or even legitimised as a 'right body' in comparison to which other bodies are 'wrong'. Lanser's discussion of *Written on the Body* prompts her to argue that it may become relevant to categorise first-person narrators "by the degree of their 'representedness' in addition to other classifications such as homo- or heterodiegetic" ('Sexing', 87). In this chapter, I link the issue of representedness to the trap doors of visibility, examining how degrees of embodiedness can be linked to degrees of authority and agency. I see a precedent for this in Punday's discussion of "disembodied" narrators as a "strategy for creating authority" motivated by

embodiment more explicitly, but I argue that the novel still centres on their capacity to trouble gender binaries and to transcend the body.

[60] Jennifer A. Smith summarises the evidence from the text that has led critics to consider two options only: either to "identify the narrator as a lesbian" or to deem "the relationship at the heart of the novel as heterosexual" (413). Some critics, like Patricia Duncker, have criticised the novel for failing to explicitly gender the narrator as a woman, thereby barring the possibility of an affirmative lesbian identity, giving "the (male) heterosexual reader plenty of room to feel smug" (81). What these discussions demonstrate is that reading the narrator as gender-variant has largely been an unacknowledged possibility. Even Smith herself, who suggests reading the narrator as a "trans-subject position" argues that this serves for the reader to situate "*him/herself* in relation to the text" (425; emphasis added). Certain gender-variant identities (ones that are nor male or female) remain excluded: even if the narrator can be conceived of as trans or non-binary, the reader cannot be.

"anxiety about the 'objectivity' of the written" (156). Since revealing a situated subjectivity can compromise the authority of the fictional account, Punday argues that "the most common way in which to imply that a narrator is not to be entirely trusted is to attribute to him or her strong physical dispositions" (176). There are grounds to see gender as such a form of 'physical disposition'. Lanser suggests that in cultures where "women's access to public discourse has been curtailed", women have sometimes been able to access "'male' authority by separating the narrating 'I' from the female body" (*Authority*, 18). As I discussed in Chapter Two, trans subjects have a fraught history of trying to secure authority, as their claims to their gender have had to be authorised by others. In this context, the disidentification with a gender assigned at birth and/or medical interventions aimed at embodying their gender are often seen as a 'disposition' that somehow compromises the ability of gender-variant subjects to be objective. As I examine the ambiguous corporeality of the *fluid I*, I focus on whether the representation of the body – which entails not only the 'traps' I have outlined so far (such as vulnerability to a 'reveal') but also the unreliability given by a situated perspective – is seen in these texts as diminishing a subject's agency. As gender-variant subjects aim to construct a speaking position from trans-inhabitation, the degree of representedness of the narrator and the extent to which they can be assigned to intelligible categories becomes relevant to interrogate how an embodied subject can tell a story.

"Away from Prying Eyes": Disembodiment and *Written on the Body*

Winterson's *Written on the Body* sustains ambiguity around the gender of its narrator through descriptions that do not bear a strong association with a particular gender, or that contradict previous ones. Readers engaged in the guesswork that I have mentioned as characterising interpretations of this text can enlist different events and behaviours as proof of anatomy or gender presentation – the narrator does not want to use a toilet that has no seat (Winterson, *Written*, 70), they describe women's magazines as an "arcane world" (74), they do not seem to provoke surprise when they are in a men's public bathroom (22), they seem attentive to their lover's menstrual cycle (13), and so on. It would of course be possible to think of a gender-variant identity (or even a binary and fixed one) for which these signs would not be contradictory. However, what I argue is that it is precisely in the suspension of a definitive answer that the novel creates a trans-inhabitation, and that this suspension is linked to a withdrawing of the body. The practice

of withholding information in the text can be understood as "paralipsis", or the "omission of some important action or thought of the focal hero, which neither the hero nor the narrator can be ignorant of but which the narrator chooses to conceal from the reader" (Genette, *Discourse*, 196). In the case of this novel, in which the narrator's body, desire, and identity are part of the narrative, an omission of indicators of their sex or gender stands out as a deliberate choice – some important aspect of the narrator's life of which they cannot be ignorant but that is 'concealed' from the reader. First-person narration is largely what makes this omission possible, as – in English – an I can speak without ever referring to their gender. Additionally, the story presents the narrator as having had relationships with both men and women (thus preventing heteronormative assumptions from aiding in determining the narrator's gender), and it does not describe details of their body or their sexual activities which could lead readers to infer a sex assignation. Finally, I argue that the suspension of sex/gender is also made possible by how the narrator remains incorporeal in the text, both as storyteller – not described, describing others – and as lover – erasing their identity as they become consumed by their love for their partner.

The narrator's identity as 'storyteller' and 'lover' is established from the beginning of the novel. The narrative is structured somewhat chronologically but also largely by what seem to be the narrator's associations by memory, presenting the development of the relationship with their lover Louise alongside episodes from the narrator's past that start with the repetitive structure "I had a girlfriend once" (Winterson, *Written*, 19) – or, from halfway through the text, "I had a boyfriend once" (92). The relationship with Louise represents an interruption of this recurring structure, as it is implied to deviate from the usual steps that the narrator has come to expect; it constitutes a re-narration of these steps. A few pages into the novel, a passage formatted as a script illustrates a conversation that the narrator has experienced multiple times, implying that their relationships have followed a specific pattern: the passage is a dialogue between a "Naked Woman" and a "Lover", in which the Naked Woman explains that the affair must end as she is returning to her husband (14). Having had this expectation, the narrator is surprised when Louise decides to leave her husband for them, and notes, "[t]his is the wrong script" (18). The relationship with Louise marks a sharp break in the repetitive structure of past affairs, as she tells the narrator: "I want you to come to me without a past. Those lines you've

learned, forget them. Forget that you've been here before in other bedrooms in other places" (54). The narrator's identity up to this point consists in their romantic past, the lines they've learned, the other bedrooms, the role of 'lover' in the script, as readers have learned virtually nothing else about them. Instead of an accumulation of narratives, therefore, the identity of the narrator from this point will consist of one narrative only: lover of Louise, unnamed, their body becoming hers. In what follows, I show how the materiality of their own body is renounced, in a way that creates a mode of trans-inhabitation – a suspension between bodies and categories – but which also carries a certain risk of annihilation, a loss of self.

The narrator's withdrawing of an embodied identity to be replaced with the story they tell is nothing new in terms of what being a narrator is. The protagonist of *Written on the Body* shows a tendency to write scripts not only about their own history but also about the lives of others. They describe walking by windows and seeing others move within their houses: "They don't know I'm here but I have begun to be as intimate with them as any member of the family. More so, since as their lips move with goldfish bowl pouts, I am the scriptwriter and I can put words in their mouths" (59). The intimacy with individuals who are unaware of the presence of an external figure who articulates their stories is what characterises a narrator's relationship with their characters. Eva Pohler discusses the use of spatial metaphors in narratology to describe the 'presence' of a narrator with respect to a story; the ways in which narratologists have made sense of where and when the narrator is, as described by Pohler, are akin to the ghostly presences that I have discussed. She argues that the narrator is understood as having "happened upon" a scene, viewing it as through "one of those one-way mirrors psychologists use to observe their subjects" (Pohler, 279) – the window of *Written on the Body* matching this description almost exactly. I argue that the narrator's presence/absence is a form of trans-inhabitation, and therefore characterised by being in between bounded spaces and inhabiting multiple spaces at once or successively. I have noted that is the case for homodiegetic narrators in general, as they inhabit two different diegetic levels – one as narrator, one as character – in the same way in which gender-variant subjects can inhabit multiple gender categories: alternately, simultaneously, or ambiguously. Therefore, the way in which the gender-variant narrator exists uneasily between/within categories of gender highlights something about the status of the homodiegetic narrator in general:

dwelling both in and outside a world, both rooted and detachable, both embodied and transcending this body to tell its story.

In addition to the narrator's trans-inhabitation of narrative spaces, the one-way mirror metaphor also points to invisibility as an advantage they possess. The narrator is observing but not observed, and, in Winterson's scene, they ventriloquise but are not ventriloquised in return, being therefore a subject who stands in a privileged relationship toward their objects. This advantage, I argue, is dependent on the low degree of representedness of the narrator of *Written on the Body*, which allows them to withdraw their own body from view while remaining in possession of their power to shape the stories of others. Though occasionally the text makes sporadic reference to the narrator's body – "my body hair" (Winterson, *Written*, 143) or "my nipple" (162) – the one piece of information even close to a *description* of what this body may *look like* is about their eyes, through a brief mention of how they *are* before an immediate retreat into explaining what they *do*: "My eyes are brown, they have fluttered across your body like butterflies" (117). Quite late in the novel, we also learn that the narrator wears glasses (146). These glimpses (glasses and brown eyes) not only cannot be coded as gendered – contributing to the suspension of legibility that I have discussed – but they are also related to the narrator's ability to see. Readers never *see* the protagonist's body, never experience it through description, apart from in this one glimpse of its 'seeing' organs: an image would then form of a human whose only specified characteristics are brown eyes and glasses. If this image is formed, the protagonist's ability to see unseen (and therefore to exist as witness of their story, as narrator) is foregrounded at the expense of any other embodied action they may perform. However, the hiding of the narrator's body from readers does not mean it is hidden from other characters.

In this respect, the invisibility of the narrator's body represents not a withdrawing from the characters in their story or from readers, but the willingness with which they have given this body up to their lover Louise to see, change, and possess. The narrator comments that "a secret code only visible in certain lights" is "[w]ritten on the body" (89); while readers can only glimpse isolated fragments of nipples, brown eyes, glasses or body hair, Louise can decipher the 'secret code' and *see* the protagonist in a way that the readers of their narrative never will. Giving the body up to Louise also results in a

replacement of the bounded space of the narrator's identity with *her* body, as the I tells Louise: "When I look into the mirror, it's not my own face I see. Your body is twice. Once you once me. Can I be sure which is which?" (99).[61] The narrator's own withdrawing of corporeality means that they can take on the materiality of another character: "Your flesh is my flesh. You deciphered me and now I am plain to read. The message is a simple one; my love for you" (106). Louise's body, the narrator's love for her, the narrative of this love, and the narrator's own identity – which has been read by Louise – are one and the same. If this space, this identity, this body are bounded entities, they are certainly trans-inhabited. A desire to cross these boundaries is expressed in a way that precludes intelligible use of pronouns to designate separate identities. The narrator says to Louise: "I will explore you and mine you and you will redraw me according to your will. We shall cross one another's boundaries and make ourselves one nation" (20). This 'trans' movement between pronouns, bodies and identities is associated with a giving up of agency: the narrator renounces their position as teller of the story – together with the character's professional identity as a translator – and concedes that Louise has "translated" them "into her own book" (89). Therefore, while the protagonist in its function as narrator hides their body in a way that allows them to remain a distant author, in control of the narrative, in their function as character they give the body up in order to be authored by Louise.

The disembodied distance of the narrator (which, as I have noted, runs counter to the disembodied closeness that the character achieves in their love for Louise) can be read through Punday's and Lanser's suggestions that the corporeality of a narrator – especially one not gendered male – can compromise their authority and reliability. Punday also discusses the notion of "differential embodiment", which takes as a starting point a tendency of novels to create a "strong distinction between heavily embodied peripheral or supporting characters, and relatively disembodied main characters" (155). In *Written on the Body*, not 'embodying' a character is presented by the narrator as an ethical gesture. For example, they decline to describe Louise's husband: "I can't be relied upon to describe Elgin properly. More importantly I'd never met the other Elgin, the one she'd

[61] Louise is the narratee of the novel, and therefore addressed as 'you'. This contributes to creating some of the deictic slippages I have discussed in Chapter Three, as readers may at different points substitute themselves for this 'you'.

married" (Winterson, *Written*, 92). Here there seems to be an understanding of physical description as pinning someone down in a manner that would be unfair, as it would not allow them to be other than how they appear to the narrator, who here recognises themself as biased. In this light, the overwhelming presence of Louise's body in the narrative (the extensive physical descriptions of her, and the assertions that the narrator has themself become Louise's body) raises the question of what her corporealisation in the text leaves out, and whether this differential embodiment with respect to the disembodied narrator relegates her to the role of a 'supporting' character. This was already implicit in the script in which the narrator is the 'Lover' (not gendered, featureless, defined by an action they perform as subject) and the target of their love is the 'Naked Woman' (gendered, exposed, an object to be looked at). While the relationship with Louise is purported to have interrupted this script, there is still a sense in the text that Louise exists as a body/character *for* the narrator only, and the narrator instead exists as a seeing and narrating entity *in* themself, with the freedom to eschew visibility.

The script only changes when the narrator seems to recognise at the end of the novel that they have treated Louise as a character in their own story in a way that has precluded her own agency – they gain an understanding of this when another character tells them "you want to live in a novel" (160). Upon discovering that Louise has terminal cancer, the narrator makes the decision to leave her, hiding their traces so that she can never find them and hoping that Louise will return to her husband who can guarantee her access to better medical treatment. After this happens, the disembodied "voice" of Louise reaches the protagonist in a moment of isolation, telling them "[y]ou made a mistake" (153). The narrator then realises that they want to begin to "think of Louise in her own right, not as my lover, not as my grief" (153). Indeed, they discover that Louise has rebelled against the decision being made for her and has left the city instead of returning to her husband. In a sense, Louise can stop being an object of love and become a subject who does not fit into the narrator's script only when her body leaves the narrative – through absence from the story, through presence as a disembodied voice, through proximity to death. At the same time, Louise has always had control over the narrator's body, which she reads, 'translates', transforms into her own in ways that are never fully disclosed to readers. However, this only applies to the narrator to the extent that they exist *as character* in the same diegetic world as Louise. Because of the double status of the I – the I who

experiences the affair with Louise and the I who narrates it – the body of the protagonist *as* narrator is necessarily withdrawn from Louise because the narrator exists on a different diegetic level, or behind the one-way mirror.

The narrator's body remains therefore always to some extent withdrawn both from Louise and from readers. This body is only knowable to us as language; as we try to see it, we only hear its narrative. In the novel, the narrator tells a joke about writing and embodiment that enacts this slippage between corporeality and language. A girlfriend asks them, "Do you know why Henry Miller said 'I write with my prick'?" (60). The narrator replies: "Because he did. When he died they found nothing between his legs but a ball-point pen" (60). This joke is a repetition of one recounted earlier in the text that replaces Miller with Renoir and a pen with a paint brush (22). The equation of the body with language (and with the creation of art) reveals the narrator's own position, especially as readers do not know what is 'between their legs': their body is only their narrative. In this respect, the text's view of gender is linked to early 1990s queer reflections on the materiality of the body only being accessible through discourse, showing an awareness of language's complicity in the "*process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*" (J. Butler, *Matter*, 9; emphasis in original). In this sense, there can be no other body than the one that is possible in language. I have discussed how the birth of trans studies, which is contemporaneous with the publication of *Written on the Body*, is close to this queer approach, in viewing the link between bodies, genders and sexualities as contingent and this insight as liberating because it allows individuals to affirm gender identities that are other than binary or fixed. Stone and Bornstein are among such writers, who view references to "the facticity of the body" (J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 68) as ultimately linked to the norms that would curtail the expression and the legitimation of gender-variant identities. The *fluid I* accordingly conveys a textually mediated corporeality that allows for the inhabitation and movement between different gendered spaces, traversing boundaries, shapeshifting between self and other.

This *fluid I* as queer, unstable, and in flux cannot, however, always offer a stable home for the body or in the body: for this reason, some approaches in trans studies introduce an emphasis on permanence and rootedness that are seen as a return of precisely what

queer seeks to disrupt. The suspension of the gendered self that the narrator of *Written of the Body* enacts and the annihilation of identity that occurs when the narrator becomes Louise – letting her traverse their own boundaries and transform them – cannot then constitute a model of gender-variant existence for those who see the gaining of the (gendered) self as something to hold on to because it has been secured with difficulty. The novel itself seems to recognise that a ghostly and disembodied existence is not always desirable. Once the narrator has lost Louise, they describe their pain as a sort of hauntedness, a being "plagued": "The worm of doubt has long since found a home in my intestines" (Winterson, *Written*, 179). This being inhabited and traversed by another (the 'worm of doubt') is not celebrated as it was when this other was Louise, but it is viewed as a causing a disempowering lack of materiality: "A dog in the street could gnaw on me, so little of substance have I become" (180). Becoming unsubstantial, traversing bounded spaced and being traversed are liberating when done for love, when done to avoid fixed gender categories, but painful when they are the result of regret and grief. The novel then, while tending toward the 'trans' meaning of trans-inhabitation – the movement, the in-between-ness, the ambiguous presence – continues to remain in tension with the 'inhabitation' side. After all, the narrator longs for home after having been an "emotional nomad for too long" (38), a home that they find in Louise, where travelling and homecoming meet, "hearth and quest become one" (81). In this formulation I read the complex negotiation between rootedness and flexibility that also characterises trans studies, the longing and the liberation that come from being ghostly. As the *fluid I* of *Written on the Body* withdraws their body "away from prying eyes" (89) and becomes incorporeal in relation to readers and to the characters they narrate, they also emphasise that being seen, being substantial, and being at home are desires that cannot be disavowed for long.

How to be both: Trans-inhabiting Genders and Diegetic Levels

The emphasis on the narrator's ghostly position that I have described in *Written on the Body* – a disembodied entity, observing but not observed, ventriloquising embodied others, existing ambiguously in time – is also characteristic of the *fluid I* in Smith's *How to be both*. Although this narrator's gender is not omitted in the same way as the one in *Written on the Body*, I argue that a similar suspension takes place, which links the character's embodiment with a mode of trans-inhabitation. The novel is divided into two

parts, both called 'one' and introduced by drawings. From its first edition, it has been published in two versions: one in which the part introduced by a drawing of eyes comes first, and one in which the part introduced by a drawing of a surveillance camera does.[62] In my reading, I focus largely on the 'Eyes' section, as it is the one narrated by a gender-variant character. The narrator of the 'Eyes' section, Francescho, is an Italian Renaissance painter whose frescoes are viewed by the protagonist of the 'Camera' section, George (Georgia), while she is on a holiday with her mother.[63] 'Camera' is a third-person narrative that takes place in contemporary England and focuses on George grieving for her mother's death, with a narration that alternates between temporal locations – both before and after the death. I briefly discuss the 'Camera' section before moving on to 'Eyes', as this narrative suggests a questioning of fixed notions of gender, language and time that inform the presentation of the gender-variant narrator in 'Eyes'. Visibility – as is evidenced by the drawings introducing the two sections – is also a major theme of the novel, which I link to formal techniques of showing and hiding the body of the narrator, as well as to the 'trap doors' of representation for gender-variant subjects.

The text's concern with blurring boundaries between moments in time and between genders as fixed and bounded locations is introduced at the start of the 'Camera' section through George's investment in grammatical and categorical precision. Her mother begins telling her about a letter, which later turns out to have been written by Francesco Del Cossa, and George wants to know if the author of the letter is "[p]ast or present" and "[m]ale or female", certain that "[i]t can't be both" (A. Smith, 8). The novel works precisely to achieve this bothness, to make the two supposedly opposite sides of these binaries coexist. George's difficulty to let go of binaries is also evidenced by her preference for saying "he or she" instead of "they" when the gender of a person is unknown (12). The 'they' – which, as I have noted in the Introduction, is a more inclusive pronoun as it encompasses identities that are other than binary or fixed – is instead the gender-variant space that Francescho's voice occupies in 'Eyes'. While George's fixation on grammatical distinctions loosens over the course of 'Camera', 'Eyes' shows an immediate willingness

[62] These two versions are issued at the same time in every edition of the novel and look otherwise identical, so that readers are as likely to purchase either.
[63] Francescho is based on the historical figure Francesco del Cossa (1430-1477), and this name is used in the 'Camera' narrative. In the 'Eyes' narrative, the narrator spells their name Francescho, and this is the spelling I use when discussing this character.

to play with syntax in order to question the boundaries of the I. The section begins with a few pages of fragmented language which slowly start to form into a narrative about an I. The identity of this I remains ambiguous for a while in passages like the following: "Long gone, the picture, I expect. Long gone the life I, the boy and the men I, the sleek good sweet-eyed horse Mattone I, the blushing girl I" (201). The suspension of the sentence just after 'I' leaves the possibility open as to what relationship the speaking voice has with the nouns that come before it – 'the boy and the men' or the 'blushing girl' could plausibly be followed by the same 'I expect' of the start of the sentence, as well as by 'I loved' or by 'I was'. As prefigured by the multiple possibilities presented here, Francescho is implied to have been assigned female at birth and to have identified as a man, although this is never explicitly stated in terms of them being 'a woman disguised as a man', 'a trans man', or any other definition – the use of the first person allowing for this suspension of identity.[64]

As this suspension of gender identity – this coexistence of simultaneous possibilities – is maintained by the 'Eyes' narrator and their syntax, a coexistence of past and present is also achieved. There is especially a certain undecideability about which one is the main time of the novel, the one by which other sections would be marked as analepses or prolepses. The use of the present tense in 'Camera' to narrate events occurring when George's mother is still alive (occasionally corrected by the narrator into past tense), the jumbled temporality of Francescho's memories in 'Eyes', and the overall refusal to settle which section of the novel comes first, all challenge successive and linear chronologies. In discussing the re-narration of gender-variant identity in Chapter Two, I noted that this strategy seeks to challenge the metaphorical understanding of trans gender as a journey from one bounded space to the next. This novel's troubling of chrononormative progressive time can be linked to its presentation of Francescho. While this is a gender-variant character who, in some sense, effects a movement between gendered identity-spaces, the text also re-narrates, and thereby challenges, the notion of a journey. The *fluid I* of 'Eyes' could be understood as a retrospective narrator, but the scenes narrated are located ambiguously in time and space, as if recalled through association by a confused

[64] When beginning 'Eyes', readers may or may not know – depending on which version of the book they are reading – that the painter Del Cossa is gendered male by the characters in 'Camera'. Even if they do, however, the rest of this section works to undo this knowledge.

consciousness. In discussing the novel's strategy of juxtaposing past, present, and future without clear demarcations, Young argues that this juxtaposition is mirrored in the fresco painted by Del Cossa and visited by George, which represents twelve months in the same space: the fresco is thus "an emblem of an impossible and unsettling spatial co-presence" ('Invisibility', 1000). This impossibility, at once spatial and temporal, can be read as trans-inhabitation – a mode of existence that goes across, exists at the boundaries of, in between and/or in multiple bounded spaces. I argue that both Francescho's gender and their position as narrator can be read as such modes of trans-inhabitation, of ghostly co-presence in an ambiguous space and time, in a way that recalls the *fluid I* that I have described in the case of *Written on the Body*, as well as the *haunted I* of Chapter Three.

Francescho's gender identity, while veiled through paralipses of physical descriptions and gendered language, is a re-narration of a chronological story of 'becoming': a movement from a gender-variant moment of childhood to a progressive approximation to a specific gender, different from the one assigned at birth. In this sense, the degree of representedness of Francescho's embodied gender is higher than that of the narrator of *Written on the Body*. As a child, following their mother's death, Francescho starts wearing her clothes around the house. Their father seeks to put a stop to this habit and approaches Francescho hoping that they will "agree to put these clothes away" (A. Smith, 215). In exchange, he offers them schooling and apprenticeship as a painter, warning them: "nobody will take you for such a training wearing the clothes of a woman" (218). Up to this point, an omission of Francescho's corporeality and their gender identification ensures multiple possible readings of their identity. The father's discomfort with them wearing their mother's clothes could indicate that Francescho is viewed as male in childhood and is beginning to express an interest in feminine presentation that is policed by their father. The use of the phrase 'wearing the clothes of a woman' instead of 'as a woman' also keeps this possibility open. However, other factors indicate that they are assigned female: the fact that a "nunnery" is indicated as the only other way for Francescho to be allowed to paint (217), the mention of needing a new name after beginning to wear male clothes (219), the references to binding their chest (237).[65] Either

[65] One of the reasons why reading 'clues' to pin down the specific gender of this kind of fluid narrator is ultimately beside the point, is that even signs that point to anatomy have to be read alongside the possibility of intersex status. For instance, the reference about 'binding their chest' does not invalidate the possibility that Francescho may have been assigned male at birth, and it also possible that they may not have been

way, Francescho reports: "I know I am not like my brothers" (216). They need to "be, or become, one of them" (217). The 'starting point' of this becoming – the gender assigned at birth – is ambiguous. Additionally, whether adult Francescho identifies as a man, a woman, both or neither is never specified. This suspension blurs the beginning and the end of the journey of becoming and displaces gender as a salient marker of identity. This sidestepping of gender occurs simultaneously with a certain withdrawal of the narrator's corporeality, to which I now turn.

In a gesture of misdirection recalling the joke in *Written on the Body* – which replaces what is between the legs of an artist with the instrument of their craft – *How to be both* seems at times to indicate that 'painter' is not only Francescho's professional identity, but that it is in some way their gender. In a scene in which Francescho visits a girl in a "house of pleasure" (262), they show reluctance to undress for fear of what the girl would discover. Finally, she convinces them to reveal the contents of their satchel, which prompt her to say: "Ah […] That's what you are. I should have guessed" (265). In this re-narration of the moment of visual 'reveal', Francescho is 'discovered' to be a painter, and spends the night drawing a portrait of the girl. The reveal does not reveal anything: while Francescho's anatomy is presumably visible to some in the story, it remains hidden in discourse, thereby allowing the truth of his identity to be constituted for readers by other factors. In addition to the effects of never naming the gender assigned to Francescho at birth nor the gender they identify as, a missed moment of 'reveal' makes it impossible to view them as a deceiver or pretender as readers are never sure of what exactly they are and/or are 'pretending' to be. The textual absence of the body therefore prevents not only objectification and sensationalising, but also the gathering of proof with the aim of invalidating the subject's first-person authority (the epistemological primacy of their truth statements about themself). Although there are later moments of discovery that are implied to reveal to other characters what is or is not in Francescho's "breeches" (271; 299), there continues to be a slippage between gender and the narrator's status as a painter.

assigned a gender at all. As I argue, what matters about the omissions and the contradictory nature of the clues is precisely the suspension of a judgement.

After a few scenes in the 'house of pleasure', the narrator reports that their friend Barto – who accompanies them there – has been "told" about Francescho painting portraits of the girls in the house, and that this "wasn't all" that he was told (227). While it is implied here that Barto, who views his friend as a boy, has been made aware of Francescho's anatomy in a way that contradicts his expectations, the narrator suggests that Barto may have already known and accepted the 'truth' about their identity. In response to his accusations that Francescho has been "false", they reply: "I have never not been true" (278). The narrator then seems to suggest that Barto must have seen them without clothes before, and that a "general acceptance of my painter self" has been taken to mean that Francescho was accepted as themself in general, and therefore that Barto would not think of their anatomy as invalidating their gender (278). In a paradox of visibility, Barto only realises "what" Francescho is, "other than painter" (279), when he is *told*, despite seemingly having *seen* this for himself multiple times. Francescho's body is only upsetting to Barto when it is meant to be read as sign of a gender – and it is upsetting because, if Barto begins to view Francescho as a girl, they cannot be friends in the same way as if when they are two boys. The scene therefore points to a certain danger of reading the body, a 'trap door' which lies not in visibility itself but in the naming and interpreting of what is visible. The preference of Francescho for remaining unread is instead honoured through the 'incorporeality' granted by their status as a narrator.

The incorporeality of the narrator is what gives them freedom to cross the boundaries of narrative, space and time. The protagonists of both sections are indeed allowed a certain movement beyond their half of the text. Francescho's voice appears in 'Camera' when George considers writing about the painter Del Cossa for a school assignment that asks her to ventriloquise a historical figure. Trying on his voice, she speculates: "He'd be all *alas I am being made up really badly by a sixteen-year-old girl who knows fuck all about art and nothing at all about me*" (139; emphasis in original). Young suggest that the 'Eyes' section, written in Francescho's voice, may even be George's attempt at this assignment ('Invisibility', 997). If this were the case, George would be present 'in' the narrative of 'Eyes', albeit on a different diegetic level than Francescho: as its author. This trans-inhabitation (movement between, dwelling at the borders) of the two ostensibly separated narratives occurs in more explicit ways as well. In 'Eyes', the narrative alternates memories of Francescho's life with descriptions of a place in which they now

are, which they think could be purgatory or hell (A. Smith, 227).[66] Francescho's presence is ambiguously material there, as they are no longer "embodied" (228). In this space, the narrator follows a "boy", but the boy cannot see Francescho, who notes: "he looks through me : it's clear that he sees nothing" (235). It becomes clear later that the figure who looks like a boy is in fact George.[67] She is present in Francescho's narrative but only in the place in which Francescho's narrating-I dwells: a place beyond the human world, where they are a sort of ghost, as George can 'look through them' and 'see nothing'. These ghostly properties, in turn, allow Francescho to visit George's storyworld: they travel across time and space to observe the girl in her house. Like the narrator by the window of *Written on the Body,* Francescho is behind a sort of one-way mirror – seeing but not seen, at the edges of George's story. This trans-inhabitation of narrative spaces can partly be described as metalepsis, which Genette defines as "any intrusion" by a narrator or a character into a different "diegetic universe" than the one they should occupy (*Discourse*, 234). However, the ambiguous boundaries of the 'diegetic universes' inhabited by George and Francescho – and the uncertain nature of their 'intrusions' – cast doubt on whether existing definitions of metalepsis can fit these trans-inhabitations.

The kind of metalepsis that describes most closely the instances of a narrator's unseen presence (the one-way mirror) is the "projection of the narrator into the story world [which] may be expanded into literal presence of the narrator on the scene" (Fludernik, 'Metalepsis', 358). This is the case that is illustrated in *Written on the Body* when the narrator is walking past the windows and voicing the figures they see inside.[68] This 'projection' of the narrator 'into' the storyworld or 'their literal presence on the scene' occurs when Francescho 'visits' George in her world. The text indicates that they are physically present there through sentences such as "[r]ight now she and I are outside the house that is home to her and her brother" (A. Smith, 253), and "we sat on that poor specimen of wall" (251). Francescho here refers to recognisable scenes from 'Camera',

[66] The text implies that Francescho's narrating-I is dead. From the ambiguous place that they now inhabit, the narrator remembers and recounts their life. In this respect, this space is similar to the one from which a retrospective *autobiographical* I would speak, positioned 'after' the narrated life.
[67] This moment of realisation is structured as a sort of 'reveal', mirroring the one that does not quite occur in Francescho's own story: "The boy is a girl. I knew it" (A. Smith, 251).
[68] It is important to note that I am simply taking this scene as an illustration of metalepsis rather than arguing that metalepsis occurs in *Written on the Body*. For this to be the case, the narrator would have to 'see' in the windows the events that actually happen to them in the story (maybe even see themself as a character there).

scenes in which George has been described to be alone: in other words, while Francescho purports to be there with her when narrating the 'Eyes' section, the narrator of 'Camera' does not acknowledge their presence. In fact, a notion of the narrator's intrusion into the world of the characters is complicated by the fact that Francescho is not the narrator of the events in 'Camera'. They mention some of these events in their own narrative, affirming that they are able to witness them, but 'Camera' has its own third-person narrator. If it was the latter who had projected themself into the storyworld of George, then the instance of metalepsis described by Fludernik – the narrator 'on the scene' – would apply more precisely.[69] Instead, Francescho and George's intrusions in each other's storyworlds could be understood as "horizontal metalepsis": the "transmigration of a character or narrator into a different fictional text" which "involves the transgressive violation of storyworld boundaries through jumps between ontologically distinct zones or spheres." (Alber and Bell, 168). But do the two parts of *How to be both* constitute 'ontologically distinct zones or spheres', as if they were 'different fictional texts'? The ambiguity of the relationship between 'Camera' and 'Eyes' makes the nature of the characters' intrusions into different diegetic spaces difficult to fit within existing models of metalepsis.

I argue that the ambiguity of Francescho's gender can be linked to this difficulty in establishing whether and how metalepsis occurs in the novel. Francescho is an unseen presence both in George's world – as metaleptic intruder – and in their own – as narrator who speaks from an otherworldy zone, disembodied and invisible to George and to the characters they narrate. If we understand ghostliness to be related to gender-variant characters' capacity for trans-inhabitation – dwelling both within, outside and at the borders of bounded spaces – Francescho's ambivalent presence within and through borders of genders is linked with their ghostly inhabitation of narrative. I have already noted that first-person narrators blur the boundary between the diegetic level in which they act as character and the one from which they narrate this action. Despite this, first-person narration in itself is not considered metalepsis (Fludernik, 394). Indeed, if metalepsis describes only the "physically impossible" encounter of "entities from two different ontological domains" (Alber and Bell, 167), then the ordinary situation of the

[69] Similarly, if we follow Young in imagining George as the 'author' of 'Eyes', the fact that she herself appears in this narrative would constitute metalepsis.

identity of narrating-I and their former self in the story does not count as one. However, if we understand the ghost in *I'm Looking Through You* – who visits the experiencing-I – as an incarnation of the narrating-I, then a metaleptic crossing occurs, as indeed the ghost symbolises: someone from a different ontological domain (Jenny's future *and* the diegetic level that the narrator inhabits) has transcended their original location. The way in which autodiegetic narratives straddle two worlds is constitutive of this form, but it can be specifically emphasised in certain narratives: gender-variant narrators who trans-inhabit fixed and bounded categories can foreground the way in which all first-person narrators trans-inhabit diegetic levels in the same way. A narrator is then a sort of ghost, occasionally glimpsed along the 'walls' of a diegetic boundary and at times traversing these walls. In *How to be both*, the strange zone inhabited perhaps by every narrating-I is materialised in the narrative as Francescho's strange purgatory, from which they can witness and tell stories about themself and others. The extent to which this narrator is intra- or extra-diegetic with respect to the worlds they narrate and observe remains ambiguous.

As is the case in *Written on the Body*, reflections on the disembodied nature of the narrator in *How to be both* are accompanied by the withdrawing of the body of Francescho (when incarnated as character) from the story. I understand this as a strategy for discouraging a reading of their body for gender assignation, enabling a trans-inhabitation of many possible assignations instead. I have argued that the suspension of judgement about the narrator's gender has the effect of hiding the 'destination' of a journey, even if a journey can be said to take place. The result is, as in some of the texts I have discussed before (Preciado's, Bornstein's, or some of the narratives from *Finding the Real Me*), a dwelling in the middle – this time emphasised by the structure of the narrative, in which a beginning and an end cannot be said to be fixed because of the interchangeability of the two sections. The disembodiedness associated with this dwelling in the middle is what enables a questioning of fixed and binary categories, but it is, at the same time, a place in which it is difficult to belong. Francescho asserts that the space that they inhabit now, from which they can tell their story, is purgatory because it entails "the knowledge of a home after a home is gone" and witnessing "a world which you recognise to be your own but in which you are a stranger and of which you can no longer be a part" (335). I have argued so far that this otherwordliness characterises the

position of a narrating-I. Additionally, it resembles the metaphor of the trans subject as ghost used by Hale: a figure who cannot expect "a social world […] to provide homely comforts" because they do not fit into fixed and bounded categories (55). This gesture toward the negative affects that can result from the 'transitory' space before, or outside, the possibility of inhabitation introduces an emphasis on the desire to belong which runs counter to a celebration of fluidity and transgression. The *fluid I*'s trans-inhabitation of genders and diegetic levels, resulting in a disembodied dwelling at the borders of these spaces, can simultaneously allow (for) a liberating movement and produce a painful sense of exclusion.

The Risk of Objectification and *Frankissstein*'s Withdrawal Strategies

I have argued that the early 1990s influence of queer theory on discourses of gender-variant embodiment contributes to the creation of a narrator, in *Written on the Body*, who is able to transcend the constraints of the (gendered) body by remaining suspended in between binary and fixed spaces. Similarly, *How to be both* constructs a veiled or ambiguous corporeality for its narrator to allow Francescho to challenge binaries like male/female, present/past, origin/destination and intradiegetic/extradiegetic. The context of the publication of Winterson's *Frankissstein* is markedly different from that of her other novel. *Frankissstein* is published at the end of a third decade of trans studies, in a moment of trans visibility especially fraught with 'trap doors': in the second half of the 2010s, the legitimisation of certain trans identities continued to exclude those who do not fit an established model, at the same time as it attracted violent attempts at erasure. The visibility and materiality of the body, and the corporeality of the narrator as specifically trans, are central to *Frankissstein*, in a way that can be taken to show the changed context for Winterson's reflections on gender fluidity and flexibility. Increased visibility and precision in defining gender-variant identities in the world outside the text correlate with increased textual visibility of the trans body in the novel and precision in describing the character's identity. The novel is an adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1823), featuring two main narratives: one about Shelley writing the novel, and one re-imagining its plot and focusing on the relationship between a medical professional who is trans (and narrator) Ry, and Victor Stein, a scientist devoted to pushing the boundaries of AI experimentation. The text is repeatedly concerned with the possibility of creating human consciousness as independent from the biological body,

explored through references to cryogenics, robotics, spiritism, religion, mind uploading, and more. I argue that the positioning of a trans narrator at the centre of such a text reveals that gender variance often stands in for a negotiation with the flexibility and limitations of embodiment, and that *both* gender-variant characters *and* narrators can become emblematic of a certain degree of freedom in transcending the body.

The narrator of *Frankissstein* articulates a gender identity that has to do with 'bothness' but is conveyed, this time, through description rather than paralipsis. Ry goes into detail about their anatomy and the medical treatment that has shaped their embodiment: "When I had top surgery there wasn't much to remove, and the hormones had already altered my chest. I never wore a bra when I was female" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 89). In descriptions such as this one, Ry maintains, but at the same time slightly distorts, the presentation of their transition as a journey. There is a past, a starting point ('when I was female') and a process (hormones, top surgery). There is also a destination, but this destination is not an opposite of the origin. Ry refers to themselves as a "hybrid" and links their status of bothness to their decision not to have genital surgery: "When I look in the mirror I see someone I recognize, or rather, I see at least two people I recognize. That is why I have chosen not to have lower surgery. I am what I am, but what I am is not one thing, not one gender. I live with doubleness" (89). Compared to the reference to the mirror made by the narrator of *Written on the Body* (a mirror that reflects back Louise rather than their own body), this description roots Ry's gendered 'hybridity' in their represented corporeality.[70] Instead of being made invisible, their body is revealed in what are meant to be read as its contradictions. The question of reading a represented corporeality is then explicitly foregrounded by this text, and I argue that the 'revealing' of their body opens Ry up to fetishisation from other characters in a way that the withdrawn bodies discussed so far can avoid. The fact that the narrator here is not only observing but can also be observed carries the risk of readers taking part in this fetishisation as well. In negotiating these issues, the text sharply withdraws and reveals, alternately, the narrator's body.

[70] I have discussed in Chapter Three the role of the mirror in punctuating the trajectory of the gender-variant subject's achievement of desired embodiment. Here I am more interested in whether the mirror reflects back a corporeality at all and whether readers can access what the character sees when they look into it.

Victor, Ry's lover, is explicitly shown to be someone who fetishises Ry's hybridity. His attraction Ry is tantamount to his fascination with the transformability of the human, and he is interested in them to the extent that they are a "harbinger of the future" (154). I have discussed this tendency to view trans subjects as examples of a generalised capability of transcending bounded spaces (categories, bodies), whereby "a hybrid blend of male and female, organism and machine, […] emblematizes the contemporary fusion and intermingling of previously distinct categories" (Felski, 340). Some gender-variant individuals find this hybridity enabling and embrace it as their own – I have noted, for instance, that Halberstam finds "a charting of hybridity" as a productive gesture to challenge spatialisations of "the two territories of male and female" (*Female Masculinity*, 164). However, if subjects are reduced to 'emblems', 'metaphors' or 'harbingers' by *others*, this can efface their own self-determination. *Frankissstein*'s narrator explicitly discusses the misunderstandings that arise from equating transness with futuristic transcendence of the body. Ry recounts their inclusion in a "small group of transgender medical professionals" invited to a cryogenics facility to learn about this process and judges that this is a "mistake" (104). They assert that this invitation is the result of a "semantic confusion" (105) which assumes that, as transgender, Ry would automatically be a "transhuman enthusiast", and thereby interested in learning about separating the mind from the body: trans subjects are assumed to "understand the feeling that any-body is the wrong body" (104). Opening up the meaning of 'trans' too much, to signify transgression of all boundaries, and discarding of all bodies, is figured by Ry as a 'semantic confusion'. In a similar way, Ry clarifies that it is hasty to assume that, because as a doctor they are dedicated to "extend[ing] life", this would mean that they are interested in getting rid of the boundary of mortality altogether by working toward "the end of death" (186). Ry's role in the novel continues to be the one who pauses to question whether boundaries should be crossed, rather than enthusiastically playing the part of 'harbinger of the future'. Their position is resonant with the view expressed in most of the texts I have discussed so far: inhabiting bounded categories and bodies in ambiguous, non-normative or partly unintelligible or unreadable ways is not to be equated with seeking to be rid of these bounded entities altogether.

The conflation between transgender and transhuman raises the question of the role that gender-variant subjects may be expected to play in a transhuman future. By focusing on

"human enhancement", a transhumanist perspective seeks in "science and technology" the potential to ultimately "transcend" the human (Ferrando, 439). However, by being rooted in ideals of the Enlightenment and the humanist tradition, transhumanism does not acknowledge that "historically, not every human being has been recognized as such: some humans have been considered more human than others; some have been considered less than human" (439). In this novel, when Victor assumes that Ry would be interested in the possibility of a disembodied consciousness, he does not take into account the fact that the different intersectional identities of individuals would lead them to have different relationships with their human bodies. For instance, he does not realise that Ry may not want to be rid of their body as the validity of their embodied trans identity has to be affirmed against those who would want to deny it – those who would literally get rid of their body because they consider them less than human. In a lecture he gives at the beginning of the novel, Victor speaks excitedly of a future in which "we" (a pronoun whose referent is implied to be all humans) "will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us" and "will colonise space" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 73). This transhumanist hope leaves the hierarchies that harm marginalised subjects intact, postulating a sharing of the planet with life forms "created by us", and celebrating an impulse to colonise (73).[71] While Victor sees Ry as part of this 'us' (the creators, the colonisers), he also sees them to an extent as the object of these plans (the technologically created 'life form'). The question of the hierarchy between subject and object is raised: a subject (Victor) views Ry's body as an object onto which to invest his dreams of the future, in which he is creator and coloniser. Ry's hesitation in conflating trans-gender and transhuman can be understood as a recognition of how easily they can be objectified and fetishised in the name of the latter, and of how the subordination of those who are marginalised in the present is not likely to be challenged in the future transhumanists want.

Victor's interest in Ry seems solely predicated on an equation between embodied gender hybridity and a transhuman future – the potentially unlimited reshaping power of medical technologies and boundless cyberspaces that may allow a discarding of the body.

[71] I discuss in the next chapter how a posthuman, rather than transhuman, approach is embraced by some trans writers precisely because of its potential to destabilise these hierarchies – between human and non-human, and between groups of humans among whom power is unequally distributed.

Instead, Ry's own interest in reshaping embodiment does not entail that they seek a complete freedom from corporeality. In fact, they are perhaps the character most attached to embodiment in the novel. When Victor asks "Do you miss your other body?", they reply: "No, because it didn't feel like my body. This one is my body, and I'd like to keep it" (282). The mode of trans-inhabitation articulated here is one that travels and traverses spaces – away from a 'past' gender, although this to some extent co-exists with the present gender in Ry's 'doubleness' – but it is also one that values stability in a desired body/home. When Victor accuses Ry of disliking "the idea of intelligence not bound to a body", they confirm that this is true: "We are our bodies" (148). This stance re-narrates trans subjects' supposed desire to leave a wrong body behind. I have discussed how trans writers like Hayward conceive of the gender affirmation journey as remaining *in* the body: a "moving toward myself through myself" ('Starfish', 72) rather than a "jumping out of our bodies" (73). Ry expresses a similar sentiment when they explain: "I didn't do [surgery] to distance myself from myself. I did it to get nearer to myself" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 122). The fact that the trans character in the novel is the one who finds the body the least renounceable demonstrates the text's awareness that real-life gender variant subjects may not find the kind of disembodiedness achieved by the narrator of *Written on the Body* necessarily appealing.

As a first-person narrator, however, Ry still becomes at times disembodied and, in some ways, invisible – most remarkably in situations in which other characters are reading and interpreting their body. Their own presence in their story is not always consistent. Aside from the sections narrated by Shelley, even in their own story Ry often 'disappears'. An early instance of this is an interview that Ry conducts with Ron Lord, a manufacturer of life-like robots designed to be used for sex. What begins as a mix of indirect and direct discourse, with questions from Ry and answers from Ron, gradually becomes Ron's monologue, which incorporates replies to Ry's questions without the questions – or anything outside Ron's speech – being reported. Because speech is not marked by punctuation in the novel, Ron effectively takes over narration in this section, with Ry becoming the narratee of his words. The absence of Ry's voice becomes conspicuous when Ron makes assumptions about Ry being interested in trying the female dolls – "Imagine coming home to this beauty" (44) – and when he relates his extensive market research about (exclusively cis-heterosexual) men and women's sexual habits. As the

novel shows that Ry consider themself both male and female and is attracted to men, it becomes clear that Ron is misreading them. Through a similar withdrawing of voice, the narrator intervenes to varying degrees in Victor's reading/objectification of them as a character. For instance, experiencing-Ry interrupts sex when Victor calls their body "new data" for expanding his view of human life; through dialogue, they protest this objectification (123). As a narrator, however, they decline to report their reaction in many similar moments, such as when Victors marvels at the multiple possible readings of their appearance and asks: "*What are you*?" (298; emphasis in original). In other passages still, such as when Victor states that Ry's "sex change" attracts them and refers to them "exotic", the narrator explains: "I want to argue, but he excites me, and I want him" (154). The ambivalent agency that Ry exercises in shaping others' perceptions of them is linked to their visibility in the narrative, their degree of representedness. The revealing and withdrawing of their body in the novel indeed raise the question of whether being embodied aids or hinders the narrator's agency.

Compared to the narrator of Winterson's earlier text – who willingly gives up their body to Louise as character and whose disembodiedness as narrator ultimately puts them in a secure position from which they can observe the bodies of others unseen – and to Francescho – who maintains unreadability as character and exists disembodied as ghostly narrator – Ry's ability to withdraw as narrator from scenes that they are reporting *contrasts* with a very visible and readable corporeality that they possess as character. This comes with dangers: for instance, in a vividly described scene, Ry is assaulted in a men's bathroom in a transphobic attack (241). In a way that differs from the complete omissions of *Written on the Body* (which incidentally features a scene in a men's bathroom, in which the narrator seems to face no danger) and the half omissions of *How to be both*, characters in *Frankissstein* often explicitly discuss which 'parts' Ry does and does not have and the extent to which their body does and does not look male or female. I argue that Ry's withdrawing of themself as narrator is a way to regain agency over how they are read. A consideration of the text's status as an adaptation partly suggests this: Ry's former name is Mary, creating a parallel in which, if Mary Shelley writes Victor Frankenstein, in the same way Ry is writing – or authoring – Victor. The fact that Ry narrates him, inhabiting a separate diegetic level, gives them this primacy over him, even if *as character* they are subjected to Victor's assumptions. Ultimately, a certain

degree of disembodiedness that comes with being a narrator seems to be what grants the *fluid I* safety, reducing the risk of being read, objectified or seen against their will. However, this mode of trans-inhabitation is not exactly a possibility for embodied, real-life subjects who, like Ry, often encounter the body not as infinitely transformable or discardable but as "pliant to a point, flexible within limits" (Hayward, 'Starfish', 74). If becoming absent is the only choice to avoid being read, the comforts of the body as a home have to be renounced; instead, the solution could be to challenge misreadings by shifting, as texts by gender-variant writers do, the terms in which gender is understood.

Because withdrawing the self while leaving others' assumptions intact is Ry's main strategy against objectification, their role as Shelley in the adaptation – the author who sits at the top of the textual hierarchy and has ultimate power to shape the actions of those below – is not particularly highlighted. They instead risk losing this power as author/narrator through association with another participant in *Frankenstein*'s narrative: the creature. I have noted Victor's interest in the medical technologies that shape Ry's body, and his vision of the future in which the planet will be shared with "non-biological life forms created by us" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 73). While he himself is not Ry's creator in any sense, the way in which he treats them as an object of marvel, "harbinger of the future" (154), and site of scientific experimentation suggest the parallel with the doctor and his creature in the original novel, and the power differential that this entails. In the novel, Ry is a doctor, they are linked to Shelley by name, and they are narrator, thereby existing on a higher diegetic level than Victor's – however, the risk of being the creature (subordinated, marginalised, misunderstood, assembled by another) persists. It is relevant to note here that an allegiance to Frankenstein's monster forms the basis of an often-quoted text in trans studies, Stryker's 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix' (1994). Stryker argues that, like the "monster", she is also "often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment" (238) and wants to reclaim terms like monster, which others have associated with transsexuality, in order "dispel their ability to harm" (240). This strategy to counter stigmatisation, however, is not one that Ry seems interested in adopting; as much as Victor pushes them to consider the ways in which they transcend notions of the (gendered) human, Ry maintains: "Maybe I just don't want to be post-human" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 281). Whether one actively embraces a non-normative

inhabitation of the body *or* is being misread as doing so has different connotations in terms of the agency, safety and self-determination of gender-variant characters. In the following chapter, I discuss representations of trans-inhabitation that celebrate the kinship between the gender-variant body and the non-human body, as well as ones that highlight the risks of fostering this connection. Here, because this association is made against Ry's will, their agency is curtailed, and can be expressed only as a withdrawing of the body into the space of an absent or unreadable *fluid I* in order to escape objectification.

Where Something or Nothing Should Be

By making itself less embodied, the *fluid I* trans-inhabits gender and narrative boundaries – traversing them, dwelling ambiguously within them, flitting (ghostlike) at the borders of them. In my re-narration (as reader) of Winterson's and Smith's texts, I noted that all novels are concerned with queer questioning of binaries, with identities that are in flux and textual bodies that are difficult to 'read', and with spatiotemporal borderlands; however, an emphasis on the desire to be embodied, safe, stable, and seen can be revealed by reading these texts through a 'trans' lens. In *Written on the Body*, the body of the narrator is veiled to readers through paralipsis, and the narrator/character disappears for Louise in two ways: in the former function because they inhabit a different diegetic level, in the latter because they give up their body to 'become' her. Ultimately, however, the protagonist learns that differential embodiment (making others into visible objects while remaining unsubstantial subject oneself) results in isolation and prevents them from recognising Louise's agency. *How to be both* effects in some way a re-narration of the canonical plot of gender variance, implying a sort of movement from one gender to another. However, through paralipsis and a low degree of representedness, the body of Francescho remains hidden in discourse, avoiding an invalidating moment of 'reveal'. At the same time, Francescho's incorporeality as narrator grants them freedom to metaleptically cross the borders of the story of 'Camera', which both is and is not part of the same fictional world. However, the borderland from which they do this – beyond life, beyond the world of their own story – is a lonely place, in which they long for home. Of the three narrators I have discussed, *Frankissstein*'s Ry risks objectification the most, because they are textually visible – fully described to readers. They are also harmed by other characters or fetishised as embodying a transhuman future; their role as object of

observation and fascination leaves doubt as to their own ability to shape this future as a subject. As a way to counter these 'traps' of visibility, they withdraw into the safe space of the diegetic world of the narrator, disappearing from some scenes so that, at times, not a single 'I' occurs for several pages. Compared to instances of the *fluid I* that are rendered less readable, the narrator of *Frankissstein* is either too revealed (vulnerable to being visually dissected by characters and readers) or too withdrawn (not intervening to contradict misreadings) to have full agency in shaping how they come across.

The less a narrator is embodied, the more they can hide behind a one-way mirror, have control over others, cross gendered and diegetic boundaries, and be ungendered. This provides some safety from the objectification that being incarnated always entails. While this works for narrators, it is not a material solution for embodied subjects, including those who are characters in their own stories. In these novels, the bodies of the protagonists are still not absent enough to avoid being read. In fact, bodily absence can itself constitute a moment of 'reveal': exposing the missing presence of something guides readers to infer gender in ways that may or may not go against the characters' own identifications. These revelations are more or less explicit in relation to the degree of 'representedness' of their narrators. *Frankissstein* constructs this moment as focalised through Victor, who has full visual access to Ry's body: "He saw the scars under my pecs. I watched his eyes work down my body. No penis" (118). A version of this 'no penis' moment occurs in some way in the other two novels as well. The narrator of *Written on the Body* reports a dream in which a girlfriend has placed a mouse trap in her letter box and explains that they avoid ringing the doorbell for fear of "pushing my private parts into [it]" (Winterson, *Written*, 41). Subsequently, the girlfriend tells them that they have "nothing to be frightened of" (42). In the mode of suspension of judgement typical of this novel, this can equally be read as a 'no penis' moment or as a joke about one, but it still draws attention to the fact the narrator does have a body, and that sex and gender could be read there. *How to be both*, which I have argued is somewhat more explicit about its narrator's anatomy, nonetheless avoids naming the 'no penis' moment as one, for instance as the narrator describes another character "drop[ping] his hand to my breeches to take hold of me where something or nothing should be" (A. Smith, 299). The reveal of an absence (be it scars or a 'nothing' where something should be) occurs here always in relation to characters who are read as having 'no penis'. Transmasculine subjects, or

individuals assigned female at birth, would then appear as a privileged site of reflections on the flexibility of gender, raising the question of whether all gender-variant subjects can be a *fluid I* or if some types of embodiment are considered more visible or difficult to transcend than others.

The opportunities and risks associated with visibility (representation and unwanted exposure, intelligibility and misunderstanding, legitimisation and exclusion), depend on *who* is making *what* visible *for whom*. In the texts I have discussed so far, being a ghost, being represented, being seen, and being absent are not inherently positive or negative states, but become so according to whether they are imposed, chosen, embraced, or rejected. The epigraph from Nelson's *Argonauts* – "Visibility makes possible, but it also disciplines" (107) – can also be applied to how theoretical frameworks like narratology both describe (*make visible*) and simplify (*discipline*) complex narrative situations.[72] I have noted, for instance, that narratological definitions of metalepsis partly help to account for the narrative operations of *How to be both*, but, at the same time, the trans-inhabitations occurring there do not quite fit into existing categories – indeed they perhaps can be said to trans-inhabit these categories. If textual phenomena can be said to trans-inhabit available models, this is also the case with *Freshwater* and we-narration, or trans memoirs and *Bildungsroman* plots – each example partly fitting into its description but also exceeding it. By showing that these texts test the boundaries of definitions of narrative features, I do not aim to propose alternative and better-fitting models, but I instead want to show that narrators who inhabit uneasily binary and fixed gender categories similarly dwell ambiguously in narrative ones. In the case of the *fluid I*, the strategies used by gender-variant narrators foreground the negotiations with the body that *all* narrators have to perform – happening upon a scene unseen but also being part of this scene, being both embodied and disembodied, remaining ghostly and alone with respect to characters and a story which one controls. These aspects of the narrator's position are less emphasised instead in the group of texts I discuss in the next chapter. This is because, in narratives with an *alien I*, gender-variant identity is not conveyed through omissions and ghostly crossings but through reference to textually visible (sometimes very visible, and thus 'spectacular') non-human bodies.

[72] I have noted in Chapter One that a similar dynamic characterises conceptual metaphors, which highlight some aspects of the experience they are being used to describe while downplaying or hiding others.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Alien I and Posthuman Genders

> He looked up, and Robin was gone. Paul was looking at himself, a version of himself. Or was he? Maybe he had switched bodies with Robin and *was* looking at himself? He was a little dizzy. He touched his face, cradled his nose for a minute – familiar, yes, his – then checked his right hand for the stitches scar from the broken wine glass at the restaurant. He looked at Robin/himself. He looked cute in Robin's bright blue polyester Cubs uniform shirt.
>
> ~ Andrea Lawlor, *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl* (2017)

In this passage, shapeshifter Paul encounters someone who has the same ability as him: Robin can change their body at will and transforms themself into Paul, causing the boundaries between self and other, observer and observed, desiring subject/desired object to become blurred. While Robin's sex and gender are never specified in this novel (even as the narrative refers to them in the third person, pronouns are avoided, in a gesture of paralipsis similar to the ones I have discussed in the previous chapter), Paul is referred to as 'he/him' but is capable of radically transforming his appearance in order to be read as different genders.[73] Linking a celebration of gender variance to a super-human ability shows that inherent in fiction is the possibility to imagine alternative modes of embodiment, which may resonate with real-life experiences that are disavowed or marginalised. *Paul Takes the Form* is engaged with the themes I discuss in this chapter: transformative exchanges with the other, mutable genders, visual assessments of otherness and sameness. The texts I focus on here also explore these themes through speculative elements: they imagine gender-variant aliens.[74] I ask whether these narratives can help create models that – by trans-inhabiting the boundaries between supposedly separate categories like male/female and human/non-human – challenge

[73] These genders are ones that specifically function within the American queer communities of the 1990s in which Paul moves. Some genders mentioned in the novel are "butch" (Lawlor, 299), "femme" (152), "dyke" (74), "leatherman" (316), "fag" (207), and so on. The novel avoids casting Paul's transformations as 'journeys' to and from heteronormative categories of male and female.

[74] I use the term aliens as inhabitants of a planet other than Earth, who encounter or are compared to, in each of the texts I discuss, Earth natives. These aliens have varying degrees of identity with humans, as I clarify in my readings. The extent to which aliens are genetically or anatomically close to humans contributes, in these narratives, to defamiliarising or reinforcing normative assumptions about sex and gender that human characters hold.

assumptions about human embodiment in a way that resonates with the experience of gender-variant subjects. In her memoir *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*, Bornstein explains being drawn to science fiction precisely for its capacity to propose these speculative models, as the genre features "men who were magically or technologically turned into women [as is the case with *Paul Takes the Form*], women who rightly assumed themselves to be men, alien races that have more than two genders [as is the case with the texts I discuss in what follows], otherworldly sexual adventures" (40). Bornstein turns to science fiction "searching characters like myself" (40), as in her own world the possibilities for gender transformation or gender fluidity are limited. The modes of trans-inhabitation that I examine here do offer alternatives to cis-heteronormative structures; however, they often go beyond a focus on the possibilities of transforming sex or gender and they explore what it might mean to cross identity boundaries more generally, by representing endlessly adaptable bodies or ones that can inhabit, and be inhabited by, others.

These trans-inhabitations are articulated through a gender-variant narrator that I call the *alien I*. I start my discussion with two novels from the canon of feminist science fiction,[75] Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Octavia Butler's *Imago* (1989), both of which feature the encounter between humans and alien species that have unfamiliar sex/gender systems. I conclude the chapter with a focus on three short stories – which similarly deal with human/alien encounters – from Cat Fitzpatrick and Casey Plett's collection *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Science Fiction and Fantasy from Transgender Writers* (2017). The two novels are written (by authors who do not explicitly identify as gender-variant) in a period characterised by sensationalist reporting of 'sex changes' and

[75] Feminist science fiction, as Marleen Barr defines it, is "fiction that enlarges patriarchal myths in order to facilitate scrutinizing these myths" (4). In Le Guin's and Butler's texts, the subordination of women inherent in a binary and hierarchical model of gender is the 'patriarchal myth' that is 'enlarged' through human men's reactions to aliens with a different sex system. A reflection on the position of women (as both characters and authors) in science fiction, and on the extent to which writing by and about women conforms to or subverts these patriarchal myths, took place in the 1970s, in essays such as Joanna Russ's 'The Image of Women in Science Fiction' (1970) and anthologies such as Vonda McIntyre and Susan Janice Anderson's *Aurora: Beyond Equality* (1976), Virginia Kidd's *Millennial Women* (1978), and Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder* (1974). Barr specifically discusses feminist engagements with the science fiction trope of the alien, concluding that "women" are themselves portrayed as "gendered or racial aliens who embrace, rather than quell, the invading monster" (99). Depictions of aliens are therefore transformed when there is an understanding of what it means to be cast in the position of Other: some humans are revealed to be already 'alien', and accepting aliens entails an embracing of difference. In my discussion, I address specifically what happens when we read this gendered and racialised alien Other as a gender-variant subject.

before the inception of trans studies and activism, meaning that an awareness of canonical narratives of trans identity is part of their historical context but the visibility of diverse narratives about gender variance we have experienced in the last three decades is not. Instead, the short stories are contributions to a collection of new work that aims "to offer a vision of what transgender sci-fi and fantasy might look like as a genre" (Fitzpatrick and Plett, 439). One consequence of this change of context is that the short stories have human characters who are gender-variant, whereas the novels restrict this possibility to aliens. My aim, however, is to argue that these narratives of alien encounters can be re-narrated *together* as offering a mode of trans-inhabitation through the use of first-person narration.[76] The mode of trans-inhabitation that I find in the texts is, once again, a balance between rootedness in the body and the crossing of boundaries. Specifically, the *alien I* challenges objectifying modes of knowing the other, thereby producing possibilities for transformation and exchange that question the assumptions that human characters hold about the (gendered) body.

I read texts with an *alien I* as engaged in a questioning of not only gendered hierarchies, but hierarchies between the human and the non-human. In Chapter Four, I noted that the association of gender-variance with the non-human, the not-quite-human and the more-than-human carries the risk of erasing the subjectivity of trans individuals by fetishising them as symbols of boundary crossing and futuristic transformations. However, some authors in trans studies consider these connections as empowering and as leading to more inclusive epistemological and linguistic modes that can be used to define intelligible and legitimate human life. When Stryker declares her allegiance to Frankenstein's creature, she explains: "I find no shame […] in acknowledging my egalitarian relationship with non-human material Being" ('Frankenstein', 240). While recognising that seeing gender-variant individuals as non-human is intended to thwart their hard-won claims to personhood, Stryker suggests that those who wish to discredit certain modes of human

[76] This re-narration entails again the re-arranging of a canonical timeline: this time, one of progress from a moment in which trans identities were erased to one in which they are visible. Instead, I read these texts together as conveying modes of trans-inhabitation that speak to each other across decades. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is the only novel discussed in the thesis that significantly pre-dates the 1990s. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, of which *Imago* is the third novel, is published in the 1980s. The operation of re-narration is the reason for including these texts in the thesis: my reading of these novels teases out concerns around visibility, bodily boundaries and transformability that are central to trans sci-fi literature, and that demonstrate that science fiction has long been engaged with what I term trans-inhabitations.

life posit a hierarchy between human and non-human; instead of reinforcing this hierarchy, Stryker argues that it can be critiqued in order to lead to a more inclusive way of conceiving individuals' embodiment and experience. A posthumanist approach is therefore compatible with trans studies as they both "offer a radical challenge to the 'human' as configured through the binaries of human/animal, human/nonhuman, sex/gender, hetero/homo, man/ woman" (Nurka, 210).[77] In *TSQ*'s *Transanimalities* issue, Camille Nurka identifies a common aim between challenging gender as binary and fixed and challenging the primacy of the human over the non-human – between "undoing gender" and "creatively refigur[ing] what it means to be human in the Anthropocene" (224). In the same issue, Hayward turns to animals to accomplish this creative reconfiguring and compares the regenerative capacities of the starfish and the gender-variant human, arguing that "they share a phenomenological experience of reshaping and reworking bodily boundaries" ('Starfish', 76). Trans-inhabitation occurs in two senses here: on the one hand, both the animal and the human trans-inhabit their bodies in a comparable way. On the other, the boundary between human transformation and starfish transformation is itself trans-inhabited, as the two creatures are "sensuously intertwined" (69). The fictional narratives I discuss here similarly consider both the individual transformations experienced by different species and the way in which the supposed separation between these species can be rethought as connection.

The Left Hand of Darkness, *Imago* and the stories from *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* can then be read with a lens that is both trans and posthumanist, simultaneously considering the potentialities of human embodiment and their relations with embodiments that are other than human. The speculative capacities of science fiction lend themselves to these aims. Texts representing encounters with differently embodied others and societies with varied sex/gender systems allow authors and readers to test modes of trans-inhabiting

[77] I follow the definition of posthumanism proposed by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova: a "critique of the humanist ideal of 'Man' as the universal representative of the human", linked to a "post-anthropocentrism" that "criticizes species hierarchy and advances bio-centred egalitarianism" (1). This approach is markedly different from, and indeed constitutes a critique of, transhumanism, which I discussed in Chapter Four as centring, rather than decentring, human hegemonic subjects. If we take *Frankissstein*'s Victor as representative of a transhumanist perspective, his hope that "we will colonise space" (Winterson, *Frankissstein*, 73) is condemned through the posthumanist stance that the texts in this chapter take. The latter deconstruct the hierarchy between the colonising 'we' (male, white, cisgender, heterosexual, imperialist) and the colonised non-humans, who are revealed to be kin to humans who are implicitly or explicitly excluded from this 'we'.

conventional boundaries of bodies and social categories. Reviewing early science fiction narratives about non-heteronormative sexualities and genders, Stryker argues that the genre is "exceptionally well suited" to "promote visions of alternative societies, new forms of embodiment, and novel pathways for desire and pleasure" (*Queer Pulp*, 17). The ability of science fiction texts to imagine alternatives to the worlds of readers' lived experience can be used to bring into existence previously unconceived modes of being and social relations, but also to question those that are taken for granted. In outlining a tradition of female writers who use science fiction to examine "social and sexual hierarchies" and "challenge normative ideas of gender roles", Sarah Lefanu draws attention to the "twin possibilities" offered by the genre: on the one hand, to "defamiliarise the familiar" and, on the other, to "make familiar the new and strange" (21). In the texts I analyse, I read both operations in relation to the representation of gender. On the one hand, societies that function without a binary understanding of gender or that are inclusive of a vast range of embodiments might be presented to readers who have not considered them possible. At the same time, normative notions of identity, corporeality and sexuality can be shown as contingent rather than necessary.

This twin process of 'familiarisation of the unfamiliar' and 'de-familiarisation of the familiar' is achieved in the texts I focus on by the juxtaposition of different norms. Darko Suvin defines science fiction as "confronting a normative system […] with a point of view or glance implying a new set of norms" (374). The relationship between different notions of what is 'normal' (a difference to be found either within the text or between readers and the text) is at the core of this definition, together with the 'point of view' or 'glance'. In the human/alien encounters I examine, the first-person narrator has the advantage of presenting their own set of norms, through their own glance, as familiar. If these norms are the ones with which readers are also familiar – for instance, an understanding of gender as binary and fixed – then these readers and the narrator will be confronted *together* with the 'unfamiliar' world, gradually becoming used to it. Alternatively, the world that is familiar to, and taken for granted by, the *alien I* may be unfamiliar to readers, and therefore may prompt them to question what they, in turn, take for granted, and how this may appear equally unfamiliar to others. Lastly, a situation can arise that was not perhaps predicted by writers like Le Guin: gender-variant readers can encounter texts where gender variance is a characteristic of aliens but not of humans. Here the

supposedly unfamiliar world of the aliens will appear familiar to the gender-variant reader, while what is meant to be the norm (gender as binary or fixed) will already be at odds with this reader's experience. In analysing this complex system of glances and the difficulty in locating which sets of norms is supposed to be new and unfamiliar, I argue that the possibility of trans-inhabitation can be considered either as novelty or as the norm for humans, and that both options can be valuable in promoting the imagining of inclusive societies.

Indeed, reading texts that present gender variance as a novelty through the lens of trans studies can lead to interrogating the relationship between normative and marginal experiences. Dagmar Van Engen, examining the science fiction of Butler as offering imaginative ways to conceive of gender-variant identity, points to the capacity of the genre to "imagine whole new planets, alien cultures, or future societies in which gender transition is the norm rather than the exception" (752). Positing the notion of fixed and binary gender as exceptional turns the tables on those who see gender variance as an aberration, and gender-variant subjects as the objects of exoticising gaze. Van Engen's reading of Butler's fiction as representing 'gender transition' while this is not explicitly the case – and indeed it has not been read as such before – exemplifies the operation of re-narration that I continue here. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy – the last book of which I discuss here – features an alien species, the Oankali, who have three sexual roles. The Oankali have a third sex beside male and female, the ooloi, whose function in reproduction is to select genetic material from each of the three parents to form an embryo. Van Engen notes that the ooloi, whose sex has nothing in common with human notions of maleness and femaleness, have been interpreted variably by critics, including as "metaphors for something else, particularly other genders and sexual identities, rather than as nonbinary genders in their own right" (736). I have noted how interpreting sex and gender variance as a metaphor for something else (*e.g.* queer desire, women's transgressions, a utopian fluidity of all gender) can have the effect of erasing trans, non-binary, intersex or gender-nonconforming status as an identity in itself. A reading (or a re-narrating) attuned to this issue would focus on the extent to which non-binary gender in science fiction can be read as fostering an understanding or exploring the possibilities of real-life gender-variant experience. Following Van Engen, I make this reading here,

adding an emphasis on how elements like narrative voice, pronoun use, and plot structure participate in conveying the experience of trans-inhabitation.

Interrupting Ai, I and eye in *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* features a human explorer from Earth, Genly Ai, vising the planet Gethen, which is populated by aliens who can be said to be androgynous, bi-gendered, non-sexed or ambi-sexed. Through the form of a report from an exploratory mission that precedes Genly's, readers are informed that Gethenians possess an "ambisexuality": they are asexual most of the time, but they have a monthly oestrus, called "kemmer", during which, regardless of whether reproduction is involved, the aliens' genitals "engorge or shrink accordingly, […] and the partner, triggered by the change, takes on the other sexual role" (Le Guin, *Darkness*, 73).[78] Crucially, there is no way to predict which role an individual will take in any given encounter, either by examining their personality and behaviour or by relying on the roles one has taken in the past, as "[n]o physiological habit is established" (74). Ultimately, Gethenians cannot be sexed as male or female for the majority of the time. The explorer compiling the report nevertheless chooses to use masculine pronouns for the Gethenians: "I must say 'he', for the same reasons as we used the masculine pronoun in referring to a transcendent god: it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine" (76). The use of pronouns in the novel has been central to debates, which I address in what follows, about the extent to which the text questions a binary model of sex and gender that positions men as superior to women. I argue, however, that the question of *which* third-person pronoun is most appropriate for Gethenians must be addressed together with the role of the first-person I in the novel, as the relationship between a subject (the human I) and an object (the alien read as 'he'), which is gradually challenged and subverted over the course of the text, is key in assessing the stakes and the effects of misgendering the aliens.

[78] Despite the unpredictability of which 'role' a Gethenian would take in sexual encounters, this model still largely relies on a heteronormative and reproductive understanding of sex. This is something about which Le Guin has shown awareness. The report on the sex of Gethenians in this novel includes a parenthetical observation stating that "If there are exceptions, resulting in kemmer-partners of the same sex, they are so rare as to be ignored" (*Darkness*, 73). However, in 'Coming of Age in Kharide' (1995) a short story set on Gethen, the narrator's sex – though triggered by its 'opposite' during kemmer – does not prevent them from sexual intimacy with others that have assumed the same sex.

All narrators in the novel use masculine pronouns to refer to all Gethenians. Some critics have viewed the choice of using an available binary pronoun as a sign of reliance "on traditional (primarily realistic) narrative conventions" and a rejection of "the possibility of creating a 'new language'" (Pennington, 351). Le Guin's essay 'Is Gender Necessary?' addresses this choice by stating a refusal to "mangle English by inventing a pronoun for 'he/she'" (15).[79] In the commentary featured in the 'Redux' version of the essay, however, she notes that this refusal *"collapsed, utterly, within a couple of years more"*: Le Guin now expresses a dislike of the *"so-called generic pronoun he/him/his"* that has surpassed, since the novel's publication, her dislike for *"invented pronouns"* (15; emphasis in original). With this statement, she acknowledges a new understanding of how 'he/him' is not in fact a neutral choice: *"the pronouns I used shaped, directed, controlled my own thinking"* (15; emphasis in original). Le Guin's ongoing negotiation over whether to 'invent' pronouns reveals a growing understanding that language shapes the visibility and the intelligibility of gender identity. Reading this choice in a context that has seen the normalisation of pronouns for non-binary identities as well as an increased attention to the ethics of gendering and misgendering clearly refocuses this issue as being connected to the right of self-determination of gender-variant subjects. What I ask, however, is whether possibilities for trans-inhabitation can be read in the novel *despite* its use of the masculine pronoun, and especially through the use of the pronoun I. In this narrative, unreliable

[79] This essay first appeared in McIntyre and Anderson's anthology *Aurora*, and three years later it was included in a collection of Le Guin's essays, *The Language of the Night* (1979). The version I quote from, entitled 'Is Gender Necessary? Redux' is included in another essay collection, *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989). This last version features a commentary on the original text by its author in bracketed italics. In the preface to the essay, Le Guin states that, already in 1979, she was "getting uncomfortable with some of the statements" ('Redux', 7) made in the 1976 version, and that the fact that this "discomfort became plain disagreement" is what leads her to make the parenthetical additions in the 'Redux' edition (7). The ongoing reflection on pronouns that I outline here leads Le Guin to try different ways of gendering Gethenians in other short stories set on this world. For instance, 'The Winter's King' (1975) is a revised version of a story that was published just before *The Left Hand of Darkness* and takes place in the same world, using 'he/him' pronouns for the aliens. In the 1975 version, Le Guin has chosen to change all the pronouns to 'she/her' as a way to "redress that injustice slightly" ('Winter's King', 85). However, she still maintains that this is an imperfect solution, because "the exclusion of the feminine (she) and the neuter (it) from the generic/masculine (he) makes the use of either of them more specific, more unjust, than the use of 'he'" (85). In 'Coming of Age in Kharide', the first-person narrator self-reflexively picks either 'he/him' or 'she/her' pronouns whenever a new character is introduced. While Le Guin never ultimately 'invents new pronouns', other feminist science fiction texts do: for instance, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) uses the non-binary 'person/per'. Approaches by trans writers vary. Within the *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* collection, whenever a non-binary character is referred to, many text simply use 'they/them'. Some stories, instead, experiment with language and gender in a more overt manner: in Sybil Lamb's 'Cybervania', the focal character uses "-" as a gender pronoun (205), and the text includes phrases like "a pic of '-'self" (209). Pronoun use is one of the ways – though I argue that it is not the only way – in which trans-inhabitation of social categories can be conveyed.

narration by the human protagonist is extensively employed to question his binary outlook, and therefore the use of masculine pronouns appears as a manifestation of his own bias. Genly's own surname, Ai, is a homophone of both I and eye. All three – the character himself, his subjectivity and voice, and his role as observer – undergo a transformation as proximity with the Gethenians increases. I argue that, as Genly's biases are challenged, his desire to open himself up to a connection with the otherness of the aliens – beyond his own reading of them as 'men' (or sometimes 'women') – can be read as a form of trans-inhabitation.

Despite Genly's progressive awareness that the aliens are not men or women in the way that he conceives of these terms, the novel raises questions about the limitations of his capacity for changing his way of reading gender. These limitations never quite cease to exist, but they are nonetheless exposed, in a way that may be used to imagine how Genly's growing understanding of the Gethenian system of thought might be taken further. As Genly's initial biases are revealed through his unreliable narration and through eventual character progression, chapters narrated by an *alien I* also help highlight the human's blind spots. The novel's other protagonist, Estraven – an initially mistrusted political ally with whom Genly ends up forming a bond that he calls "love" (Le Guin, *Darkness*, 203) – speaks in the first person in several chapters. Estraven's chapters interrupt Genly's narration together with other kinds of narratives, such as other explorers' reports or Gethenian folk tales with no clear narrator. The novel indeed appears to be a collection of documents gathered for the purpose of giving a comprehensive account of Genly's mission, compiled presumably by himself as the text begins with his first-person voice stating that the story is "not all mine, not told by me alone" (1). Therefore, while the *alien I* does speak, they do so from within the framing of the human's narrative, with Genly possibly acting as editor and translator: even though this is not made explicit when it comes to Estraven's chapters, the inserting of a footnote by Genly in one of the other chapters not narrated by him betrays his presence there (18). The status of Estraven's narration as potentially translated or edited recalls the power imbalance that I have discussed between the gender-variant subject narrating their own story and the authorising preface of the medical professional in early trans narratives. Genly's ultimate ownership of the narrative of *The Left Hand of Darkness* limits the potential of Estraven's narration to resist the human's own reading of them.

The alien is also a fairly disembodied narrator, in the way I have discussed is the case with the *fluid I*: Estraven's sexed body (and most other Gethenians' bodies) are never the object of their narrative, leaving readers to 'see' the aliens almost exclusively through the eyes of Genly. Estraven's chapters do not offer a phenomenological experience of trans-inhabitation of human gender categories, partly because these categories are of no concern to them. For this reason, I focus mainly on Genly's 'I' and on his experiences or attempts at tans-inhabitation. Ultimately, Genly sees trans-inhabitation as the Genethians' mode of embodiment *and* as an experience he both fears and desires for himself. This trans-inhabitation consists in the shifting sexed embodiment of the aliens (the 'journey' sense of the term, even though the journey is not here a unidirectional and definitive path from man to woman or vice versa) as well as in their ability to connect and partially merge with others through forms of meditation (the 'crossing boundaries' sense and the 'inhabiting different spaces at once' sense). Genly is, like Estraven, another mostly disembodied narrator, or at least one who attempts, through the differential embodiment I have discussed in the previous chapter, to keep their own body out of sight while other bodies are the focus of the narrative. The trans-inhabiting capacity that Genly sees in the aliens (their mutability, their crossing category boundaries) does not come across through the presentation of Estraven's direct perspective, but through Genly's own inability to access this perspective. When I do address Estraven's narration, then, it is to argue that it *interrupts* the human's narration: for this reason, the novel's *alien I* is still crucial in the text as it participates in challenging the primacy of Genly's position.

The use of pronouns to read the Gethenians according to Genly's own system of binary gender can be seen as a way to reduce and control their mutability and their capacity for crossing category boundaries. Genly's narrating-I shows some awareness of this as he exposes his past self's biases and the resulting inability to understand the aliens in their own terms. He admits that the experiencing-I at the start of the novel, after two years of living on Gethen, is "still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes" (10). Genly describes his attempts at doing so as taking "the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing *him* into those categories so irrelevant to *his* nature and so essential to my own" (10; emphasis added). Genly's awareness of his limitations here goes hand in hand with the continued encoding

of those limitations in language. He recognises that Gethenians have their own 'eyes' but admits to not being able to look 'through them' himself, and this is confirmed by his use of pronouns. The use of pronouns is therefore explicitly linked to a situated visual epistemology: other 'Is' (eyes) might be able to see the Gethenians as other than men or women, but Genly('s) cannot. However, because those pronouns are also used in Estraven's narration – again, presumably because it is translated – the aliens' own 'Is' (eyes) are never quite given the same opportunity to articulate their gaze in language. Despite this, the fact that the novel sets up the limitations of Genly's gaze and voice as an explicit theme implies that another way of seeing that might lead to an adequate understanding of the non-binary identities of the aliens *is* possible.

Genly's efforts in making the inhabitants of the new planet intelligible by using his own categories of binary and fixed gender are shown as limited not least because they have contradictory results from the start. The first few pages of the novel introduce the first Gethenian character – Estraven – as 'he'. When it comes to describing them, Genly almost appears to have trapped himself into a binary linguistic choice by accident. Calling the alien a man, he explains: "*man* I must say, having said *he* and *his*" (4; emphasis in original). The linguistic choice turns out to be motivated by Genly's habit of reading appearance, behaviour, and social roles as gendered. He justifies the use of masculine pronouns for Estraven because the alien has "power" and "authority" (6). Conversely, the owner of his lodgings is referred to as his "landlady" owing to their "fat buttocks", their "soft face" and their "prying, spying, ignoble, kindly nature (39).[80] Here, embodied appearance and character traits are enlisted as clues to determine binary gender, which is also assumed to be connected with a reproductive role: Genly is surprised upon learning that the individual he calls his landlady has not borne any children but has instead "sired four" (39). The inadequacy of reading gender as binary, fixed and made up of coherent sets of cues is repeatedly shown in the novel, especially as any gendering of a Gethenian as female clashes with the choice of using 'man' and 'he/him' pronouns to refer to them, creating linguistic contradictions such as "my landlady, a voluble man" (38). Genly's unreliability as a narrator when it comes to describing the aliens leaves readers to fill in

[80] Viewing gender as a strict binary seems to go hand in hand, in Genly's perspective, with the subordination and devaluation of women. This shows that the text can be understood as feminist science fiction, as it exposes 'patriarchal myths' inherent in the male protagonist's perspective.

the gaps and imagine how they might be read instead. At the same time, the apparent contradictions of identities like that of the "landlady, a voluble man" (38) can themselves resonate with readers' experience of their own gender as multiple.

Genly's role as an explorer, his reliance on sight and his initially limited efforts to understand the planet's inhabitants 'through their own eyes' can be read as a critique of colonialism. Mona Fayad reads the novel as a challenge to colonialist anthropological practices that result in "the production of a race which is an inferior 'auto-copy'" of that of the coloniser/observer (67). Indeed, Genly can only perceive the Gethenians' embodiment as a sort of (ill-fitting) 'copy' of his own. His claims to mastery over the other through the sight of the explorer are undermined over the course of the novel both by the increasingly obvious limitations of his gaze and by moments when he risks losing his status as the subject of sight. The possibility of him being observed in turn shows his vulnerability as embodied character in the novel. Indeed, while Estraven's narration does not provide an entry point into the Gethenian's own experience of sexed embodiment, it can at least turn the gaze back on Genly. The alien notes that "[t]here is a frailty about him" as he is "unprotected, exposed, vulnerable, even to his sexual organ which he must carry always outside himself" (Le Guin, *Darkness*, 185). Genly's body becomes the object of a gaze that sees it as exceptional, and especially as exceptionally vulnerable to being seen, subverting the dynamic by which the non-human, non-binary and generally non-hegemonic subjects would become spectacle as they are the most 'visible'. Exposed to sight and in increasing physical proximity with the alien other, Genly loses some of the control of the scientific and impartial observer. As he loses this control and shifts from the position of subject to that of object of sight – which is accompanied by the recurring interruption of his narrative voice – the strict separation between the human and the aliens is called into question.

Not only observing the other, but especially observing the other as gender-variant, raises questions about the connections between colonialist discourse and the exoticisaton of subjects whose gender is seen as different. Katrina Roen documents instances of anthropological research that, in the manner of the encounter between Genly and the Gethenians, shows "non-western" social organisations as being "accommodated through available gender roles", for example by using terms like transsexual or transgender,

which are developed in medical, theoretical and activist Anglo-American discourses, to describe local genders that are other than male or female (254). This may happen especially at the expense of experiences that do not fit into the canonical trans narratives that I have been discussing. Introducing an issue of *TSQ* on *Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary*, Aizura *et al*. draw attention to the questions of first-person voice and subjective gaze that are raised at the intersection of trans studies and anti-colonial discourse:

> We thought it would be important to center our writing on the "I" (or the "eye"), to turn attention back toward the one writing or observing from a particular perspective, not in the manner of scientific authority (with its unvoiced I and unseen eye), not as social scientists who erase the other in the act of writing the Other, but rather to authorize knowledge of the marginalized and to promote the value of the I, and the eye, of those speaking from marginality. (309)

A confrontation of voices (Is) and gazes (eyes) is described here as characterising the encounter between the colonised and gendered other and the colonialist and scientific discourse that seeks to describe them. The authors highlight how speaking in the first person can be a way of enacting a detachment of the self that subordinates the object of observation through a supposedly impartial gaze, but it can also enable a self-determining discourse for marginalised subjects. This confrontation of gazes can be linked to the 'glance' into unfamiliar sets of norms that Suvin describes as pertaining to science fiction as a genre.

Genly's confrontation with unfamiliar norms causes his glance (eye) as well as his self (I) to become decentred. Genly jokes about "abandoning my 'I'" (Le Guin, *Darkness*, 46) when he is addressed by his first name (instead of by Ai) in his visit to the Gethenian spiritual order of the Handdara, which he temporarily joins to learn about their practice of foretelling. The foretelling ritual turns out to lend an actual significance to Genly's joke, as he experiences a loss of self. The ritual involves a form of meditation during which all participants feel connected with one another and temporarily abandon a sense of self-identity. Genly reports anxiety when confronted with this: "I was made very uneasy by […] the sense of being drawn in […] But when I set up a barrier, it was worse. I felt cut off and cowered inside my own mind" (53). The observer here can no longer just be an observer: his isolation "inside his own mind" feels wrong. Engaging with the Genethians

in their own terms requires an exposure to the other, and at this point Genly finds himself trans-inhabiting a 'barrier' – he is unable to be fully 'drawn in', but equally unable to find relief in being back to being 'cut off'. Moreover, during the ritual he hallucinates "great gaping pits with ragged lips, vaginas, wounds, hellmouths" (53). This ambiguous reference, which is not explored further, suggests that Genly's uneasiness is ultimately related to the aliens' sexed embodiment; this is also indicated by the presence of a participant in kemmer, as well as by how the ceremony officiant suddenly appears to the narrator as "a woman" (53). It is implied that sexual tension between the participants, including Genly, is instrumental in generating the visions as well as the sense of connectedness between bodies that narrator experiences. His reaction here begins to hint at how Genly not only is made uneasy by the mutable gender and ambiguous sexuality of the aliens, but that part of this uneasiness is caused by his desire to be closer to them in a way that compromises his 'objective' distance.

Genly continues to lose the control he has over his bodily autonomy and his degree of proximity to the aliens when he is imprisoned by one of the Gethenian governments, who sees him as a threat, and transported to a labour camp. His gendering of the aliens based on visual cues continues to be exposed as arbitrary and contradictory in this section of the novel: he reports that the camp guards appear "*to my eyes* effeminate – not in the sense of delicacy, etc., but in just the opposite sense: a gross, bland fleshiness, a bovinity without point or edge" (143; emphasis added). Rather than a coherent system of gendered differences, Genly's binary lens at this point mainly reveals an anxiety about passivity. This passivity is coded as feminine and seen as a threat to his masculine subjectivity, which is instead predicated on control over his own body and those of others. The fear of passivity becomes reality as Genly is drugged and questioned in long sessions of which he remembers nothing and finally becomes too weak to work and must spend all day lying down. His own narrative stops when he is no longer conscious, and a chapter in Estraven's voice takes over with an account of how they rescue him from the camp. Ai's abilities as the 'seer' and narrator in this section of the novel fail as his memory initially shows gaps and as, eventually, the experiencing-I is unconscious and no longer able to retain his own viewpoint. In the final part of the novel, Genly and Estraven spend weeks crossing a deserted glacier together in order to escape from their political enemies. As the human spends night after night with the Gethenian in a small tent, his horror of

otherness and gender-variant embodiment begins to belie attraction, and, just as in the foretelling ritual, he trans-inhabits the boundary between fear of being drawn outside himself and of being excluded.

At the beginning of the journey on the glacier, Genly is surprised and angered at Estraven's suggestion that they use surnames to address each other. Considering that his surname is Ai and that, when joining the Handdara, he has joked about 'losing his I', the desire to not be 'Ai' with Estraven could be read as a desire to cling less firmly to his sense of self (perhaps to be a 'we' instead). As a reaction to being denied closeness, he reports: "I locked into my virility", as the aliens – who are "neither man nor woman", "metamorphosing under the hand's touch" – are "no flesh of mine, no friends" (173). The description of 'locking into his virility' indicates focalisation through the narrating-I, as Genly, in hindsight, interprets his past self's reaction as entrenchment in his masculine identity as a means for detachment from others. Genly's fear of, as well as his attraction to, the aliens is very much linked here to the mutability of their sexed embodiment: if he reaffirms his own inhabitation of a whole, bounded and well-defined gender category (his 'virility'), he can distance himself from the possibility of trans-inhabitation. The ability of the Gethenians to 'metamorphose' under the hand's touch leads him to want to separate his 'flesh' from theirs, away from that transformative touch. Touch could indeed become the point at which Genly's limitation, the barrier between himself and the gender-variant other, might be traversed. As such, touch is ostensibly avoided, as Genly clarifies that he and Estraven do not "meet sexually" (202). However, glimpses of physical intimacy appear through the narrator's reporting of events. Genly remarks that, one day, "his eye fr[eezes] shut" and Estraven "thaw[s] it open with breath and tongue" (198). Genly's failure of sight and his physical connection with the alien are here tellingly entwined as indicating a relationship of closeness and care, and readers are offered a fragment of possibility that the human and the non-human, the observer and the observed, the supposedly fixed gender and the mutable gender might meet – that the autonomy of Ai, I and eye might be challenged. Through the use of 'he/him' pronouns, Genly's first person narration attempts to reduce and fix the mutability of the aliens' bodies. However, his own ambivalent wish to trans-inhabit the boundary between them and himself shows that this is not a desirable solution, because it disavows the full range of possible embodied realities that Genly can not only observe, but also experience.

Trans-inhabiting 'I' and 'it': Octavia Butler's Ooloi

The meeting between human and non-human, binary and non-binary, mutable and fixed embodiment that is glimpsed in *The Left Hand of Darkness* is realised more explicitly in Butler's *Imago*. This is partly linked to the first-person narration of a non-binary character, through which a direct experience of trans-inhabitation is conveyed. The posthumanist challenge to inter- and intra-species hierarchies and to the centrality of the human male coloniser therefore emerges by giving full articulation to the 'glance' of the gender-variant and non-human subject. *Imago*'s narrator, Jodhas, is the offspring of a hybrid alien/human family, born a few decades after the aliens – the Oankali – have rescued human survivors from after a nuclear disaster on Earth with the view of forming a genetically blended species with them.[81] The hybrid families are an expanded version of traditional Oankali families: while the latter have a male, a female and an ooloi parent, the former have a human male, human female, Oankali male, Oankali female and Oankali ooloi parent. The role of the ooloi in the trilogy is to disrupt binary couplings and oppositions. As a species, the Oankali have more experience than the humans with what I call trans-inhabitation. By touching with their tentacles, they are able to enter into the human (as well as each other's) bodies and to manipulate their genes – therefore literally

[81] The Oankali's 'rescue' is ambiguously characterised as colonisation, which leads critics like Nolan Belk to describe the trilogy as "an inseparable blending of dystopia-utopia" (384). Humans are offered clear benefits by the Oankali, such as a lifestyle that is in harmony with the natural environment, cures for many diseases, and non-hierarchical and non-violent social models. However, humans are (for the most part, and at least in the first novel of the trilogy) not given any choice but to form hybrid families with the aliens, and are sterilised if they resist. *Dawn*, the first novel, focuses on Jodhas's human mother Lilith, a black American woman who is initially held captive by the Oankali because she has been selected as the first 'mother' of the new hybrid species. The limitation of Lilith's freedom and the ambiguous notion of choice that exists generally in relations between humans and Oankali – as ooloi can release chemicals that make them virtually irresistible to humans – has lead critics like Cathy Peppers to read Lilith's relationship with the aliens with whom she eventually forms a family as a "re-creation of the black woman's 'choice' under slavery" (50). Moreover, *Dawn* references the "violent legacies of biology and medicine" when describing the Oankali taking samples of Lilith's cells without her consent, echoing a history of "anti-Black medical experimentation in Western science" (Van Engen, 750). While the ways in which the *Xenogenesis* trilogy engages with legacies of colonialism and racial violence are key to a full understanding of the text, I choose here to focus on what the Oankali gender system can offer in terms of models for trans-inhabitation. Finding value in Oankali societies is made possible by how the novel clearly presents them as being inclusive and open to difference. In fact, most humans' resistance to what they see as oppression from the Oankali is represented as stemming from a fear of the aliens' bodily difference and a resentment at being displaced from a position of power. As Aparajita Nanda argues, humans in the trilogy "cannot be sympathized with completely as helpless victims because of their discriminatory behaviour towards difference as well as a hierarchical, violent mind frame" (122). Some important aspects of the trilogy remain beyond the scope of my discussion as I focus on what the Oankali offer humans in terms of respect and understanding of bodily difference and alternatives to violent hierarchies.

making humans "metamorphos[e] under the hand's touch", to use Genly's expression for Gethenian mutability (Le Guin, *Darkness*, 173). As ooloi tap into the nervous systems of others, which they do every time they 'work' on their bodies to heal them or collect information about them, they share every sensation felt by the other. Here, I focus on how the Oankali are able to traverse spatial boundaries between their bodies and the bodies of others, as well as on the temporalities of their embodiments.

Regardless of their sex, all Oankali experience a metamorphosis during which they transform from non-sexed children to sexed adults. I have noted that Van Engen reads Butler's trilogy as representing "gender transition" as a normalised, rather than marginalised, experience (752). *Imago* can indeed partly be read as a re-narration of transition. The title of the novel refers to the latest stage in insect metamorphosis, and the text explicitly addresses a temporality of transformation. Jodhas experiences a metamorphosis the result of which is to determine sex, and this metamorphosis is the inciting event of the novel. Additionally, Jodhas becomes ooloi (instead of male or female), and this outcome marks a particular stage in the development of the hybrid species: so far, only male and female children have been born of human/Oankali families, and Jodhas's change is unexpected and provokes anxiety in the community. Human/Oankali children have enhanced abilities compared to their single-species counterparts, and it is unclear what abilities a hybrid ooloi will have. Both the individual's metamorphosis and the moment in which it occurs in the development of a human/Oankali hybrid species inaugurate therefore a phase of unruly middle with an unknown end, which is particularly apt for narrating modes of trans-inhabitation that emphasise the mutability of identity and alternatives to a fixed final embodiment. *Imago*, then, re-narrates canonical trans temporalities by imagining sex variance, as well as a sort of 'sex change', as encoded in the biological functioning of a species, but resulting – in the case of Jodhas – in an identity that is other than male and female, and that has few predictable characteristics. While the novel, again, does not include the possibility of these modes of embodiment as a reality for *humans*, it still provides some model for more inclusive notions of gender identity.

Jodhas's capacity for trans-inhabitation is connected in the novel with the use of the pronoun 'it'. This is the third-person pronoun used in the trilogy to designate ooloi and

indicate a gender that is other than male or female. Humans in the novel are shown to continually misunderstand this pronoun – which the Oankali themselves indicate to English speakers as the most appropriate one. For instance, those who are hostile to the aliens embrace the use of the pronoun 'it' *because of*, and not despite, its derogatory connotations.[82] However, *Imago* questions whether this pronoun should carry the negative meaning that the humans attribute to it. Non-human beings ranging from the novel's narrator to the organic substance that forms the environment for Oankali settlements are both named (and thereby individuated as 'subjects') *and* referred to as 'it', creating a continuum between living entities rather than a categorical distinction – a continuum which allows for trans-inhabitation. Jodhas's family's environment has a proper name, Lo, and it is a living, mutating entity that forms the soil, buildings and furniture of their village. For Jodhas, Lo is "parent, sibling, home"; it is referred to as 'it' but is "self-aware" and communicates with its inhabitants through touch (O. Butler, 554). The narrator often refers to its own body as an 'it', one that is shown to have as much agency as an 'I'. The ooloi's organ for genetic storage and manipulation, yashi, is a living entity with a will of its own, whose needs are regarded on the same level as those of the 'I'. The equality between the I of Jodhas and the it of yashi is shown in parallel constructions such as "Any perception of new living things attracted *it* and distracted *me*" (701; emphasis added). This egalitarian relationship between entities referred to as 'it' resonates with Stryker's declaration of kinship with "non-human material Being"; she in fact seems to suggest that "being called 'it'" and its association with "the lack or loss of superior personhood" can be reclaimed as an empowering connection with other "creatures" ('Frankenstein', 240). The pronoun 'it', in *Imago*, refers to a range of beings, all alive, aware of their needs, and cared for despite their different degrees of sentience: the organic substance of Lo; the yashi organ; Jodhas itself.

Giving 'voice' to what is other than I – including to what is sometimes 'it' – is also a central function of Jodhas as narrator. This is linked to its role in the species. As an ooloi, once it reaches maturity, it is entrusted with inheriting the genetic information of all the beings that its ooloi parent and ancestors have encountered. The narrator describes the

[82] When Jodhas's human mother, at the beginning of the trilogy, is first introduced to an ooloi and is repulsed by its non-human appearance, she takes "pleasure in the knowledge that the Oankali themselves used the neuter pronoun in referring to the ooloi" as "[s]ome things deserved to be called 'it'" (O. Butler, 49).

experience as "having billions of strangers screaming from inside you for your own individual attention" (O. Butler, 694).[83] At the end of the novel, therefore, the *alien I* is inhabited by billions of non-Is. Even before acquiring this information, because of its ability to 'feel through' the bodies of others (and making them feel through its own) by tapping into their nervous systems, Jodhas's narrating-I can focalise not only through its own experiencing-I, but through other characters, whose perceptions it can describe with the same degree of certainty. For instance, as the narrator describes an encounter with a human woman, it reports: "she discovered that if she touched me now with her hand, she felt the touch as though on her own skin, felt pleasure and discomfort just as she made me feel" (634). Jodhas can say 'she felt' as it would say 'I felt' because it has direct experience of this sensation. In addition to containing or temporarily inhabiting others, Jodhas, like all Oankali, also has the ability to perfectly record its perceptions even when it is unconscious. For instance, even when the experiencing-I is asleep, the narrating-I is able to report – as if it was overheard – a conversation between its mother and other humans expressing a frank ambivalence toward their relationship with the Oankali (670). Because of Jodhas's ability to objectively know and record others, this human ambivalence and resistance to hybridisation is given voice. In the novel, it coexists with the Oankali's desire to overcome this resistance – which is Jodhas's own viewpoint – without being overridden by it.

The narrator's capacity for respecting and empathising with different viewpoints without erasing them is the result of the aliens' view of the individual as well as the social body as made up of single agencies between which an imperfect consensus should be sought. Indeed, the Oankali, and those like Jodhas who are 'both' species, have an easier time than humans conceiving of internally contradictory systems. Jodhas explains that the ooloi's capacity to read (with more than one sense) a multiplicity of conflicting bodily cues leads them to treat "individuals as […] groups of beings" (553). Like with their own yashi, they do not feel the need to resolve the multiplicity of 'its' that make up an individual into an 'I', and take seriously the needs and desires of these 'its'. For instance, Jodhas describes a new character's body as an 'it' with its own agency, reading a narrative of its identity independent from the narrative that the woman has provided for herself: "Not only had

[83] Though I have no scope to explore the use of 'you' here, it is worth noting how the I attempts to draw in narratees as other beings with whom to share experiences.

it done hard work, it was probably comfortable doing hard work. It liked to move quickly and eat frequently. It was hungry now" (579). The Oankali's, and especially the ooloi's, capacity for trans-inhabitation is therefore linked to their ability to maintain multiplicity in tension without resolving it into unity. I have noted that trans-inhabitation can be conceived of as containing (or being contained in) multiple wholes or as being between wholes, not neatly separating off what is other, what is past, what is outside – and finding there a position from which to speak. The ooloi's gender is similarly characterised by a capacity for mixing and containing multiplicities. However, it is not a mix of male and female: indeed, by having a non-binary gender that is not a combination of conventional male and female characteristics, ooloi ultimately question what defines gender in the first place.

The olooi's mode of trans-inhabitation fits Getsy's description of "trans capacity", which I have used as a starting point to describe gender-variant embodiment: a way of making visible genders that are "mutable, successive, and multiple" (47). I have so far discussed Jodhas's ability to be 'multiple' – inhabiting and being inhabited by various Is and 'its' – and I have clarified how metamorphoses make all Oankali genders 'successive'. The fact that ooloi go through two metamorphoses, and that the majority of the narrative of *Imago* takes place between Jodhas's first and second one, marks the ooloi as a gender that is particularly characterised by temporalities of progression and change. Jodhas's 'middle' stage is especially marked by the third characteristic of trans capacity, mutability. This mutability, just like successiveness and multiplicity, is shown to be difficult for humans to understand. This seems to be the case partly because their reliance on a visual epistemology (the same one that is attempted by Genly in the *Left Hand of Darkness* as a way of knowing others) 'misreads' the aliens. From the start of the novel, Jodhas reports that it "looks" to others both particularly "male" (O. Butler, 536) and particularly "human" (528), the text soon revealing that it is neither. Whatever visible characteristics are read as confirming its 'maleness' are in fact, somewhat paradoxically, only present during its unsexed childhood, seemingly predicting a future sex but actually reported as changing after metamorphosis. The novel therefore can be read as re-narrating (*i.e.* both reproducing and challenging in its temporality) a notion of a true sex that is 'revealed' at a climactic point in the narrative. The clues that humans use to predict Jodhas's future sex fail partly because this turns out to be neither male nor female, but mainly because they

underestimate the alien's capacity for transformation. In the same way, when individuals are assigned gender at birth, the normative expectation is that this will not change (as well as that it will be either male or female).

Like its 'maleness', Jodhas's human appearance pre-metamorphosis – implied to be caused by the absence of Oankali tentacles and the pair of sensory arms that adult ooloi develop – is temporary and misleading: the narrator in fact corrects a human's reading of itself as looking "human" by replying: "I look unfinished" (528). This self-assessment confirms Jodhas's status in the novel as inhabiting a dangerous 'middle', which is viewed with anxiety by others because of its unknowable end – to use Roof's definition of the narrative middle, Jodhas's body pre-metamorphosis is "the scene for doubt, risk, and uncertainty" (xxxiv). With Jodhas's first metamorphosis, which occurs at the beginning of the text, its embodiment is quickly proven to be successive, multiple and mutable despite the visual cues that caused humans not to view it as such. Its ooloi parent confirms that Jodhas is becoming ooloi: "You were never male, no matter how you looked" (536). The narrating-I reflects: "All my life, I had been referred to as 'he'" (536). For this reason, it has "never thought about being anything else" (537). The community's misgendering of Jodhas prior to this moment can therefore be read as a re-narration of a narrative of gender variance, especially as Jodhas's gender is revealed to be other than the one assigned to it in childhood on the basis of anatomical characteristics observed by humans and accommodated into their own framework of intelligibility. The way that Jodhas is confirmed as not being male is instead through a *non-visual* reading by its ooloi parent, who "slip[s]" its sensory tentacles, Jodhas reports, "through my flesh" (535). This alien mode of knowing, more effective than seeing, prefigures the trans-inhabitation of bodies that will come to characterise Jodhas's own experience.

While Jodhas knows that the Oankali are able to perceive its identity through this touching, it maintains an awareness that humans rely on visual cues. Therefore, after its first metamorphosis, it begins to – sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously – change its shape when it wants to attract them. After Jodhas has spent some time with a human it likes, one of its parent notes: "Your body has been striving to please her. You're more brown now – less grey" (588). Very soon after, a man to whom Jodhas is attracted is surprised upon learning that it is an ooloi because, he remarks, it "appear[s] to be a

woman" (598). The text constructs this statement as somewhat of a surprise for readers too, since Jodhas's masculine appearance, though revealed to be misleading, has not been indicated to have changed up until this point, and there has been no warning from the first-person narrator that its body was adapting to the new human's desire. Descriptions of the I's embodied appearance instead are often conveyed through dialogue, mostly with humans who have noticed visible changes in its body. The effect is that Jodhas's identity remains unified through its narrative voice while its outward appearance changes, arguably with the result of not unsettling readers in the same way as human characters are unsettled in the novel. As it becomes clear that Jodhas can exercise some control over what its body looks like, its human mother Lilith expresses disapproval when it fails to exercise this control. "'I wish you could see yourself through *my eyes*," she says, "[d]eformity is as bad as illness" (592; emphasis added). Humans in the text are continually suspicious of the aliens' ability to manipulate their own bodies and the bodies of others, as they fear that a change of embodiment will entail a loss of self. They see a visual change of 'form' as a de-forming, a trans-inhabitation between bounded bodies or bounded categories (male/female, human/non-human) as a loss of 'inhabitation' of anything that would make one an 'I'. The novel's *alien I*, however, is able remain an I despite containing others, temporarily being others, and mixing with others.

The novel indeed posits the complete loss of an I through unrestrained mutability as an undesirable status. This is what ultimately makes Jodhas's *alien I* a viable position from which to speak and guarantees that the ending somehow still secures identity, which I have argued is necessary for ensuring a liveable subjectivity. What characterises trans-inhabitation, and the way in which gender-variant subjects describe their embodiment, is indeed not only the movement of 'trans' but the rootedness of 'inhabitation'. In the passage from *Paul Takes the Form* with which I have opened the chapter, Paul is in fact initially uneasy at seeing Robin become him, as he thinks that he may have somehow lost his own identity in the process. In *Imago*, the dangers of unrestrained shapeshifting are represented by Jodhas's sibling Aaor, also an ooloi, but one who is having more difficulties embodying itself. The novel makes clear that the ooloi's ability to touch, heal, mix with, and feel through the bodies of others is not only a benefit of their sex but a necessity. Soon after its first metamorphosis, Jodhas realises that it needs to find mates to bond with in order to secure its wellbeing. When Aaor fails to do the same, its body begins to change

and break down into a "less and less complex" form (682). The ease with which ooloi can traverse boundaries between species (Aaor shifts from vertebrate to invertebrate) carries the risk of loss of an I: if continuing to transform into simpler and simpler organisms, Jodhas reports, "Aaor as an individual would be gone" (682). The way to halt this dissolution of the self is not to isolate oneself as a way to secure the boundaries of the I, but it is to connect to others: indeed, Jodhas is at its strongest and most secure when it and its mates are "utterly submerged in one another" (642) or able to "drown in one another" (679), and Aaor will similarly need to find mates. In the novel, the way to balance the mutability and the crossing of boundaries of the 'trans' side of trans-inhabitation is the rootedness of an 'inhabitation'; as this rootedness, for ooloi, is to be found in a connection with what is not self, it is precisely the movement of trans that allows for the stability of inhabitation.

Despite the fact that the ooloi's embodiment as mutable, successive and multiple is not necessarily related to any masculinity or femininity as understood by humans, the hostility that human characters display toward them is linked to the challenge they pose to this binary. As the ooloi are misgendered by humans, they are seen as male or female according to other characters' projected desires and fears (themselves rooted in a heteronormative system). The first man that Jodhas wants to touch recoils from it as he has heard of the ooloi as those aliens who "take men as though they were women" (599). The ooloi's ability to penetrate the flesh of others through their sensory tentacles and to manipulate their bodies to feel pleasure is understood as putting their partners in a position of passivity that is coded as feminine. At the same time, Jodhas describes another human's desire for it as desire for a woman, as the man reaches for Jodhas "probably in the same way he reache[s] out for his human mate when he [is] especially eager for her" (721). Ooloi are defined in the novel by their power to change themselves and others, to traverse their bodily boundaries and to be especially desirable and desiring of contact. In the same way as Genly's attempt to fit Gethenians into a system of gender as binary and fixed creates contradictions and paradoxes, *Imago*'s humans fail at pinning down the ooloi in this way. At the same time, in order to attract them, Jodhas inhabits bodies that are at least partly recognisably gendered. Jodhas's sexual encounters with humans, characterised by its ability to feel what they are feeling, give way to specifically embodied trans-inhabitations, for instance when it "remember[s] what it was like to have breasts"

while a woman is taking its "hand and put[ting] it on her breasts" (635). The narrator – who throughout the novel trans-inhabits I and it, mind and body – simultaneously experiences in sexual contact a past and present embodiment, as well as its own and the other's embodiment. This fluid and complex corporeality is something that humans (at least as they are imagined by Butler) are not (yet) able to fully understand or achieve themselves.

Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Re-narrating the Other's Gaze in Trans Sci-Fi

Many short stories in Plett and Fitzpatrick's collection *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* can be read as re-narrations of the models that I have discussed so far: binary gender systems imposed through a colonising gaze, the ability of various species to traverse the boundaries of their own bodies, language choices (like pronouns) made to negotiate familiar and unfamiliar worlds. I focus here on three stories that have a first-person narrator and present an encounter between humans and alien species, conveying models of embodiment that are close to what I have called trans-inhabitation: 'What Cheer' by RJ Edwards, 'Notes from a Hunter Boy: As Filed by Girtrude the Librarian' by Beckett K. Bauer, and 'Heat Death of Western Human Arrogance' by M Téllez. In the 'Afterword' to the collection, Plett and Fitzpatrick clarify their aims for soliciting short stories by trans writers: "For a long time, trans people have been treated in science fiction and fantasy as part of the spectacle […]. We hoped to challenge this by making a book of stories that […] might […] act as both an escape from the current world and a manual for your own possibilities" (440). The narrators of the stories I discuss live in a world where trans-inhabitation, gender variance and non-binary sex systems are part of their ordinary reality. Crucially, and differently from the texts I have discussed so far, these narrators who are 'at home' with gender variance are sometimes human, meaning that challenges to gender as binary and fixed do not necessary come from another world (as 'spectacle') but also from the realities of authors and readers. Through their narratives, the texts negotiate trans-inhabitation in a way that can act as a 'manual' for new 'possibilities' in the 'current world'.

Bauer's short story 'Notes from a Hunter Boy' is comprised of journal entries by Malkim, a boy who is growing up in a nomadic group of 'Hunters' on a planet other than Earth. While the narrative uses the words 'men' and 'women' as well as masculine and feminine

pronouns, it gradually becomes clear that these distinctions are not made on the basis of anatomy or reproductive roles. There are no 'women' in Malkim's group, and he mentions that individuals belonging to this category exclusively live in cities. At the same time, he discovers that some of the boys in his group can be "eggy" and some can be "semmy" (*i.e.* can either produce ova or semen) (Bauer, 195), some boys have "globs" (breasts) and others do not (179). In a short 'Translator's Note' that follows Malkim's journal entries, it is made clear that Malkim's society has "no concept of gender as we know it" (192). The translator has instead (somewhat arbitrarily) chosen 'men' and 'women' (and related pronouns) to translate a distinction so important for Malkim's people that it "exists in their *language*": the distinction "between people who live stationary lives [who are called 'women' in the text] and people who wander the wild [who are called 'men', and travel in groups like the one to which Malkim belongs]" (192; emphasis in original). If readers are looking for 'men' and 'women' in the text, therefore, they will find themselves misled: these terms, as the translator confirms, do not indicate what we may assume they do (anatomies, reproductive roles, gender presentation). Therefore, what appears to be a society that makes a strict distinction between two genders is revealed to not make this distinction at all: both wanderers ('men') and city dwellers ('women') have the same diverse range of bodies. The shifting of category boundaries that occurs in the story – apparent rigid distinctions collapsing and being displaced – and the way Malkim and the other boys view their bodies are instances of what I have called trans-inhabitation: a dwelling in, in between, and across identity spaces.

The translator in the text is shown, similarly to Genly in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, to have made linguistic adjustments to make an alien culture familiar. The effect is that the categories of the translator's world are themselves defamiliarised in the process of trying to fit the unfamiliar world into them. The story makes this intent fairly explicit, concluding with the words of the translator clarifying that, whereas readers may find the categorical distinction between city dwellers and wanderers arbitrary, Malkim's people "find our distinctions equally arbitrary" (192). The text is therefore decidedly aiming to question whether gender is a meaningful distinction at all. Before making this clear in the translator's note, the notion that there are individuals with penises capable of inseminating and individuals with vaginas and wombs capable of becoming pregnant is constructed as a surprise for the narrator. After Malkim discovers this, the bodies of his

friends begin to look unfamiliar as he ponders how to spot who can become pregnant and who cannot. He begins for the first time to see bodies as made up of "*parts*" instead of as "one solid thing" and he is uncertain about which of these parts should be used as clues and why – for instance, he notes that the presence of hair seems to sometimes be an indicator, but the colour of hair is not (187; emphasis in original). Instead of starting the narrative with a gaze that already reads bodily clues as part of a binary system of gender, the text shows a narrator who needs to actively learn this gaze. Ultimately, Malkim's viewpoint is not only that of an imagined *alien I* but also that of gender-variant individuals in 'our own' world who struggle with adjusting to cis gender categories.

The modes of embodiment that are possible in Malkim's society, and indeed for those readers who might identify with him, lend themselves to be described as trans-inhabitation, particularly because of the link between identity categories and ways of moving/dwelling that is made in the text. The discovery of an internal distinction within a category that appeared homogeneous (boys, formerly all the same but now revealed to be 'semmy' or 'eggy') prompts Malkim to challenge the larger distinction that he has been taught – the one between nomadic 'men' and city dwelling 'women'. He is initially inclined to map the semmy/eggy distinction onto the one that the text calls men/women (distinctions that, the translator insists, are not at all related to each other in Malkim's language): "How could I be a Hunter, or a Man at all, when this womb in me is just like a city with elastic walls, and all those eggs, Women waiting? And aren't seeds like wandering Men?" (188). Here the text suggests that the choice of 'women' as a term for stationary groups and 'men' as a term for nomadic groups may not be as arbitrary as the translator claim it is. However, a friend of Malkim suggests a different way of conceiving of these distinctions: he argues that "all bodies" are "like cities, filled with skeletons and kidneys and things that never get to leave" but also with "so much" that "wanders", like "blood and sweat and urine and breath" (188). Malkim is reassured by his friend's conclusion that everyone is "like Women and Men combined" as they are both "[c]ities and the wild" (188). Bodies, as read through the most meaningful distinction in Malkim's society – that between staying and wandering – are shown to be both fixed and fluid, both inhabited and traversed, and therefore, because of the translator's linguistic choices, "[w]omen and men combined". The translation, rather than erasing the gender variance of aliens (like Genly's masculine pronouns do), instead actively encourages humans to

reflect on the possibility of their own gender variance, and wonder if it is possible to embody a mixing of what was previously considered distinct: in 'our' world, the categories of 'man' and 'woman'.

While the narrator of 'Notes from a Hunter Boy' is an *alien I*, other narratives from *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* have a gender-variant I who is not other – not "part of the spectacle", as Fitzpatrick and Plett put it (440) – but is instead the one living in the world that is supposed to be familiar to readers. In Edwards' 'What Cheer', the alien visiting the human narrator Addie is trans, but only because they are an exact copy of Addie themself – differently from Le Guin's and Butler's novels, the 'human' is gender-variant *first*. The aliens of 'What Cheer' are a species who visits Earth in order to collect information about humans: they do this by shaping themselves into copies of the first human they find so that they can "walk" with them, *i.e.* learn information about them (Edwards, 35). The narrator calls this visitor an "alien anthropologist walking around in my body" and is reminded in their encounter about the phrase, learned in a history class, "*what cheer, friend?*" – reportedly used by an indigenous North American man upon meeting the settler Roger Williams (36; emphasis in original). The use of this phrase as the title of the story indicates a foregrounding of the colonialist gaze of the 'visitor' toward the 'unfamiliar native' – which is also foregrounded in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Like the novel, this text disrupts this dynamic through a developing emotional closeness between the human and the alien. However, it also posits gender variance as a characteristic of humans that the alien must learn, rather than vice versa. As Addie takes the alien to meet their friends, one of them remarks: "This is so cool. Like, a trans alien [….] Are we the only people it's met? An alien that only knows trans people?" (41). The effect of the human being trans before the alien reverses the situation of *The Left Hand of Darkness* in which gender variance is approached as other by the human narrator. Further, by seeking to learn information about Addie as representative of humans, the alien, together with readers, is able to gain insight into a reality in which trans people are the norm rather than the exception.

The fact that the 'alien anthropologist' is walking around *in* Addie's body indicates closeness and a traversing of bodily boundaries. The distinction of subject and object of gaze is blurred as Addie sees themself when looking at the alien (as Paul does when he looks at Robin). The alien's mode of 'observation' is not a distanced looking, reading

information on someone else's body, but it is a literal transformation of the observer's body to match the observed. At the same time, the passages in which Addie narrates their own observing of the alien are also characterised by the unclear distinction between the two, with phrases like "They stretch their legs which are my legs" or "They're looking at me with my own face" (34). Further, Addie's alien companion not only trans-inhabits the boundaries of individual identity, but also those between known species. Initially they appear as a sort of seed, which Addie calls a "plant thing" (33), but eventually from the seed hatches "the huddled form of an animal"; once Addie can "see the hatched animal clearly" they realise first that it is "human" and then that it is "me" (34). The text may be suggesting, then, that imagining a mode of trans-inhabitation where the boundaries between human and non-human are called into question can be mobilised for the aim – as Nurka puts it when describing the intersection of posthumanism and trans studies – of "undoing gender" (224). 'What Cheer', in the same way as *Imago*, also negotiates the use of the pronoun 'it' in relation to the non-human: Addie seems uncomfortable when their friends call the alien "it" (Edwards, 41). The narrator's association with the non-human – indicated by a 'plant thing' becoming 'me' – is something that can aid in questioning human assumptions about embodied identities. Yet, the pronoun 'it' is still one that a trans subject (whose perspective on pronouns is not present in *Imago*) might find linked to painful dehumanising and objectifying connotations.

A form of trans-inhabitation that interrogates the boundaries between human and non-human is also found in Téllez's short story 'Human Arrogance', narrated by *the alien I* of a plant-like organism. The narrator, Inri, explains that their species – a rhizomatic plant of which they are implied to be a sort of individual part – has been engineered on Earth to encourage the development of an ecosystem on Mars. After this initial stage of the species' life, humans have campaigned to grant them "individual autonomy rights" and they can now live on Earth for periods of time (Téllez, 254). Inri makes clear that one of the main differences between them and humans is sexed embodiment: they have "no decisive genitals" (254) and are regarded by their human lover to "have a perfect balance of male and female energies" (255). However, as in *Imago*, a focus on gender as related to male/female anatomy or masculine/feminine visual codes is displaced in favour of representing an embodiment that is different beyond its relation to conventional notions of gender. This difference is ultimately misunderstood by humans, who are shown as

misguided for having fought for the species' individual autonomy. In fact, Inri finds being considered an individual a lonely experience and ends the narrative "longing for my rhizome on Mars" (259). On Earth, they are surrounded by humans who are "free individual[s]" but "stare ahead and do not make eye contact" (259). Inri's isolation on Earth is contrasted with their existence on Mars among others of their species: "We do not use words to speak […] Surrounded with each other, rooted in cooperation, we share" (257). Because humans regard Inri as different in appearance and sexed embodiment but as ultimately analogous to themselves (desiring individual agency and subjectivity), they misunderstand Inri's species' mode of existence. Humans once again insist on translating the Other into their language rather than attempting to know them as other, regarding them instead – to use Fayad's term – as an "inferior 'auto-copy'" of themselves (67). The 'rights' obtained for Inri actually limit their species' wellbeing, as the latter is linked to embodied connection with others – trans-inhabitation – rather than individuation.

'Human Arrogance' therefore advocates for the recognition of a mode of trans-inhabitation that is attributed to an alien species: finding joy in crossing the boundaries of supposedly autonomous 'wholes', existing in between what is self and what is other. The posthumanist gesture of questioning the universality of human models also prompts a consideration of disavowed and marginalised experiences *within* the seemingly homogenous category of the human, revealing other species as sharing the condition of those who are othered, decentred and denied agency. The short stories from *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* make the experience of the *alien I* familiar, defamiliarising in turn what might be taken for granted in the world of readers. The distinction between city dwellers and nomads in Malkim's world makes our own distinction between men and women appear arbitrary and contingent, and Inri's desire for rhizomatic symbiosis with non-individuated others shows the dangers of universalising what are supposed to be core human values. The 'glance' of the first-person narrator is what allows these texts to present their worlds as normalised rather than exceptional. 'What Cheer' functions differently but achieves a similar effect. The narrator is human, visited by the alien, but they are trans – their world may be as unfamiliar as an alien one to readers immersed in cis culture. The fact that this world is rendered familiar, once again through first-person narration, results in eschewing the representation of gender variance as a spectacle, which to some extent instead characterises the novels I have discussed earlier. All three

stories then re-narrate (invoke but disrupt) a dynamic in which a human framework that views gender and sex as binary, individuals as autonomous and distinct wholes, and these structures as universal and necessary, directs the gaze toward an Other, who appears as a result spectacularly unfamiliar. This re-narration, as re-narration always does, calls up and deviates from a dominant temporal order: in this case, one who puts the human subject and binary gender first, and the non-human other and trans-inhabitation of gender second.

Strange Sights, Familiar Voices

The trans-inhabitations I have discussed, which occur away from a human 'home' (either off Earth or on a radically unfamiliar Earth), re-narrate the metaphor of the body as a 'home': bodies are bounded wholes but they are malleable and porous, transgress species boundaries, can be reformed and transformed, are both fluid and substantial. These trans-inhabitations are often experienced through sensuous connection between characters rather than through observation and articulation in language. In the *Left Hand of Darkness*, Genly starts out as witness and narrator, shaping his narrative and his reading of the aliens according to a binary, hierarchical and colonialist framework – self/other, male/female, Earth/Gethen. Estraven, to some extent, interrupts this: they speak as a subject in the first person, they observe Genly back, they elude gender. As Genly glimpses the aliens' trans-inhabitation and ultimately desires it, what is supposed to be our 'glance' into the unfamiliar world falters and becomes obscured – Genly does not understand all and does not (cannot) tell all. In *Imago*, Jodhas presents an embodiment that is mutable, successive, and multiple through speaking as an I. This *alien I* contains others, experiences bodily touch *as* others, changes into other selves, and deconstructs divisions between human and non-human entities. The use of 'it' becomes emblematic of this, as pronoun for the novel's narrator, for non-sentient beings, for bodies or body parts, for all species. Science fiction stories about aliens by trans writers, in *Meanwhile, Elsewhere*, can be viewed as re-narrating elements of the two earlier novels I discuss in this chapter, by showing that humans can be gender-variant 'first' or that attempts to fit alien sex and gender systems into 'our' own categories end up defamiliarising the latter. These narratives also continue to raise the question of pronouns encountered by Le Guin and Butler. I have noted that these authors' solutions are 'he/him' – with the reservations I have discussed – and 'it' – with the de-humanising connotations that sometimes

accompany it. The trans authors contributing to the collection adopt and transform these choices. They use 'they/them' without drawing attention to it, they show that 'he' and 'she' may mean something different in a different world, or they engage in careful negotiation with 'it', in its capacity for an empowering kinship with non-human others as well as its power to harm gender-variant subjects as it excludes them from personhood, agency and subjectivity.

While showing that language reiterates structures unable to account for diverse embodiments and relations, all the narratives I have discussed mostly employ realist prose as well as standard grammar and syntax. In other words, while the world of the story may be unfamiliar, the presentation of it in discourse is not. Simon Spiegel argues that, despite Suvin's use of the term "estrangement" for the clash of different sets of norms in science fiction, the unfamiliar worlds produced in this genre are not often "presented in an estranged way; rather they are rationalized and made plausible" (371). Therefore, while "diegetic estrangement" – "the collision of contradicting elements on the level of the story" (375) – can be said to occur, the language and narrative structures employed to articulate these contradicting elements are designed to be familiar, recognisable, and intelligible. The distinction between estrangement as an element of story and estrangement as an effect of discourse also maps onto the question of whether science fiction narratives can be termed 'unnatural'. On the one hand, "unnatural narratives" are defined as being "in violation of the mimetic conventions that govern conversational natural narratives, nonfictional texts, and realistic works that attempt to mimic the conventions of nonfictional narratives" (Alber *et al.*, 6). On the other, they designate narratives containing "physically, logically, or humanly impossible scenarios and events" (6). While the texts I have focused on can be considered to do the latter, they do not often violate the mimetic conventions of conversational, nonfictional, or realist narratives. For instance, while Jodhas's capacity for reading the minds and bodies of others does occasionally result in an 'unnatural' focalisation through others (which would be impossible for a human narrator as the latter would not know with certainty what others perceive), the statement that this character has "billions of strangers" inside of it (O. Butler, 694) does not result in a narrative discourse that reflects this status – instead, throughout the novel, events are reported through one unified consciousness and perspective. Similarly, the symbiotic 'we' of Inri's rhizome is not mirrored in passages

of narration by more than one I. In this respect, texts like *Freshwater*, *Testo Junkie* or *How to be both* are more 'unnatural' at the level of discourse (unfamiliar, non-conversational or anti-mimetic) as they feature impossibly co-embodied narrators, a confusion of pronouns, achronies, a blending of past and present tense, non-standard syntax, and so on.

Instead, the *alien I* "rationalise[s]" and "ma[kes] plausible" – to use Spiegel's terms (371) – the strange, contradictory and 'unnatural' worlds and events described. I argue that the purpose of this choice is to facilitate empathy with a viewpoint that would be intelligible and recognisable, as learning to adopt this viewpoint would reveal how the norms we assume to be natural and familiar actually marginalise, exclude and harm those who are rendered alien by them. In this context, questions of visibility and voice emerge: dynamics of speaking and seeing (language, spectacle, recognition, obscurity) are central, in these texts, to the relationships between narrators, characters, and readers. I want to highlight here how the matters of voice – being a narrator and shaping one's story – and visibility – being embodied, observed and described as character, and thus risking an objectifying 'reveal' – are crucial for an analysis of gender-variant narrators, and can best be addressed through combining concerns about narrative form and about trans politics. As I have noted, when Aizura *et al.* articulate their trans anti-colonialist stance, they contrast the "unvoiced I and unseen eye" of "scientific authority" with the "the value of the I, and the eye, of those speaking from marginality" (390). Therefore, they foreground the link between questions of voice and vision. In this passage, the unacknowledged bias of 'scientific authority' manifests itself as a voice and a gaze that are assumed to be universal to such an extent that they belong to no-body (thereby being 'unvoiced' and 'unseen', perceiving but not perceptible) whereas a resistance to this authority entails embodied speaking and seeing. Because being a no-body paradoxically connotes both authority (disembodied narrator, objective observer) and marginalisation (annihilated life, erased subjectivity), I have also argued that the ghost in trans writing, and the ambiguous materiality that characterises it, can represent both an empowering position – from which one haunts normativity and transcends the self – or a painful condition resulting from violence, to be countered by affirming one's embodied presence. These questions of speaking and seeing are taken up again in the next chapter and in the Conclusion, the former focusing on the ethical implications of texts with an *exposed I*, as they negotiate

the display and concealment of narrative bodies both at the level of story and at the level of discourse.

CHAPTER SIX

The Exposed I and the Narrative Ethics of Visibility[84]

> History wanted to be remembered. Evidence hated having to live in dark, hidden places and devoted itself to resurfacing. Truth was messy. The natural order of an entropic universe was to tend toward it.
>
> *That's what ghosts really are*, Aint Melusine had said, *the past refusing to be forgot*. She'd been helping Aster scrub down X deck with ammonia and bleach, a failed attempt to rub out the stink of what had happened there. *Ghosts is smells, stains, scars. Everything is ruins. Everything is a clue. It wants you to know its story. Ancestors are everywhere if you are looking.*
>
> ~ Rivers Solomon, *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (2017)

Ghosts refuse to be forgotten. Through their ambivalent presence, they signal erased histories, marginalised bodies, the porosity of the boundary between past and present. Solomon's *An Unkindness of Ghosts* enacts the continual reappearance of the legacies of racial and gendered violence that persist in our present and in the novel's imagined future. However troubling, this 'resurfacing' brings with it hope: knowing that 'ancestors are everywhere' can nourish action and resistance in the present. In *Trans Care* (2020), Hil Malatino explains his search for "trancestors" (gender-variant figures encountered in the archive) as a quest for "representation", for "some sense that other subjects ha[ve] encountered and survived" transphobia and oppression, for "resources for resilience" – and argues that this search is "deeply comforting" (Ch.3). The visibility of bodies and histories – together with relationships of care between subjects, textual and historical – is the focus of this chapter. The *exposed I* is a narrator who explicitly negotiates not only their ability to speak and be known, but also the extent to which their body can be protected from unwanted visibility. All texts discussed here re-narrate the moment of the 'reveal' – the gesture of exposing a gender-variant person's anatomy in order to verify some 'truth' about their sex – showing that, when it comes to the body as well as to history, truth is messy. Seid notes that the reveal, like visibility in general, can either be

[84] An earlier version of this chapter has been published in *Interdisciplinary and Global Perspectives on Intersex*, edited by Megan Walker (Palgrave, 2022).

empowering or dehumanising: it can be "seized upon by a trans person as a moment to exert agency and […] determine the meaning of one's own life and body" (176) but, when occurring without the subject's consent, it often instead serves the function of "regulat[ing] and correct[ing] gender noncompliance" (177). Through narrative acts at the level of discourse, the *exposed I* tests their own agency in deciding what to reveal and what to conceal about their body and their story. Like Solomon's ghosts, the *exposed I* 'wants you to know its story', against the stories that others presume to be able to read on their body. The three novels I discuss – Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2002), Wesley Stace's *Misfortune* (2005) and Jordy Rosenberg's *Confessions of the Fox* (2018) – re-narrate the withholding of knowledge, the policing of bodies, the sensationalising of difference, and the erasures from history that have characterised the real-life encounters of gender- and sex-variant subjects with medical authorities in different historical moments, and either repeat or challenge these dynamics through narrative acts of looking, hiding, and revealing.

The type of gender-variant narrator I discuss in this chapter is one that is situated in a history (both inside and outside the text) of unwanted exposures. The novels, all published in the twenty-first century, focus on the medico-legal treatment of sex and gender variance in the eighteenth century (Rosenberg), the nineteenth century (Stace) and the twentieth century (Eugenides). I understand their self-aware narrators and their playful engagement with textual traces of the past as constituting what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction, a term for narratives "whose metafictional self-reflexivity (and intertextuality) renders their implicit claims to historical veracity somewhat problematic, to say the least" (3). All narrators I discuss here are self-reflexive, explicitly addressing how to best articulate – and whether it is possible to access – a 'truth' from the past. They foreground and humorously transcend the limitations of a first-person account, they consider the difficulties of reconstructing 'what happened' for a narratee, and they fabricate 'historical' evidence for the purpose of fiction, thus engaging simultaneously with "the intertexts of history and fiction" to achieve "the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the 'world' and literature" (Hutcheon, 4). These novels refer to real publications at the same time as they 'invent' literary texts and historical documents. The protagonist of *Middlesex* cites (fictional) articles about his case published in a *Journal of Paediatric Endocrinology*, a volume called *Genetics and Heredity*

(Eugenides, 1), and the (real) *New England Journal of Medicine* (411). *Misfortune* often quotes from the work of (fictional) proto-feminist poet Mary Day to explain the fascination of the protagonist's mother with androgyny (Stace, 97) and concludes the narrative with a (fictional) English Heritage guidebook to the protagonist's house. *Confessions of the Fox* centres around a fictional manuscript of 'confessions' by a real historical figure, and its footnotes cite real texts. The manuscript itself includes a fictional article from the real "*Applebee's Original Weekly Journal* (1715-1737)" (Rosenberg, 116), and a fictional entry on "Sexual Chimeras" from the real Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopeadia* (1728) (130). Finally, all novels engage with the textual conventions of auto/biography, as I note over the course of the chapter. The novels emulate the styles and conventions of these 'historical' documents, uncovering the lives of gender-variant subjects in a past that sits ambiguously between the real and the fictional, the extra- and intra-textual. However, as the texts engage with non-fictional genres that lay claim to an objective truth (such as scientific studies), they differ in the way they reassert or undermine it. As I have argued, the notion of 'truth' is contested when it comes to gender-variant identities, as it becomes a matter of *which* and *whose* truth is being mobilised for what aims. When invoking (and re-narrating) medical 'truths' about sex and gender, the authority of the latter can end up being both challenged and upheld.

Historical sources of knowledge about sex and gender that constitute the novels' intertexts are specifically linked – more than for the texts I have discussed so far – to the medical treatment of intersex variations. Intersex bodies are defined, as Iain Morland puts it, as having "genetic, hormonal, and anatomical configurations that cannot be adequately apprehended by hegemonic discourses of sexual difference" ('Like a Book', 335). The medical management of bodies that do not 'fit' into normative configurations of sex curtails the agency and self-determination of the subjects treated as patients through the non-consensual interpretation and handling of their bodies as well as through concealment and manipulation of knowledge. Narratives by intersex subjects highlight practices such as corrective surgery on intersex infants and children, routinely performed in hospitals until at least the end of the twentieth century (Amato, 14), as well as the concealment of information about the patient's sex through outright omission or through the use of "incomprehensible medical verbiage" (Amato, 82). Intersex activism has impacted academic discourse both in the sciences and the humanities, where a

critique of these practices has been developed.[85] For instance, biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling notes that both surgery and the withholding of information serve the same end: the patient's perceived "need for clear-cut gender identity", which is felt to be incompatible with 'ambiguous' genitalia or full knowledge of one's chromosomal status (65). However, as Viola Amato summarises in her survey of intersex life writing, these attempts at "normalisation" often lead to the need for further medical and psychological interventions and ultimately can "never be realized as […] intended" (52). When reading these arguments through the framework I have developed, it becomes clear that these invasive interventions aim to reduce the capacity of intersex subjects to trans-inhabit supposedly bounded and incompatible categories (male and female), at the same time as they limit their power to determine how to inhabit their body and identity.

Individuals who are classed, or identify, as intersex risk unintelligibility and 'unreadability' the less they are perceived as fitting into binary and mutually exclusive spaces. This situation raises the question of visibility as a 'trap door': visibility *to whom* and *as what* becomes important in assessing whether 'being seen' can result in the well-being and safety of a group. As Amato puts it, "[i]ntersex bodies are constituted in paradoxical interrelations between invisibility and high visibility" (48). When they are perceived as visibly different, they are disproportionately singled out and exhibited, as invasive examinations are performed and medical publications invite the ogling of photographs in which the patients "are deprived of individuality, subjectivity and humanity by blacking out their eyes and only exhibiting their genitalia" (Amato, 61). However, the very practices resulting from this exposure and display, such as genital surgery, are precisely geared toward rendering bodies 'invisible' – to use Stone's term for the different but not unrelated demand for trans normativity, they are expected to "fade into the 'normal' population" (164). Morland argues that the practice of 'correcting' the body – often conceived as benefiting the patient by making them less visible to others in changing rooms or other places where their bodies might be exposed – places the responsibility for being visible on the patient rather than on the individuals or discourses

[85] In the Anglo-American context that pertains to the novels I discuss, critiques of the medical 'correction' of intersex bodies, and of the withholding of information about these bodies, have been developed by organisations such as Intersex Society of North America and Intersex UK, newsletters such as *Hermaphrodites with Attitude* (1994-2005), and journal issues dedicated to intersexuality in *Chrysalis* (1997), *The Psychologist* (2004) and *GLQ* (2009).

that produce this visibility in the first place: "Treatment shames the child by suggesting that the problem is not the uninvited act of looking but the anatomy that is seen" ('Intersex', 113). Morland notes that performing surgery to fix 'ambiguous anatomy' does not take into account that "ambiguity is an interpretation, not a trait" (113): indeed, intersex activists and writers focus on challenging the norms that produce the intersex body as visibly 'wrong' and in need of correction. This recalls the othering gaze that I have discussed in Chapter Five, and its ability to produce the 'unfamiliar' object of observation as spectacle; a subject who evades the 'uninvited act of looking' is instead the *fluid I* of Chapter Four, who looks but is not seen in return. In this context, the extent to which, and the way in which, the body is being made visible in narrative – and the subject is able to gaze back – can result in a challenge or a reiteration of the norms that single it out and invite looking from others.

At the same time as intersex subjects are viewed as especially visible, some intersex variations are represented as invisible or 'hiding'. For instance, in describing a woman with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, born with XY chromosomes but having what is considered the external appearance of a woman, the narrator of *Middlesex* comments that she "appeared to be all woman" because "[t]here was no visible sign that she possessed neither womb nor ovaries" (Eugenides, 487). *Middlesex*'s protagonist Cal is instead born with 5-alpha-reductase deficiency, meaning that they have male gonads but genitals that are classed as female. The genetic variation is described as "a skilful counterfeiter" which, aided by the family doctor's "failing eyesight and cursory examinations", is able to conceal the protagonist's intersex status until puberty (226). An ability (or even will) to deceive is here ascribed to the intersex body, which is presented as hiding secrets from more or less successful decoders of a 'true sex'. In real-life clinical settings, however, the lack of transparency and the power to conceal are often on the side of clinicians rather than patients. The invitation for others to decode sex and gender is also implicit in some representations of trans individuals, who, as argued by Bettcher, are often seen as "deceivers" or "pretenders" and are considered unreliable when uttering a discourse about their own gender ('Wrong Theory', 391). Prosser also explains that trans subjects who seek hormone replacement therapy and surgery are treated by clinicians as "a 'suspect' text" from which the truth must be extracted as one would in the presence of an unreliable narrator (111). Descriptions of the intersex body as deceptive, in addition to

non-consensual medical interventions, reveal the belief that someone other than the intersex individual themself is better able to decode, assess and authorise their identity. There is a link here between gender-variant subjects who are intersex and other gender-variant subjects: they all trans-inhabit bodies and categories in a manner that is viewed as needing external judgement and intervention, and they are all confronted with the same normative demands to fit into binary and fixed gendered spaces.[86]

As a way for the intersex individual to take control over their category assignations and the shaping of their embodiment, Morland suggests that they need to become a "narrative hero" who is "the architect of his [*sic*] story's progress and purpose" ('Like a Book', 337). As I have argued is the case with trans autobiographical writing, a discourse uttered by a gender-variant I becomes an important vehicle for self-determination and agency. The novels I discuss in this chapter are fictional auto/biographies and, therefore, allude to this same function within the text. However, the *autobiographical I* can also be a 'trap door': because of the link I have outlined so far between disembodiedness and objectivity, a narrator who has a body that is made particularly 'visible' may appear unable to articulate an authoritative discourse about themself, as they are vulnerable to objectification (thus unable to take control as a subject) and to being assessed as a 'suspect text' or a 'deceiver'. For this reason, narrators such as the ones I discuss in this chapter at times aim to achieve what Lanser calls "authorial status" (*Authority*, 16). The authorial mode, which is close to heterodiegetic narration, grants the narrator "superhuman privileges" (19) and allows them to "undertake 'extrarepresentational' acts: reflections, judgements, generalizations about the world 'beyond' the fiction" (16). Showcasing superhuman privileges (for instance, knowing with certainty what other characters are thinking) and undertaking extrarepresentational acts can be ways for a gender-variant narrator to gain authority, by wielding a great degree of control over their

[86] Not everyone with intersex variations identifies as gender-variant (trans, non-binary, gender-non-conforming, and so on), and not everyone who is gender-variant is also intersex. However, I see the intersex and the non-intersex narrators I discuss in the thesis as linked because of their relationship to binary and fixed gender categories. Indeed, they all find themselves negotiating medico-legal narratives about what constitutes gender and what kind of embodiment is required to belong to specific categories. As Morland argues, medical interventions, whether sought or imposed, never decidedly fix one's gender as a permanent, binary, and perfectly coherent whole: they "neither cause trans people to change gender nor cause intersex individuals to acquire gender" ('Intersex', 114). I read the 'failure' to fix gender as revealing sex- and gender-variant subjects' capacity to trans-inhabit, to belong to spaces that are seen as incompatible and to have a connection with past, future, or generally other gendered selves.

own story. This mode can also allow them to distance themselves from their body, to the extent that this is ever possible for a homodiegetic narrator: this gives rise to situations, as I explore especially in my reading of *Middlesex*, where the (embodied) experiencing-I is kept at a distance from the (less embodied) narrating-I. This operation of "differential embodiment" (Punday, 155) grants the narrator a supposedly impartial position, while the character (still them, but a different 'side' of them) is described and offered up for readers to look at. At the same time, declining to add extrarepresentational 'reflections, judgements and generalisations' to the narration of events can represent, as we see in *Confessions of the Fox*, the ethical refusal to make the gender-variant protagonist into an object of examination and assessment.

Middlesex and the Retrospective Objectification of the Experiencing-I

The opening sentence of *Middlesex* illustrates the position of the retrospective narrator with respect to his younger self: "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl […] and then again, as a teenage boy" (Eugenides, 3). Implicit in this formulation is the sharp break between the 'girl' and the 'boy': the girl, Calliope or Callie, is assigned female and identifies as such until age fourteen, and the boy, Cal, starts identifying as male after his intersex variation is discovered, and eventually becomes the adult narrator in a *Bildungsroman* progression from the experiencing-I to the narrating-I. The novel begins decades before Callie's birth, which occurs halfway through the text, and teenage Cal is 'born' even later. This last event (the 'discovery' of male identity) is anticipated often in the narrative, and the inevitability of its occurrence is explicitly attributed to "narrative requirements" that Cal/lie's "body ha[s] lived up to" (396). I argue that, by describing his own 'past' body as an object carried along by the demand for a narrative climax, the narrator of *Middlesex* positions himself as a subject who is in charge of his own story – in the authorial mode – at the expense of the agency of the experiencing-I, Callie. Cal gains control over his narrative not only by foregrounding its structure and his capacity to craft it, but also by presenting his past self as an object to be studied by readers, thereby reproducing the silencing of the intersex subject as he takes focalisation away from Callie and severs himself from 'her'. At the same time as this separation is enacted, the retrospective narrator actively interprets his past as presenting signs or clues of the masculine identity constituting the 'final' gender of the I. Contrary to the narratives I have discussed in Chapter Two, which aim to make visible the ambiguities and contradictions of one's gendered inhabitation, the purpose of

Cal's reinterpretation is to make his past self coherent with his current one. Ultimately, *both* a sharp break with Callie *and* the insistence on a smooth continuity between her and Cal are strategies to disavow the trans-inhabitation of the I between past and present, between genders, or in multiple spaces at once.

I have noted, in Chapter One and Chapter Two, that narrators who aim for a coherent narrative of gender-variance will select, order, and interpret material from the past of the I in "anticipation of the structuring power of the ending" (Brooks, 94). Jana Funke argues that narratives of gender variance produced for sexologists in the twentieth century are formed in accordance with the definitive and final sex attributed to the patient (the known ending of the story) (133). As these narratives strive to meet "the ideals of narrative and sexual coherence", they always partially fail to do so, as, for instance, the male narrator looking back on a female self cannot help but highlight the non-coincidence of the two subject positions (133). Funke notes that, in order to produce this coherence, childhood is viewed as a period of "latency" where sex and gender appear to be one way but will soon be revealed to be another (138). The narrative of *Middlesex* is structured in this manner. As Callie enters puberty, Cal notes that they are "quickly approaching the moment of discovery: of myself by myself", and of what their family doctor "failed to notice" (Eugenides, 361).[87] The gene that carries the intersex variation is described as laying "buried" in Cal's "bloodline", "biding its time" until "it start[s] the chain of events" leading up to "me, here, writing" (361). The interaction of visibility and hiddenness that is attributed to intersex traits is used here to support the narrative structure, which moves linearly from latency, to climactic discovery, to opening a clear path to the male narrating-I. In anticipation of this, the narrator continually speculates that Callie's masculinity was always already visible even when she was assigned female.[88] The

[87] Because of the distance that the text establishes between the narrating-I and the experiencing-I, with the latter being called 'she', I have chosen to use 'he' when referring to Cal as narrator, 'she' for Callie as character, and 'they' for what applies to both. Normally, I would use the narrator's current identification for all statements pertaining to them, in the past as well as in the present. In this case, however, part of my argument is that Callie is severed from Cal in a way to make her become almost a separate character from the I, hence my reference to her as 'she'.

[88] For instance, as Callie likes narratives of war and bloodshed more than her other female classmates, the narrator attributes this to testosterone: "Maybe this was another sign of my hormones manifesting themselves silently inside me" (322). The notion of a 'silent manifestation', or the 'hidden' catalyst of a chain of events, construct Callie's intersex status as simultaneously visible and invisible, while at the same time shaping a linear narrative journey from one (normatively understood) sex – the supposedly false one – to the 'other' – the supposedly true one.

dynamic of latent discovery of the self by the self also characterises some trans narratives I have discussed in Chapter Two, such as Sepulveda's, in which the narrator argues that they should have 'known' sooner. In the case of this novel, however, the discovery that ends the period of latency is not something that has (solely) to do with the protagonist's self-determination, but it is something that could have been read on her body (by doctors or other characters) and that the narrator deciphers for readers, without the experiencing-I being in charge or whether and when to 'reveal' it to others.

One way in which Cal creates a narrative of Callie's latent masculinity is by disavowing an interpretation of her attraction to women as queer and inscribing it as a version of his own heterosexual desire. When the narrator describes going on a date with a woman in the present, he notes: "[b]reasts have the same effect on me as on anyone with my testosterone level" (166). This formulation anticipates a reading of Callie's attraction to women as an early manifestation of Cal's own heterosexuality, secretly 'hiding' in Callie's hormone levels. This heteronormative reading of Callie's sexuality continues as the narrator describes teenage Callie's attraction, and attractiveness, to women. The narrator speculates that, with puberty, "I might have released pheromones that affected my schoolmates" (304). He wonders if "Calliope fe[lt] an inkling of her true biological nature" when looking at girls (327). The narrator's use of hypotheticals – questions, 'mights' and 'maybes' – shows that these comments constitute an ongoing (and still tentative) re-narration of his past as informed by his current situation. His understanding of desire for women as solely motivated by a maleness hiding in Callie's 'true biological nature' is therefore exposed as his situated perspective; however, despite the hypothetical language and the narrator's playful unreliability, it is the sole interpretation to be gleaned from Cal's extrarepresentational remarks. He further compares Callie's classmates' "envious crushes on other girls" to Callie's own crush, which feels "physical" (caused by sexual attraction that the text implies is not felt by other girls) and looks as if "it [is] here to stay" (367). The difference in intensity and duration of Callie's crushes is enlisted as a sign that distinguishes heterosexual women's temporary interest in other women from heterosexual boys' 'biologically' motivated urges. This understanding of sexuality, and disavowal of non-heterosexual desire, ultimately serves the purpose of establishing male and female as binary and separate categories, despite the narrator clearly trans-

inhabiting them by continually juxtaposing his past inhabitation of 'girl' with his current one of 'man'.

As I have anticipated, this trans-inhabitation is curtailed not only by ascribing maleness to Callie but also, at the same time, by separating her from the narrator's current identity. What Lanser has noted as the strategy employed by female writers of using the authorial mode as a means of "separating the narrating 'I' from the female body" ('Authority', 18) is here employed by Cal, who distances himself from *his own* female, or at least not 'properly' male, body. The narrator of *Middlesex* is, in the authorial mode, self-reflexive, authoritative, and omnipresent; spending over a third of the book recounting events that occurred before his birth sets him up as heterodiegetic more than homodiegetic narrator. He states that he can "feel" changes in the lives of his grandparents and has an ambiguous presence as witness of past scenes, being able to, camera-like, "sail down the basement stairs" (157), or beckoning the narratee to "[w]atch closely" (31). This status as ghostly witness, seeing but not seen, can be linked to the disembodiedness of the *fluid I* that I have discussed in Chapter Four, and the metaleptic irruption of the narrator on the scene. While the ghostliness of a *fluid I*, however, is directly linked to their trans-inhabitation of gender categories, Cal's own is linked to a disavowal of the same. Like a *fluid I*, he hides his own body – the last we hear of the narrator's present life is, in fact, his decision to finally show his body to a woman he has been dating but this description is not given for readers (514) – and describes the bodies of others. One of the bodies he describes, however, is Callie's. Cal's heterodiegetic tendency indeed resurfaces when he refers to his past self in the third person and detaches himself from Callie's feelings and thoughts.[89] Therefore, Cal's apparent crossing of boundaries of time periods and diegetic levels occurs together with the narrator's preoccupation with reinforcing, rather than traversing, the boundaries of gender categories (represented by the distance between himself and Callie). In the same way, as narrator, he does not ultimately 'enter' the past, or the story: he remains 'on the scene' behind the one-way mirror, disconnected from the experiencing-I, seeing but not seen.

[89] I have noted the use of the third person to refer to a version of the self in Boylan's *I'm Looking Though You*. In that case, however, the effect was to convey the self as divided and to negotiate the feeling of not having always been the 'she' that young Jenny sees initially as a ghost or a proleptic mirror image. In *Middlesex*, the effect is the opposite: by positing that the 'she' exists outside himself, Cal is trying to affirm a coherent, whole and unified identity. The two narrators, therefore, have contrasting purposes: Jenny conveys trans-inhabitation, Cal prevents it.

I read *Middlesex*'s *exposed I* as an exposed *experiencing*-I who is exposed *by* the narrating-I. In fact, Cal presents himself at the start of the narrative as an experiment whose results are to be judged by readers: "I've got a male brain. But I was raised as a girl. If you were going to devise an experiment to measure the relative influences of nature versus nurture, you couldn't come up with anything better than my life" (19). The real object of the experiment, however, is often not Cal as a whole, but only his younger self, as the narrator continually subordinates Callie's subjective experience to the conclusions that he is able to draw about it from his position of superiority – given by the privilege of adult masculinity as well as the narrator's (albeit playfully) 'superhuman' powers. While describing Callie's sexual experiences, which highlight some anatomical differences between her and other girls, the narrator marvels at how they "made no lasting conclusions about myself" (387). He then explains that this apparent failure to detect what is implied to be a fundamental difference between Callie and 'normal' girls is a result of being embodied: "It's a different thing to be inside a body than outside. From outside, you can look, inspect, compare. From inside there is no comparison" (387). In this formulation, it is Callie who is 'inside' a body and whose ability to reach 'lasting conclusions' is compromised: like the trans subject as a suspect text who needs verification by an 'objective' party, Callie is not to be trusted. I read this passage as implying that Cal instead sees himself as being, to some degree, outside the body. Not only he does not see himself as being *in* Callie's body, but perhaps he does not see himself as having a body at all: he is narrator (subject of narration), never character (object of narration). Such a disembodied narrator can be safe from the objectifying gaze he instead directs toward his younger self. However – while this was not the case with the *fluid I* – Cal's disembodiedness works toward reinforcing an understanding of gender as a binary, fixed, and hierarchical system. Additionally, even if Cal himself is not the one on the 'outside', who can 'look, inspect, compare', he certainly invites others to do so. As Callie's subjectivity is discounted, the objectivity of those who examine and assess her body is valued; as doctors do it in the novel, readers are invited to do the same.

Cal's ability to witness, disembodied, events in the past – seeing but not seen – emerges in situations in which his younger self is specifically deprived of the same power. After Callie's intersex status is discovered in a hospital examination, she visits a gender clinic

where she is examined by Dr Luce. Luce has appeared earlier in the narrative, especially whenever the narrator offers up Callie's feelings and behaviours as evidence for gender assignment. For instance, in describing Callie's experiences in her school locker room, the narrator's looking at his past self is guided by the doctor: "I look back now (as Dr Luce urged me to do) to see exactly what twelve-year-old Calliope was feeling" (297). While Luce and the narrator witness scenes from Callie's life, Callie is never present in the rooms where the doctor and her parents are discussing her sex, in line with the documented practices of lack of transparency in the clinic that I have outlined. Even when she is present, she is ignored as doctors examine her body, making her feel as if she is "no longer […] in the room", "there and not there" (421). A power imbalance between Cal and Callie becomes clear: Cal (together with Luce and with readers) is seeing, Callie is seen; Cal is omniscient, Callie is excluded from knowledge about herself. The use of the third person (as in the passage I have quoted) reinforces the separation between the two. The treatment of Callie's life as an experiment is reinforced by the narrator focalising through Luce, who is tasked with deciphering Callie's body in order to fit her 'neatly' into a gender category: "He registered my tenor of voice. He noted that I sat with one leg tucked under me. He watched how I examined my nails, curling my fingers into my palm" (408). Through the eyes of Luce, readers witness the assessment of Callie's body, while Callie's voice is silenced, exposing the difference in agency and control that divides the narrating-I from the experiencing-I – who indeed often becomes an experiencing-she.

The presence of Luce as observer of the *exposed I* also contextualises Cal's autobiographical act as motivated by the need to secure a coherent narrative of gender-variance for a medical authority. I have noted that many instances of the *autobiographical I* are conscious of the contexts in which a narrative of the self is produced as a means to 'supply evidence' to a third party, and attempt to resist others' expectations through re-narration. Cal similarly hints at how the text we are reading is a version of a narrative that Callie was invited to produce by Luce. The narrator explains that, initially, Callie self-consciously crafts her life story for specific purposes: "I […] knew that I was writing for an audience – Dr Luce – and that if I seemed normal enough, he might send me back home" (418). The purpose of adult Cal's text is in some ways similar to this earlier version: it presents the narrator's life as an experiment whose results are to be judged by others, and it supplies evidence to locate him into a clearly defined and definable gender

category.[90] An explicit connection is also made by the narrator between the two narratives: "The early autobiography didn't begin 'I was born twice'. Flashy, rhetorical openings were something I had to get the hang of" (417). Therefore, in addition to the purpose of treating his life as an experiment, Cal acknowledges that the later narrative has a new purpose, indicated by the reference to 'flashy, rhetorical openings': to entertain, to once again offer himself up not only for assessment but for amusement. In both cases, young Callie is the object of the gaze of others, while adult Cal himself to an extent escapes the same scrutiny by distancing himself from her.

Upon reading Luce's report and interpreting it as meaning that they are "not a girl" but a "boy" (439), Cal/lie decides to run away from home and from the imminent genital surgery that Dr Luce is planning, and begins to live as male.[91] While Cal/lie's masculinity is posited as innate and biological, this notion coexists with a view of masculinity as learned or honed through time. Cal states: "*biology* was perfecting my *disguise* day by day" (467; emphasis added). He then adds: "people took me for the teenage boy I was every minute more conclusively becoming" (448). With these two sentences, Cal positions his embodiment as a paradoxical intersection of naturalness and constructedness. On the one hand, he seeks legitimacy for his current gender identity by grounding it in scientific discourse (biology); on the other, he sees it as a 'disguise'. In the narrator's view, teenage Cal is both fooling others and showing them his real self by presenting as male: he passes as 'the teenage boy he is'. By mobilising the notion that some truth could be arrived at (and by ultimately grounding Cal's masculinity in the visible effect of hormones that have always been hiding in him and are now beginning to act on his body) the text reinforces the view of trans individuals as deceivers or pretenders. Instead of affirming that Cal is a boy because he identifies as such, the narrator references an external, supposedly objective truth: puberty is transforming him into a 'real' boy. This implicitly casts anyone

[90] Luce aims to demonstrate that Callie should live as a girl because she has been socialised as one, and young Callie's narrative accordingly omits her attraction to girls in order to prove that she is (a heterosexual) one. Cal's re-narration – the text we read – instead wants to demonstrate the opposite: that Cal/lie is fundamentally male. Those previously omitted details are now included, as they are perceived as evidence for his maleness. Ultimately, Cal's criticism of Luce is not only directed toward the practice of corrective surgery, which the doctor believes is necessary for Callie to be a 'real girl', but it implies that Luce is wrong in thinking that Callie's testes and XY chromosomes could be compatible with a gender other than male., The text ultimately aligns itself with the position that a 'correct' binary gender can be found 'in' the body.

[91] Cal/lie's gradual transition from girl to boy is linked to a journey metaphor, as the character literally traverses the width of the United States during this portion of the narrative.

who cannot lay claim to this biological legitimation as remaining on the side of the disguise, of 'being taken for' someone who they perhaps are not as 'conclusively becoming' as Cal is. Ultimately, it is the fact that Cal can be judged by others as being (at least partly) male – doctors and readers both acting as potential authorising observers – that vouches for the authenticity of his gender identification.

The narrator's seizing on aspects of his past that could be used to confirm his inhabitation of a 'male' gender category, together with his distancing himself from Callie to the extent that she cannot wholly fit this category, constitute attempts to disavow moments of trans-inhabitation. Despite the claim to an incontestable masculinity, Cal states: "I've lived more than half my life as male, and by now everything comes naturally. When Calliope resurfaces, she does so like a speech impediment" (42). In referring to his past gender inhabitation as a 'speech impediment', the narrator acknowledges both that work has been done to suppress it and that Calliope may come just as 'naturally' to him as Cal does. It is indeed the narrator's inhabitation of Callie that I see as constituting an unruly middle, a moment in which the anticipated conclusion of the narrative as the fixed embodiment of adult Cal is threatened. In a passage where Callie has her first sexual encounter with a boy at the same time as her friend – who is the actual object of her desire – is having sex with another boy next to her, she is shown as literally capable of inhabiting different bodies through her desire to transcend the role that she has been assigned. The narrator focalises through his past self here, noting that they "entered into" the boy's body "so that it was me […] who kissed" the girl (374). This is made possible by a "state of displacement" experienced by Callie, who feels like they are "dissolving, turning into a vapor" (374). Callie here is not an *exposed I*, but is instead able to access the same privileges as adult Cal: a disembodiedness that allows them to move freely and 'enter' other characters as a narrator does. Callie's trans-inhabitation, however, is not the same gesture as Cal visiting characters in his narrative while remaining detached from them: she instead dissolves and reconstitutes themself, becomes another, and is transformed in the process. In this moment, the narrator reports: "suddenly I […] for the first time clearly understood I wasn't a girl but something in between" (375). However, as Cal continues to take away Callie's agency and her capacity to make judgements, this feeling of in-between-ness is relegated to the past – it is a statement about an *I* but an I that *was* rather

than *am*, therefore the referent is clearly the experiencing-I.[92] Feelings of trans-inhabitation in the novel are always open to be corrected by the adult male narrator's superior knowledge, as the narrative progresses unidirectionally toward him.

"A Secret Kept Even to Myself": Narrative Agency in *Misfortune*

Misfortune's protagonist and fictional *autobiographical I* Rose Loveall is, like Callie, often the object of an experiment designed to prove the extent to which gender and sex categories can be trans-inhabited. However, instead of doctors and the narrating-I, those who test and assess Rose are her parents and relatives. Baby Rose is found on the streets of Victorian London by Lord Loveall, who becomes convinced that the baby is the reincarnation of his sister; he adopts the baby and always refers to them as a girl despite, the text suggests, the baby's anatomy pointing to male assignment. His wife, and Rose's adoptive mother, complies with raising them as a girl in order to prove her theory that a "baby's inner sense of itself [is] neither male nor female, until society t[eaches] it which role […] to assume" (Stace, 97).[93] As other characters repeatedly gender Rose for their own purposes, Rose as narrator attempts to gain the ability to affirm their own gender identification. However, Rose's gender does not coincide with some maleness that they

[92] As Callie's capacity to call into question categories of gender as binary and fixed is undermined and superseded by Cal's reasserting them as such, this recalls the way in which transition – as I have argued in Chapter One – is seen a temporary period of 'unruliness'. Detaching oneself from the gender assigned at birth is only admissible if this "transgression" is a "momentary lapse on the way to a proper embodied belonging, a proper home and full social inclusion" (Aizura, 'Borders and Homes', 293). In *Middlesex*, the certainty of the outcome of Cal/lie's adolescent trans-inhabitations (the narrator's own maleness) curbs the risk of the body remaining unruly and uncategorisable for long.

[93] The extent to which the text judges this theory to be wrong is ambiguous. In the passage where it is introduced, the narrator adds in brackets: "Has this been entirely discredited yet? If not, it will be" (Stace, 97). This suggests that the novel ultimately wants to demonstrate, as is the case with *Middlesex*, that a 'baby's inner sense of self' is indeed 'male or female' and that gender identity is ultimately tied to biological factors like anatomy, hormones and chromosomes. The latter view is expressed in a book that is cited in a 'Suggested Reading' section at the end of *Misfortune*: John Colapinto's *As Nature Made Him: The Boy who was Raised as a Girl* (2001). The book, written by a journalist, is about the case of David Reimer, a 'biologically male' child who was raised as a girl following an accident that removed most of his penis. The treatment of Reimer is the object of debates between sexologists John Money and Milton Diamond. After Money had declared Reimer to be successfully socialised as a girl, the latter started to express a masculine identity. In reviewing the case, Diamond argued that Money had been wrong in thinking that he could override Reimer's innate 'maleness', and Colapinto also adopts this view. There are parallels here with the plot of *Middlesex*, and indeed Dr Luce is arguably based on Money. The theory of Rose's mother in *Misfortune* can also be read (anachronistically) as a version of Money's faith in socialisation. However, despite the passing reference to it having been 'discredited', the text ultimately presents Rose's gender as influenced by their socialisation as much as by other factors, and it continually challenges the idea that Rose is 'really' a boy. Ultimately, I choose to focus on how the narrator criticises their mother's 'theory' less in its substance and more because their life has been used as proof of something. It is indeed this concern with agency and self-determination, rather than debates on which theory by which scientific authority more correctly explains one's gender, that is central to literature by gender-variant writers.

were denied at birth. Indeed, the text questions the extent to which the visibility of Rose's body can be used to prove their gender, implicitly critiquing what Bettcher calls "reality enforcement": the transphobic act of revealing a body in a situation in which "public gender presentation and private genitalia are construed as misaligned" ('Wrong Theory', 392). One of the consequences of this act is "the erasure of a trans person's gender identity through an opposing categorization (e.g., trans person sees herself as a woman, but she is categorized a man)" (392). The moment of the 'reveal' that I have discussed at the start of this chapter can constitute such a form of reality enforcement, guiding readers or audiences to judge the represented body as showing a truth that the subject was trying to disguise. *Misfortune* presents versions of this moment in order to either show that identity invalidation does not follow from revealing a body, or that what is visible can itself be a 'disguise' for the subject's actual gender identity.

As is the case with *Middlesex*, the use of pronouns in this novel helps elucidate the relationship that the narrating-I establishes with the experiencing-I. The first section of the novel is narrated by a seemingly omniscient heterodiegetic narrator, who refers to baby Rose as a (non-gendered) 'it' and who eventually reveals, when Rose is found by Lord Loveall, that the baby is "Me" (Stace, 71). The narrator then explains that they spoke in the third person because they "didn't think my own voice would be persuasive enough" rendering explicit the wish – which is implicit in *Middlesex* – to distance themself from an identity (gender-variant, or just embodied) that would have granted them less authority or credibility (77). After this, Rose almost always refers to their past self as 'I', making clear that available gendered pronouns are never quite appropriate and at the same time suggesting that the use of the third person to refer to the self is linked to an affect to be resolved. In the process of switching from heterodiegetic to homodiegetic narration, the I pauses to comment on their use of 'her' to refer to themself: "Her? Me? A bit of both" (82). This indicates that their identity does not neatly or fully fit into the 'her', largely because the 'her' is seen as a result of Rose's parents' imposition. At the same time, the 'he' is only used when Rose feels painfully alienated from themself after discovering that their body *should* signify that they are male: "From now on, I could refer to myself only in the third person – was there even an 'I' to speak from?" (225). In this moment of crisis, they see themself from the outside: "He wandered, a stranger in a foreign country […]" (225). The third person is used here to indicate that Rose does not feel like a subject (an

I): they have been deprived of the ability to speak authoritatively about themself, or – as Bettcher would put it – of their first-person authority, the "capacity to avow" ('First Person Authority', 114). Read through the spatial metaphors that I have discussed so far, the 'foreign country' coincides with the space of masculine identity (the 'he'), where Rose does not feel at home.

I have noted that *Middlesex* curtails Callie's trans-inhabitation through eschewing focalisation from her and continually commenting on her thoughts and actions, evaluating the extent to which they are signs of her 'hidden' masculinity. A lack of similar narratorial interventions in the majority of the narrative of *Misfortune* results in a sustained focalisation through young Rose, whose 'incorrect' or naïve views are not questioned. While Cal's extrarepresentational acts in *Middlesex* repeatedly measure Callie's body against an external standard – with authoritative sentences such as "[m]any genetic males raised as girls don't blend in so easily" (Eugenides, 304) – young Rose's perspective in *Misfortune* is not mediated by such a discourse, and the narrator never corrects it after conveying it in phrases such as, "I was a girl of course, and of that there was no doubt" (Stace, 146). One of the effects of this sustained focalisation is to suggest that young Rose – who does not 'know' that, as the text sees it, they are misreading themself as a girl – is not placed in an inferior position with respect to those (the narrator, other characters, or readers) who know more than them. Instead, they are able to access a mode of trans-inhabitation that may not be imaginable by those who have a fuller understanding of what defines each sex according to the normative binary. This is metaphorically conveyed in a scene in which Rose is sat in the middle of a seesaw, with their friends Stephen and Sarah – whom young Rose often uses as points of comparison for her appearance and behaviour – on either end. When the two take a break to urinate behind a bush, Rose remains seated in the middle of the seesaw, and from this "vantage point" (137) they can see both of them, Sarah crouching down and Stephen standing. Having been instructed by their mother to always crouch, as they are a girl, they now discover that "*We have a choice*" (137; emphasis in original). While this thought can be read as the naïve assumption of child Rose, who does not understand why standing could not be a choice for Sarah, it also hints at some freedom between, and across, sex and gender categories that Rose, from her 'vantage point', is able to access.

The moment of Rose's eventual discovery of their difference from Sarah, and their anatomical similarity to Stephen, is construed as an instance of self-reality-enforcement which has ambiguous consequences. Rose comes to realise: "Everything I read about girls applied to my outer layers only" (225). This leads them to see themself as "a failure, a secret kept even from myself" (225). Being a secret and at the same time being the person from whom the secret is kept means that Rose is both the object and the subject of this discovery. This is further complicated as they wonder: "Was it a secret I was keeping from others, or one that others were keeping from me?" (224). On the one hand, *being* the secret, the body that is hidden and revealed, is a source of distress because it happens without Rose's consent, making her the object of an evaluating gaze that comes from outside – from the norms learned by 'reading about girls'. At the same time, the discovery of the injustice of information being kept from them, and the possibility that their body is now a secret that *they* are keeping from others, is, I argue, what allows Rose to gain some agency. Being able to keep a secret acts as a first step for Rose to exercise some power over how they are perceived, as they can now make a decision as to whether and when to disclose their knowledge to others. Additionally, the moment of self-'reveal' or self-discovery, while resulting in suffering, fails to function as reality enforcement or identity invalidation in any permanent way. For instance, when Rose takes ownership of their father's estate as the new Lord Loveall, they state: "I was disguising myself in men's clothes" (240). Despite realising, then, that what they 'read about girls' applies to the 'outer layers only', there is no sense here that the 'inner layers' would constitute a more accurate truth about Rose's identity. While men's clothes are ostensibly matched with their anatomy now, their body is now hiding their identity more than ever, acting as a further 'outer layer' to be peeled back in order to shed light on Rose's actual gender.

The novel, therefore, does not posit a discovery of Rose's 'maleness' as a resolution. Indeed, it is precisely when the perceived mismatch between body and clothes is resolved, and Rose is ostensibly no longer hiding anything, that they feel the most hidden. In a scene in which they are examined by a doctor, who reads them as a man because of their clothes, Rose reports that they "instinctively pulled the sheets up around my neck" but then "remembered" that they could "be examined" (324). The resurfacing of Rose's habit to hide their body in order to pass as a girl is a reminder that, even if their body would now raise no questions in relation to their gender presentation, the fact that they

can be 'examined' does not mean that they are not hidden. Rose's gender variance, and its relationship to visibility, is based on a disidentification with not one, but two assigned genders, as they trans-inhabit both. While they are technically assigned female by their parents, this is understood by every other character to be a wrong assignation, and therefore Rose is assigned both male and female, eventually growing to partly dis/identify with both. The fact that male assignation is supposedly self-evident is suggested in an act of reality enforcement that is meant to disprove to Rose's father that the baby he found is a girl. Lord Loveall's mother lifts up the baby's dress and confronts her son with the baby's body, stating that there is only one possible reading of it: "Call the baby anything you will, but look at this, look! Proof, even to *you*!" (42; emphasis in original).[94] However, the text shows that it is not entirely evident *of what* the baby's genitals are 'proof'. The visibility of the body does not have an intrinsic meaning, thus invalidating moments of reveal or reality enforcement. Once Rose gains knowledge of the male assignation that *should* have happened at their birth, it is not their body that causes suffering, but the way that the body can be read by others as signifying something other than what it does in Rose's eyes.

The exposure and examination of Rose's body as a 'secret' coincides in the novel with the invasion and repossession of their home once their relatives discover that they are not Lord Loveall's biological child. I have noted that the body and the home are often equated in gender-variant writing as spaces of comfort and safety that one wishes to secure. The arrival of the relatives is threatening to both, as they literally and figuratively, as the narrator explains, "invad[e] my private rooms" (282). The inspection and reclaiming of Rose's house are conveyed through language that evokes a clinical setting, as the narrator reports that "the most intimate aspects" of their life have been "laid bare for [the relatives], cut open on the surgeon's table" (284). This act of uncovering and examining a body is not only used as a metaphor for what is done to Rose's life in their home, but it becomes literal as their relatives enlist a doctor to verify Rose's sex, seeking an objective assessment of their belonging in a 'male' gender category. The doctor examining Rose "[can] barely contain his lascivious interest", and he "ignore[s]" Rose while "intimately inspect[ing]" them (275). I have noted the same de-humanising and objectifying effects

[94] Lord Loveall is implied to be gender-variant – or queer – himself, and he never understands the differences between 'male' and 'female' in the way that others expect.

of clinical encounters being described in narratives by intersex and gender-variant subjects. Crucially, the narrator of *Misfortune* here foregrounds how they are *not* going to repeat the same gesture of exposure enacted by the doctor: "I am not going to go into detail about it: there are plenty of *soi-disant* medical (pornographic) novels that will titillate the keen student with the specifics of such interviews" (275). After describing the privacy of the experiencing-I being violated, the dispossession of their body and their home, and their treatment as an object to be inspected and judged, the narrating-I shows to have gained agency that young Rose does not have, and uses it to protect themself from further looking.

While I have argued that, in the case of the *exposed I* of *Middlesex*, it is the I itself who does the exposing, I read *Misfortune*'s narrator as often refusing to expose themself once more. Rose eventually flees their home, and they travel through Europe for several months; their experiences there are largely omitted from the text as the narrative picks up when Rose arrives in Turkey, ill and disoriented, and they are taken in by a local family. Rose does give some disordered and fragmented account of where they have been to their hosts, but this account is mixed with lyrics from ballads and tales that have been referenced throughout the novel, making it impossible to reconstruct what has actually happened to the I. Once Rose is tracked down by their friends and allies and brought back to London to the house of some supporting relatives, the experiencing-I is finally able to hide themself. After having been made visible to others against their will, Rose enjoys being "no longer necessarily the centre of attention" (376). It is indeed hinted at that their experiences in Europe involved being "too long among strangers who dissected and disparaged me with their every glance" (376). While experiencing-Rose finds relief in no longer being looked at, narrating-Rose prevents readers from looking at them too (and looking at them being looked at, in the omitted portion of the narrative). The narrator reports that they have avoided being "entirely candid with [their relatives] about" the travels in Europe and adds for the narratee: "(nor have I been with you)" (376). Both within and outside the narrative, Rose's experiences of objectification and suffering are kept "rolled away from prying eyes" (Winterson, *Written*, 89), in a gesture that refuses to offer the character up for the entertainment of others. Having the agency to remain out of view has different ethical implications from Rose being "a secret kept even from myself" (Stace, 225): their body is no longer a 'secret', and thereby no longer open to

detection against their will, but this does not mean that others have unlimited access to it.

Despite the fact that *Misfortune* and *Middlesex* establish a different relationship between the narrators and their younger selves, both novels ultimately describe their protagonists' gender in relation to mythology: this reproduces the objectification that comes from the heightened visibility or exceptionality of subjects 'in need of correction'. This is implicit in the use of the word 'hermaphrodite' in Eugenides' text, a term that reduces the intersex individual to a mythical object of fascination for doctors and audiences, "a fantasy, a stigmatized, unreal subject" (Amato, 97). The use of the word hermaphrodite by Cal fits with the mythology motif of the text, which evokes the Greek heritage of both narrator and author, but it also exoticises Cal/lie, who eventually takes up the role of Hermaphroditus, the character from Greek myth who is both male and female, in a sex show during which their genitals are exhibited to audiences. In *Misfortune*, although, as I have discussed, the narrator declines to describe their experiences on the continent – which, it is implied, have included a similar display of Rose's gender variance to others for sexual titillation – an analogous connection between sexual difference and mythology is established. Rose's arrival in Turkey is in fact motivated by their plan of drowning themself in the pool of Salmacis, the legendary location of Hermaphroditus's transformation into a creature who is both male and female. In this sense, both texts have an *exposed I*, experiencing both at the level of story and sometimes at the level of discourse the position of an object to be marvelled at, evaluated, or compared to a standard. Trans-inhabitation is associated in these texts to a fictional or mythical feat – albeit inserted in a historical context resembling 'reality' – rather than fully acknowledged as a possibility for subjects that exist outside texts.

The Refusal to Help 'Visualise': Ethical Erasures in *Confessions of the Fox*

I have discussed how *Misfortune* and *Middlesex* are fictional autobiographies in which an adult narrator presents their younger self through an authorial voice, at times performing extrarepresentational acts or transcending the limitations of a homodiegetic narrator. *Confessions of the Fox* instead blurs the boundaries between homo- and heterodiegetic narration through layering multiple voices. The fictional auto/biographical narrative of the novel is a re-narration of the life of eighteenth-century English thief Jack Sheppard as

a trans man. While this is narrated largely by a heterodiegetic narrator – and I argue in what follows that this perception is complicated by the text, hence why I call this narrative an auto/biography – Jack's story is framed by a 'Foreword', extensive footnotes and a 'note to readers' in the first-person voice of Dr Voth, an American historian, also a trans man, who finds and annotates the manuscript. The fictional paratext constitutes a narrative in itself: Voth recounts episodes of his own life as he edits the manuscript. He initially attempts to verify the 'authenticity' of this text but comes to reject this practice as the narrative progresses. I read this as a critique of the treatment of gender-variant subjects as a suspect text, and of the enlisting of authorities to verify some truth about them, practices that I have noted characterise the encounters of sex- and gender-variant subjects with medico-legal 'experts' – and can be repeated in texts like *Middlesex* whose narrator invites others to observe and assess Callie. *Confession of the Fox* explicitly addresses a history of exposure, surveillance, objectification and other practices of looking directed at gender-variant (among other) marginalised subjects, and explores the extent to which Voth can protect Jack Sheppard from the same gaze in the narrative – just like Rose-as-narrator shields Rose-as-character in *Misfortune*. I consider Jack an *exposed I* whom we do not quite hear as an I, but whose narrative, together with Voth's and those of others, constitutes a collective 'we' that can form the basis of a re-narration of normative histories and an affirmation of trans-inhabitation.

There in a shift, in the novel, from a situation in which a subject (Voth) is in the position to observe and judge an object (the manuscript, but also Jack's body) to a situation in which Jack, Voth and other participants in the narrative trans-inhabit a collective 'we'. This shift goes hand in hand with the progressive displacement of the question of whether the manuscript conveys the 'truth' about the historical figure of Jack Sheppard. Voth admits in the 'Foreword' that he is "ashamed" of having once been interested in the question: "*Is the manuscript the authentic autobiography?*" (Rosenberg, xiii; emphasis in original). The use of the term 'autobiography' here indicates that the text's authenticity would be found in whether its supposed author is telling the truth about himself. This implies that Voth believes (or believed at one point) that verifying the text's authenticity is tantamount to verifying whether Jack may be the author of it, despite the text referring to Jack in the third person; this is also the position of the publisher, who is interested in marketing the manuscript as the "*earliest authentic confessional transgender memoirs*

known to history" (121; emphasis in original). Indeed, the footnotes hint that, in Dr Voth's view, the manuscript's ethical treatment of its protagonist points to the author being someone who understands him intimately – perhaps himself. This ethical treatment consists in the practices of omitting, hiding and declining to expose – for example, Voth writes in the footnotes, as seen in "the excision of what appears to be Jack's given name (P–)" in favour of affirming his identity as Jack (16), or in "the elegant declining to describe" Jack's genitals (109). Such narrative acts of omission can be mobilised to counter a history of gender-variant subjects being dispossessed of their bodies and defined against their will, and are therefore an indication of a sympathetic author/narrator. Ultimately, the question of whether Jack himself is this author/narrator (making the manuscript an 'autobiography') is superseded as the text progresses: Voth realises that its authenticity does not lie in verifying its authorship by a single individual, but in by its capacity to mobilise affects and experiences that connect a multiplicity of gender-variant subjects.

Voth's numerous footnotes affirming that one detail or another points to the authenticity of the manuscript show that this authenticity is mostly indicated by the narrator's refusal to expose Jack in a way in which he would not want to be exposed. In addition, the editor's affective relationship with the manuscript, for instance his "jealousy" at Jack's capacity to be vulnerable with his lover, is enlisted as a sign of its "authenticity" (91). This hints at a reframing of the question of truth and accuracy, signposting Voth's conclusion that the manuscript is 'authentic' not because it conveys a historical truth about a certain individual but because it depicts erased and disavowed experiences of embodiment and oppression that the editor and others can recognise as akin to their own. A chapter inserted by Voth in the manuscript itself explains his realisation that Jack's story is not "exactly a singular memoir" but a sort of "collective diary-keeping" (259). This is indicated by anachronisms and passages that turn out to be quotations from later texts, which reveal to Voth that the manuscript is made up of layers of edits, corrections and contributions by marginalised subjects and political groups throughout history. This realisation brings with it a shift in the purpose of editing. Initially, Voth edits the text for a publisher who is interested not only in the manuscript's authenticity as a memoir, but in Voth's own capacity to authenticate the reality of Jack's identity as they are both trans

– his guarantee of a truth about transness.[95] Voth's discovery that the text constitutes a 'collective diary-keeping' brings about the decision to steal the manuscript and continue editing outside of the framework of authorising Jack's identity for the publisher.

In a footnote occurring after this turning point, Voth explains: "I'm editing this for *us* […] Those of us who have to guess […] what a '*home*' might feel like" (166; emphasis in original). I have discussed the notion of home as a metaphor for the body, but here the difficulty of finding a home (uniting editor, characters and readers into a 'we') indicates a host of exclusions experienced by disenfranchised subjects, including literal restrictions to inhabit countries, cities, buildings and lands.[96] After stealing the manuscript, Voth seems to have found a place for himself and the text that can constitute a sort of home. He explains in a footnote that he is now "very far away", not "primarily in terms of space" but also in the sense that he is "living at a different timescale" (266). His new place of residence appears to be populated by "friends" who are "archivists of us", and who see archives as "stretches of time, but also stretches of space" (267). Finding a time and a place elsewhere ('very far away') is in some sense an alternative to haunting the 'stretches' of time and space represented by the archives. Instead of dwelling at the borders of documented and legitimised identities, Voth and the archivists create spatiotemporal openings in which marginalised subjects can exist; in the Jack Sheppard manuscript and, it is implied, in many others that this group has edited, this creation of space is represented by the addition of passages of writing, creating trans-historical relationships of care.

I read the presence in the novel of these excluded subjects as characters, editors and readers of the manuscript as linked to the use of the first and third person at different moments in the text. A chapter of the manuscript is dedicated to the story of Bess, Jack's lover, and is narrated by Bess in the first person. This chapter features no footnotes by Voth, except for one at the very end stating: "Reader, please forgive the radio silence. I'm

[95] In a sense, the publisher's interest in Voth 'expert' opinion as a trans person represents a shift from a medical authority guaranteeing the authenticity of the experiences of gender-variant authors to this guaranteeing work being entrusted to the latter. This raises a question connected to trans normativity in terms of which gender-variant subjects are understood to carry enough authority to vouch for the 'authentic transness' of others.

[96] In the Conclusion, I attend to this material meaning of 'home' and to its relationship to the ambivalent view of the body as a home in gender-variant writing.

not in the habit of interrupting women when they are speaking" (198). This indicates that the rest of the manuscript, which has a heterodiegetic narrator, makes it somewhat easier or more appropriate for Voth to intervene in a way that does not feel like 'interrupting' someone who is speaking. Indeed, Jack does not speak as an I in the novel (apart from some brief passages of interior monologue), and it is perhaps for this reason that Voth appears more comfortable (at least initially, as I have discussed) with treating him as an object of speculation and analysis. The presence of both Jack and Bess in the manuscript is remarked upon by the editor as revealing previously unknown details about them: Jack is a trans man and Bess is South Asian. This prompts Voth to reflect on the practices used by researchers to "source [the] 'truths'" about Jack and (the even more elusive) Bess, and to conclude that "this profound lacuna in the records cannot simply be filled; it must be encountered head-on as constitutive of the archive as such" (31). I argue that the use of both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration in the novel constitutes a negotiation of 'encountering a lacuna' when attempting to know historical subjects who are less visible or legible than others. As is the case in *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, history "devote[s] itself to resurfacing" but its truth is "messy" (59). While Jack and Bess remain to an extent unknowable and unreachable as they are not heard directly and are mediated by the heterodiegetic narrator – emphasising the impossibility of Voth's search for 'truth' reaching its goal – the occasional uses of first-person narration covey the desire to hear suppressed voices.

The impossibility of knowing Jack and Bess as historical subjects (as well as the fantasy of being able to do so) that is represented in *Confessions of the Fox* is linked to the issue of visibility as dependent on exclusion and erasure. I have discussed Snorton's argument that the legibility of the trans subject has been dependent on the "negation of blackness" (13), resulting in black trans individuals existing as "shadows" who prompt the historian to direct "focus on occasions of unbecoming [….], of disappearance, of haunting" (145). In Rosenberg's novel, Jack and Bess similarly appear as 'shadows', disavowed versions of their more visible counterparts, with which readers may be familiar. Jack's transness and Bess's South Asian heritage, 'discovered' by Voth, haunt the versions of themselves that are known in the Jack Sheppard canon. I see Voth's methodology – especially when it abandons or thwarts the search for 'authenticity', when it lets Bess's narrative speak for itself, or when it never quite hears Jack's I – as resembling what Snorton outlines as his

approach to archival shadows. Snorton argues, for instance, that dealing with the "unfixed, submerged and disavowed connections within blackness and transness requires that both author and reader suspend a demand for transparency" (10). Voth often resists the publisher's 'demand for transparency', going against the imperative to expose and exhibit Jack, or to fill in missing details. Filling in these details, in one sense, is precisely what the novel does, as it imagines a voice for subjects who may not have had one – with Voth often noting that the manuscript's re-narration of Jack's story "afford[s] details that are not given in any of the other records" (Rosenberg, 59) – thereby making its characters newly 'visible'. At the same time, however, it shows characters (Voth as well as others who have intervened in the manuscript) committing to a "political and ethical imperative to the right to opacity" (Snorton, 11), by refusing to fill in the gaps in Jack's story in order to make him more legible to readers.

The visibility of Jack's body is the core of the ethical tensions between Voth, the manuscript and the demands of the publisher. Voth notes in the footnotes that certain details have been erased from the manuscript, such as Jack's former name or descriptions of Bess's body that leave the text reading as such: "Her breasts were––, her nipples––" (Rosenberg, 108). This is suggested as being the work of the multiple editors and authors of the manuscript. While some information is shown to have been explicitly erased where it was present before, other details, like a description Jack's genitals – which is implied to potentially indicate an intersex variation – do not seem to be present in the first place (if indeed we can conceive of a *first* place, an original version of the manuscript). The punctuation in the description of a sexual encounter between Jack and Bess blurs the distinction between the explicit erasure of words that may have already been present in the manuscript (an erasure, like with Jack's previous name, that is signalled in the text by a dash) and omissions that the text's narrator already makes: "So to put it plainly there was a–– / ––But language fails here–– [….] Less a–– /or, rather, more a ––" (201). What Voth calls the "elegant declining-to-describe" (109) enacted by the text is a gesture whose author is not easily identifiable: whether it is the 'original' author of the manuscript (maybe Jack himself) or subsequent authors/editors, someone always protects Jack's body from the curiosity of readers. At the same time, the publisher, whose emails are reported in the footnotes, continues to insist that Voth use clearer language and "speculate" (137) where information is missing, as "readers need to be able to visualise"

Jack's body (132). Voth's decision to steal the manuscript and sever contact with the publisher constitutes a similar declining-to-describe, a refusal to 'help visualise', as an ethical gesture toward Jack's otherwise *exposed I*.

The declining-to-describe that occurs in the manuscript is noted by Voth as being "remarkable" considering that "any other sexological or protosexological document from the period (and after) […] exfoliate[s] layer after layer of prurient fantasies about sex organs" (92). I have noted a similar statement made by the narrator of *Misfortune* to indicate their own marked departure from "medical (pornographic)" descriptions designed to "titillate the keen student" (Stace, 275). In the same way, the manuscript in *Confession of the Fox* is juxtaposed with other texts in order to highlight the differences in approaching Jack's body. Bess and Jack encounter one of these texts – Emphraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* – discussing 'sexual chimeras', which are implied to be sex- and gender-variant individuals.[97] The manuscript in which Jack's story is recounted is supposed to include a "a painted illustration" for "Sexual Chimeras" from the *Cyclopaedia*, but Voth notes that "the original author" has replaced it with an "abstract page" (Rosenberg, 134) – the same abstract page that readers of *Confession of the Fox* can see on page 133. The publisher believes, as is evident in the emails reproduced in the footnotes, that the "missing page" is being withheld by Voth, and that it is crucial for readers to be able to see the anatomy represented there, which is supposed to be similar to Jack's own (160). Once the footnotes are no longer being read by the publisher, Voth explains that he has "no idea if this page ever existed – and, if it did, at what point it may have been removed" (272). The text's refusal to satisfy the readers' demand to visualise, which is instead satisfied by texts like Chambers', occurs then on multiple levels: Rosenberg, Voth and the early authors/editors of the manuscript all repeat this gesture, sheltering Jack's body from audiences both in and outside the novel.

As is the case with many other texts I have discussed, the effects of becoming visible and legible are dependant in this novel on whether the visibility is desired or enforced. For

[97] In response to the publisher's demand for an explanation of what sexual chimeras are, Voth replies that "[i]t ranges. Hermaphroditism, heteroclitism, clitoramegaly, an abundance of masculine passion in a cis-woman, etc" (Rosenberg, 132). Keeping in mind this range of possible references, I use sex- and gender-variant as a general term here because the issue of 'sexual chimeras' is relevant to Jack's trans identity, which is connected to my discussion of trans-inhabitation, and to his potentially intersex body, which is relevant in this chapter because of the specific relationship to visibility that I have outlined.

instance, at the start of the novel, Jack craves more intimacy with Bess despite his fear of showing his body to her. Since he does not want to "retreat to […] the wretched unseenness to which he'[s] been accustom'd" (68), a form of 'reveal' to her needs to occur. Jack, however, is in control of this reveal and, as I have discussed, any exposure of his body occurring in sexual encounters with Bess is not *for* readers, who are given omissions and vague language instead. At the same time, Voth describes his own sexual encounters in detail, and explains: "I'm more than happy to go on at length about my prodigious genitalia. But there's a difference between a confession one wants to give, and one that is taken" (109). The editor of the manuscript here draws attention to the difference between a showing/telling that comes from an I who has agency and control over what is revealed, and one for which this is not the case. This distinction is also tied to the status of Jack's manuscript as 'confessions'. When he is arrested by the police who ask for his "confessions", Jack remarks that his "tales are for rogues only" (83). Voth's theft of the manuscript and the acts, in both story and discourse, of hiding, concealing and covering Jack's body, indicate that some details are indeed 'for rogues only'. Those who can access (while always encountering the constitutive gaps of history) Jack's tale are those who understand it without an expert explanation, do not need help to visualise, and can suspend a demand for transparency. In this way, *Confessions of the Fox* gestures to extra-textual readers differently than the other novels I have discussed in this chapter. While Cal and adult Rose always exhibit (or sometimes decline to exhibit) their younger selves *for* an audience that would find them an interesting object of study (exotic, extraordinary or mythical), Rosenberg's text features multiple authors/narrators that refuse to do the same.

Timing Body Truths

The way in which the *exposed I* negotiates visibility has different ethical connotations depending on what is exposed, by whom and for whom. This visibility can mean a description of the body, the intelligibility of a narrative, the presence or absence of a person (or an aspect of a person's identity) from fictional texts or historical archives, or the extent to which gender-variant voices are represented in the cultural landscape. This visibility is always a 'trap door': an opportunity for legitimation and an occasion for erasure, the path to a community of 'trancestors' and the repetition of a stigmatising gaze, the rendering intelligible of a liveable space of trans-inhabitation and the establishment

of a normative model that excludes many, and therefore needs to be re-narrated in turn. The way in which the protagonists of *Middlesex* and *Misfortune* are presented as exceptional (as spectacle) – even as the latter novel attempts to redress objectification and uninvited looking at the level of discourse – makes readers complicit in singling out gender-variant subjects, evaluating their identities and regarding their lives as detached from reality. In *Middlesex*, Cal himself is the one who encourages this objectification and assessment of his younger self, showcasing his 'superhuman' authorial status and using his disembodiedness as narrating-I – his ability to stand unseen 'outside' the storyworld – to reinforce boundaries (narrator/character, male/female, fixed gender/fluid gender) instead of crossing them. Callie's temporary moments of queerness, fluidity, trans-inhabitation, and undecideability are dismissed and ultimately superseded by the forward movement of the narrative toward its ending and by the backwards movement of Cal's narration, which retrospectively seals a coherent meaning. Instead, *Misfortune* represents Rose as gaining agency over their 'secret', agency that the narrating-I uses ethically to take seriously the perceptions of their younger self (conveyed through focalisation) and to protect them from the gaze of readers. Even when the body is visible in *Misfortune*, it does not have an intrinsic meaning, locating sex and gender in what Morland calls the "act of looking" rather than "the anatomy that is seen" ('Intersex', 113). I have noted that, in *How to be both*, no real 'reveal' of Franchesco's anatomy can be said to occur, and that the 'discovery' of his body only has consequences for the friendship with Barto when this body is named as the body of a woman. Similarly, in *Misfortune*, displaying or discovering the body loses its power to constitute transphobic reality enforcement because the meaning of what is visible is contested.

Confessions of the Fox also performs ethical gestures to protect Jack from an invasive and punitive gaze and shows that sex and gender as fixed, coherent, and self-evident notions are dependent on a history of violence against bodies perceived as deviant. The 'truth of sex', which is invoked in *Middlesex* and questioned in *Misfortune*, is completely displaced in *Confessions of the Fox* as one of many instruments of power. In the novel, declining-to-describe, omissions, and creating space for others to speak are ethical gestures with no identifiable authors – a number of intra- and extra-diegetic authors, editors and readers form a virtual community based on empathy and care. This non-hierarchical organisation of textual participants contrasts, for instance, with the narrative situation of *Middlesex*, in

which the narrator, Dr Luce, and the author are aligned as interchangeable adult male authorities over Cal/lie. Indeed, the way in which authors are implicated in the ethics of visibility cannot be wholly discounted. When an author who holds a certain kind of authority – one that has historically "attached itself most readily to white, educated men of hegemonic ideology" (Lanser, *Authority*, 6) – speaks 'for' a marginalised subject as an I, this dynamic might inform how a narrative is read. As Phelan argues, textual meaning is to be found in the "feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response" (18). This is indicated, for instance, by the reception of *Middlesex* among intersex advocacy groups, who see it as participating in a tradition of "[d]isrespectful, insensitive and sensationalist (mis)representations of a group of individuals that has been continually threatened with cultural and physical erasure" (Amato, 161). This is exacerbated by the popularity of the novel, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 2002, conferring on its non-intersex author the status of an "'expert' on intersex" (Amato, 114). A different situation arises, for instance, in relation to *Confessions of the Fox*. As a trans historian, Rosenberg simultaneously holds and renounces authority over the subject of his novel: while he would more readily be considered an expert on the topic because of his own lived experience of transness and knowledge of history, his text invites a questioning of the notion of expertise, showing that whenever this is invoked at the expense of the subject's own knowledge of themself, it is usually wielded as a means to discipline them.

As history and truth come to light, in *Confessions of the Fox*, this does not take the form a straightforward visibility, but a layering of voices, some of which speak as an I, some not, all collectively re-narrating: tweaking, adding, omitting, or directing attention to previous omissions. Indeed, the texts I have discussed in the thesis (and many others that remain, ghostly, at its borders) can all be taken together as enacting this collective re-narration, existing in tension with one another and jointly conveying a trans-inhabitation between gender belonging and gender flexibility, embodied materiality and textual transformability, the affirmation of an individual identity and the recognition of an ever-shifting community. This re-narration – which I have argued is always a reordering of temporal elements, questioning what comes and who should speak (as) 'first', what constitutes a climax, where the beginning or the ending lie, and whether past, present and future are separate and successive – uncovers a messy truth. As I have argued in Chapter

Two, the very notion of 'truth' is indeed messy: speaking and showing *as* oneself and *for* oneself against a normative framework that invalidates gender-variant voices and bodies means that this truth can only be communicated partially and obliquely, risking intelligibility and implausibility. The sum of voices heard and unheard, and bodies seen and unseen, reveals the contemporary gender-variant narrator as a figure of material and textual trans-inhabitation, existing at the borders of social categories and diegetic worlds, being at the same time embodied and disembodied, seeking belonging in gendered homes and haunting these homes, moving along a narrative journey from one space to another, and contesting the very meaning of these spaces.

CONCLUSION

'More Visible and Vocal': Narrating Bodies, Embodying Metaphors

> Who, in other words, can afford transition, whether transition be a move from female to male, a journey across the border and back, a holiday in the sun, a trip to the moon, a passage to a new body, a one-way ticket to white manhood? Who, on the other hand, can afford to stay home, who can afford to make a home, build a new home, move homes, have no home, leave home? Who can afford metaphors?
>
> ~ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (1998)

Over the course of the thesis, I have repeatedly shown how the use of spatial metaphors by gender-variant writers is often intended as a re-narration of dominant conceptual metaphors that regulate the understanding of gender and the body. In discussions of literary form, metaphors are often conceived of as a form of "stylistic foregrounding", as they deviate from "the linguistic norms that underlie 'literal' language use" (Caracciolo, 208). For instance, the metaphor used by Boylan in *I'm Looking Through You* for transition as "the process that would take me from the world of men and eventually leave me washed up on the shores of womanhood, blinking and half-drowned" (213) plainly constitutes a semantic deviation from conventional language use: Jenny has not 'literally' been in a shipwreck, but her transition feels *as if* this is the case. By conjuring up the image of a shipwreck – something that is not usually associated with experiences such as hormone replacement therapy, surgery, or gender performance and presentation – this is foregrounded as a specific creative choice. As Marco Caracciolo argues, "the metaphors appearing in literary contexts may be more creative than (most of) the metaphors we use in everyday language, but this is a probabilistic tendency rather than a hard-and-fast rule" (210). The line between commonplace (everyday) metaphors and stylistically foregrounded (creative) metaphors is indeed blurred when it comes to conveying gendered embodiment in the texts I have discussed. In the passage from *I'm Looking Through You,* for instance, the "world of men" is a more conventional expression than "the shores of womanhood", even though both the 'more' and the 'less' creative metaphor build on an underlying understanding of gender as territory. It is this underlying

dominant framework, which is still metaphorical but in a way that is not foregrounded, that I have explored over the course of the thesis, in order to show how it regulates the very way that the body, gender, or processes of change are experienced, and how it precludes alternative imaginings.

As I have noted in Chapter One, metaphors that are not stylistically foregrounded may no longer be detectable as metaphors. When Jacques, in *Trans*, describes androgynous appearance as "a step towards transition" (208), the "step" is a metaphor but it does not call attention to itself in the same way as Boylan's shipwreck does. As less detectable frameworks to organise experience, conventional metaphors may in turn render unfamiliar (or foreground) what deviates from them. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, "[i]n allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept […] a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of that concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor" (10). *Transition is a journey* highlights progress and clear purposes but hides experiences that are not linear, unidirectional or do not even entail movement. Similarly, *the body is a home*, which I have noted can form a coherent conceptual system with *transition is a journey* if one feels that the body/home is at the end of this journey, highlights desired or experienced feelings of comfort and safety in one's embodied identity but hides experiences characterised by the impossibility or undesirability of being located, static or bound. *The gender-variant individual is a ghost*, which I have read as a challenge to *the body is a home*, highlights one's ambiguous and ambivalent relations to existing social categories and groups, as well as feelings of being tied to multiple temporal and spatial locations, but hides experiences of belonging and the possibility of 'solid' presence. What is not highlighted (or is hidden) by one metaphor may then be revealed through the use of another– in the way in which *ghost* illuminates what is obscured by *home*. In explaining one experience in terms of another, metaphors may also take for granted that the concept that is being used to do the explaining is straightforward or universally understood enough that it would provide clarification for the concept that is being expressed metaphorically. In mentioning 'the transition journey' or 'feeling at home in the body', an understanding of what journeying or feeling at home would entail is assumed to be shared. How are the metaphors for embodiment at work in the texts I have examined – journeys, homes, mobility, and confinement – informed or complicated by the material conditions of subjects who use these metaphors (or to describe whom these metaphors

are used) when these material conditions involve navigating actual journeys, homes, mobility and confinement?

If we ask which journeys and which homes are doing the work of the metaphor here (*i.e.* are being used as vehicles) it becomes clear that certain relations to journeys and homes are being elided.[98] A passage in Lakoff and Johnson's argument illustrates the potential blind spot of taking for granted a shared understanding of the vehicle. They argue that, when we use metaphors, "we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated" and "we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in *terms of* the physical" (59; emphasis in original). The 'physical' is associated here with the 'more clearly delineated': but how clearly delineated are embodied experiences? Lakoff and Johnson focus on these experiences as vehicles that are supposed to illustrate something else, rather than on the need, that I have shown, to find more straightforward vehicles *for* them. When listing the "central concepts in terms of which our bodies function", which are used as vehicles in conceptual metaphors, they include "MALE-FEMALE" among these, alongside concepts such as "UP-DOWN, IN-OUT, FRONT-BACK". (57). All these concepts, they argue are "more sharply delineated than others" and are therefore used to express less universal experiences (57).[99] Even though Lakoff and Johnson clarify that these "direct physical experiences" occur "within a vast background of cultural presupposition" (57), the inclusion of 'male-female' among the basic experiences that do not require clarification through metaphors reveals significant cis-heteronormative assumptions. While they posit that the embodied experience of being 'male/female' would be used as metaphor for 'less universal' experiences, I have demonstrated that the opposite is the case: gender-variant subjects need metaphors *for* the supposedly 'sharply delineated' experience of being male and female. The blind spot that leads Lakoff and Johnson to imply that these experiences, however culturally mediated, may be as

[98] In I.A. Richards' *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), metaphors are discussed in terms of tenor, vehicle and ground (96). The tenor is what is being illustrated (*e.g.* transition), the vehicle is the object or image by which the tenor is illustrated (*e.g.* journey), and the ground is what they have in common (*e.g,* the experience of a durational process that 'starts' and 'ends' somewhere). Vehicle and ground are themselves (spatial) metaphors, which renders the process of trying to discuss the world 'beyond' metaphors a particularly challenging endeavour, and one which inevitably continues to involve metaphorical language.
[99] Lakoff and Johnson argue that the notion of 'up/down' that is being used as a vehicle in conceptual metaphors – such as in the expressions "He's at the *peak* of health" or "He *fell* ill" – is grounded on a "[p]hysical basis: Serious illness forces us to lie down physically" (Lakoff and Johnson, 16; emphasis in original). Can the culturally contested notion of 'male' and 'female' function in the same way as 'up and down'?

universally understood as up/down, in/out, or front/back shows the need for feminist, queer and trans perspectives to nuance and reframe canonical discussions of linguistic and literary operations. In the works I have discussed, 'being (in) the body' is what requires an explanation rather than what provides it. However, as embodied experiences are being explained in terms of journeys and homes, we can similarly ask if we are taking for granted what journeys and homes are, and whether these concepts may themselves require clarification.

I have discussed critiques of *home* as a vehicle for *the body* or *the 'right' gender category*. For instance, Aizura argues that being at home is "a fantasy" that is "racially and culturally marked as Anglocentric, heteronormative and capitalist" ('Border and Homes', 290). Preciado has distorted this metaphor in interrogating whether the body, instead of a (private) home, "could be a lifelong center of imprisonment", an edifice shaped by specific technologies of sex and gender over which the inhabiting subject has no control (135). Similarly, interrogations of *transition as a journey* hinge on asking which subjects are performing the journeys on which the metaphor is based: it, in fact, entails a notion of travel as experienced by those who have leisure and freedom to cross borders, thereby implying that that the same agency and ease characterises transition. Snorton argues that the "freedom to transgress national and somatic borders" which was integral to the media representation of Jorgensen's transition was "simultaneously counterindexical and intrinsic" to the spatial logics of "Jim Crow regimes within U.S. borders" and "antiblack and white-supremacist imperialist policies" (142). Jorgensen's ability to move in and out of the country for her transition (which is mapped onto her 'movement' between genders) contrasted with the segregation of bodies enforced within and at the borders the U.S., highlighting that moving between bounded spaces does not carry the same risks and opportunities for everyone. Halberstam similarly notes a connection between freedom to 'change gender' and the liberties of the colonialist subject. Referring to Morris's *Conundrum* – which is both trans memoir and travel narrative as it describes the author's journey from England to Casablanca to undergo gender confirmation surgery – Halberstam notes that "national identity" is understood "in much the same way" as "gender identity"; as "stable, legible, and all established through the ruling consciousness of empire" (*Female Masculinity*, 169). Snorton's North American example, Halberstam's British one, Aizura's Australian context and Preciado's European reflections all show that being at home with gender, and journeying across the borders between man and woman,

are the prerogative of those subjects who are seen as 'properly' belonging in national and social spaces and as moving between them without obstacles. The use of these metaphors sets a standard of travelling and belonging that actually corresponds only to the spatiotemporal experiences of certain privileged groups.

If the vehicles of these metaphors erase and exclude some by basing a universalised understanding of the body on dominant experiences of space, metaphor emerges as a question of visibility. This is evident in Halberstam's claim that "as long as migrations and borders and home remain metaphorical figures […] transsexuals and transgender people who actually are border dwellers […] or who really have migrated from their homelands […] must always remain just outside discourse, invisible and unrecognized, always inhabiting the wrong body" (*Female Masculinity*, 172). Inhabiting the wrong body here becomes a form of trans-inhabitation that is not embraced as a desired embodiment but as the result of an exclusion. Being invisible and unrecognised are once again revealed as the flipside of the 'trap door' of visibility: visibility for some in the form of the opportunity to 'explain oneself' with metaphors entails the invisibility of others who do not have the same experience of the vehicles used. Some realities of gender-variant experience may indeed change the perception (or offer an intersectional awareness) of the metaphors for embodiment discussed so far. How can the notion of 'being at home in the body' be understood if we consider gender-variant individuals' experience of homelessness and difficulty to find shelter? How is the extent to which it is possible to cross the boundaries of gender shaped by the ability of some to attain legal citizenship within national boundaries? What are these crossings to those who are forced to migrate, are stopped at borders, are deported? And how are notions of gendered and embodied freedom and unfreedom (*e.g.* being 'trapped in the body', becoming free of labels assigned by others) informed by histories of enslavement and detention?

Like homes and journeys, metaphors of ghosts and haunting are also further complicated by unpacking what ghosts mean for gender-variant subjects and communities specifically. I have shown how the ghost is used by some writers as a figure of multi-layered temporality expressing the ambiguous materiality of certain bodily configurations; but the ghost also materially signifies death, and ghosts come to acquire specific meanings in relation to premature death, violence, and the liveability of gender-

variant lives. Awkward-Rich expresses his ambivalence towards the Trans Day of Remembrance (TDoR) and his own relationship to trans 'ghosts'.[100] On the one hand, he notes that TDoR "has historically enabled white activists to extract political capital from the deaths of primarily Black trans women" and that it "circulates 'the trans woman of color' as a dead figure and therefore strips her of her life" ('Elegy'). Yet he also points to how TDoR memorials and initiatives enabled him to "understand trans as something it was possible for me to be": through this process, "*Trans* became an intimate possibility in reference to strangers' deaths" (emphasis in original). Malatino suggests that a relationship of mutual care exists with these "traces of past lives" who "haunt us in ways that are loving", as they both "provid[e] evidence of past trans flourishing and joy" and "testify to the conditions of intensive violence that these subjects lived within and through" (Ch.1). Remembering those who were made ghostly in the past (excluded, invisible, never allowed to fully belong) can strengthens the vision of a future where gender-variant subjects might not be ghosts anymore. How does this then relate to the ghost as a metaphor for individual past or future embodiment, such as in Boylan's *I'm Looking Through You*? In a sense, the victims of transphobic crimes, those who did not live to write, haunt these memoirs even as their subjects haunt themselves. If memoirs simplify and set an exclusionary standard (and, as I have argued, the trans *autobiographical I* struggles against this tradition), the lives of those who do not make it to publication, or even articulation, "appear by way of obstruction" (Snorton, 143). By considering how the metaphorical vehicle of *ghost* is invested with specific meanings for gender-variant subjects (care, violence, public mourning, community, racism), self-haunting, or a particular way to conceive of identity-in-time, becomes grounded in a multidirectional re-narration of collective occlusions and possibilities.

Contested Vehicles, Material Spaces

As metaphorical ghosts, together with material deaths, configure a trans relationship to individual and collective time, gender-variant subjects' relationship with space also needs to be examined together as both figurative and literal. When discussing the critical tensions between feminism and trans studies, I have noted the tendency in trans-exclusionary feminism to conceive of gender as a space that some have the right to access

[100] The Trans Day of Remembrance takes place internationally every year on November 20th (since 1999) as an occasion for remembering gender-variant individuals who have been victims of murder.

and some do not (trans women entering the category of woman), as well as a space that offers new opportunities once entry into it is gained (trans men entering the category of man). Spatial relations used in trans-exclusionary discourse make more or less explicit reference to literal spaces: in the fear that people assigned male at birth might gain access to women-only spaces literally (bathrooms, shelters, rape crisis centres), gender is imagined metaphorically as one of these spaces, a territory that may be invaded. This kind of metaphor has ties to colonialist and imperialist frameworks to conceive of social and individual relations. Ruth Pearce, Sonja Erikainen and Ben Vincent urge a consideration of the "colonial legacies that have long defined racialised women as the unfeminine or 'masculine' contrast to white women's presumed 'natural' femininity" in order to reveal the women-only spaces that TERFs deem to be in need of protection are implicitly assumed to be white (680). Deciding who has access or legitimately belongs to a certain territory (*e.g.* gender as an abstract space) recalls racist and nationalist practices of restricting citizenship, and fears that a minority of trans people might become a majority echo white supremacist and anti-immigration rhetoric. When talking about gender as a space (be it a home, a trap, or a land one leaves or enters), it is worth unpacking how spaces are not only abstract tropes, but have a material existence that is entangled in historical and political relations. Halberstam warns about the "danger of transposing an already loaded conceptual frame – place, travel, location, home, borders – onto another contested site" (*Female Masculinity*, 170). If theories like Lakoff and Johnson's acknowledge that the tenor of the metaphor – the concept that requires clarification – is indeed a 'contested site' (hence the need for explanation), I argue that we should not lose sight of how the vehicle itself can be an 'already loaded conceptual frame'. Doing so would allow us to unpack the intersectional implications of dominant understandings of gender-variant embodiment, movement, safety, and freedom.

In addition to how imagining gender as a space draws onto a particular notion of space as bounded territory, with legitimate and illegitimate dwellers and in need to be protected from outsiders, the vehicle of *home* as particular kind of space can be reinvested with meaning by attending to how gender-variant individuals can struggle to find a home not only metaphorically in their body or in their gender. The metaphor can be interrogated through gender-variant subject's relationship with material housing and shelters. For instance, Jake Pyne notes that "harassment in schools, discrimination in

employment and housing, as well as familial rejection […] create the economic conditions for homelessness" for trans subjects ('Shelter Services', 132). This situation of exclusion from spaces of safety is exacerbated by the fact that shelters "are almost universally gender-specific", giving one the option to "'blend in' in such settings" or be refused access (132). In this context, "trans bodies are rendered unintelligible and unwelcome" (133). A situation of multiple exclusion from homes owing to the perception of the gender-variant body as particularly visible – and visible as not 'fitting in' – is outlined here: if being unintelligible is to be unwelcome, to blend in is to be welcome. This dynamic highlights how home (and being welcome home) is a space, literally and metaphorically, for those who are willing and able to conform to certain cis and binary norms. Paying attention to the materiality of the vehicle of 'home' shows that *the body is a home* is a metaphor that implicitly circumscribes which body can be one. While attending to these material circumstances inevitably entails geographical specificity (Pyne's case study is limited to Toronto), I continue to argue that understandings of gender as binary and fixed, as well as the marginalisation gender-variant communities, characterise Western Anglophone discourse more broadly. I take the spatial relations experienced by particular subjects in specific cities, countries, buildings, and territories as offering models that are valuable especially insofar as they sit in tension with these overarching structures.

Belonging and exclusion in figurative and material homes also relate to the matter of crossing. I have discussed representations of gender-variant individuals as being at the borders of, in between, or in transit across gender categories. How do gendered crossings and in-between spaces relate to the actual mobility of gender-variant individuals across (or existence at) borders? Martha Balaguera identifies a spatial dynamic of "permanent state of confinement in motion" (650) in the experiences of her interviewees (gender-variant individuals moving between Central America and the United States). Balaguera describes the "cycle of migration and deportation" experienced by Rosario, for example, who flees Guatemala after her family's "demand that she reverse her gender transition" (650). The multiple relationships between mobility and detention in Rosario's story complicate metaphorical journeys into another gender, beyond the *Conundrum* model of parallel travelling to a gendered and a geographical elsewhere. Rosario sets off from the 'starting point' of Guatemala in order to resist the demand that she go back to the 'starting point' of the gender assigned to her at birth. Though she is "[s]et into motion by her

nonbinary gender", the destination of the United States does not provide a home as she faces "precarity" and "state violence" (650). The ensuing pattern of crossing, detention and deportation is described by Balaguera as exemplifying the "pervasiveness of confinement through permanent displacement" (650). A "restriction" of "geographical movement" is correlated with confinement (detention) but also with movement (deportation) (650). If being *trapped* at a *starting point* from which one wants to flee occasions a *journey across* in search of a *home*, noting the fact that being *trapped* can be a consequence of *moving across* (detention) and that a desired *crossing* can lead to being forced back to a *starting point* (deportation) illuminates the difficulties of the transition that references to spatial movement are supposed to clarify. A more complex interaction of literal and metaphorical trans-inhabitations emerges from this attention to the vehicle.

Being barred from entering desired spaces and being confined in undesired spaces can shape gender-variant individuals' relationship with mobility, visibility and belonging. Eric A. Stanley notes that "many trans/queer people spend their youth shuttling between the anonymity of the streets and the hyper-surveillance of the juvenile justice system" (7). Being excluded from homes (inhabiting 'the streets') and being detained in prison spaces (having one's mobility limited) are linked by Stanley to the question of visibility (anonymity and surveillance), in the same way as, for Pyne, visibility has to do with who is granted access to shelters. Visibility (the result of moving across or being in between *metaphorical* gendered spaces) shapes subjects' relationship to *literal* spaces. Stanley presents a formulation that can be compared to Balaguera's permanent state of confinement in motion in arguing that the cycle of being "[p]icked up—locked up—placed in a home—escape—survive—picked up again […] builds a cage" (7). States of 'confinement in motion', being 'caged in a cycle', as well as being 'unwelcome' or barred access to shelter unless blending in, are geographical relations that derive from gender-variant individuals' negotiation of both material spaces and metaphorical gender spaces. They form spatiotemporal models that complicate those that are taken for granted when *journey* and *home* are used as seemingly "clearly delineated" vehicles – to use Lakoff and Johnson's term (59) – and universally shared experiences. It is a relationship to both sets of spaces (literal and metaphorical) that needs to be addressed in order to ensure safety, comfort, and well-being.

The norms that are implied by the concepts used as vehicles (homes and bounded spaces, journeys and mobility) determine which bodies, experiences and identities can be described by them. A contextualisation of vehicles might in turn produce new spatiotemporal relations (loving haunting, confinement in motion, gender citizenship) that can form the basis of inclusive and intersectional discourse about gender-variance. In trans studies, many theorisations of identity (in the form of creative metaphors) go beyond the conceptual frameworks of bounded spaces and directional movement. For instance, Jenny Sundén proposes the notion of "trans-crystals" to represent "an intense temporal layering of femininity/masculinity that makes the virtual and the actual happen together", existing "at the boundary between the present that is no longer and the future which is not yet, a doubling or echo of perception in recollection, and vice versa" (203). The spatiotemporal clustering of crystals effects a challenge to conventional trajectories and containers used to conceptualise trans experience. Hayward instead suggests that "webs" might best articulate "the act of extending bodily substance through sex transition" and the "arrangement between sensorial milieu of the self and the profusion of the world" ('Transpositions', 95). Both crystals and webs are multidirectional, collective, provisional but substantial, extended across times and realities, providing a model for thinking of the embodied self in spatiotemporal connection with others and with the world.[101] At the same time, metaphors such as webs can be used to illuminate realities that impede liveability, such as when Stanley notes that "[t]rans/gender-non-conforming and queer people, along with many others, are born into *webs* of surveillance" (7; emphasis added). This comparison shows that there is no one metaphor that is inherently best at enabling gender-variant subjects' agency or at describing anyone's experience with exhaustive complexity. This enabling can instead be effected by, first, paying attention to the underlying metaphorical concepts behind the way we conceive of identity; then, by empowering subjects to articulate new metaphors. At the same time, the vehicle of the metaphor, the clarifying concept whose meaning is the taken for granted, needs to be carefully examined for its material entanglements with the conditions of those whose experiences it is used to articulate.

[101] These formulations have affinities with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome (3), a discussion of which remains beyond the scope of this thesis.

Trans Forms: Who Speaks? Who Sees?

Linguistic and narrative structures – like metaphors – enable and constrain not only the production of texts but also real-life experiences of identity, the body, and social relations. The connection between the two needs to be borne in mind when addressing matters of speaking and seeing. Introducing the *Finding the Real Me* collection I discussed in Chapter Two, Fox and O'Keefe note that, at the time of book's publication in 2003, "members of the sex and gender diverse community have become more visible and vocal" (xv). Throughout this thesis, I have shown visibility and voice as being central concerns when it comes to the representation of gender-variant subjects in narrative. I have discussed the ethical and political stakes of marginalised subjects speaking for themselves instead of being spoken for, and of being able to control the way in which (and extent to which) they are seen after having long been the object of a classifying, evaluating or dismissive gaze. However, I have also shown that being 'visible' and 'vocal' are not unambiguously desirable positions – *to whom* and *as what* make a difference. Declining to 'tell all' – or 'show all' – means for some a refusal to make gender-variant subjectivities more legible, interesting, or palatable to others. Textual acts of seeing and speaking implicate narrative form in matters of representation, ethics, and justice, which are at stake when identities are trans-inhabited and temporalities are re-narrated. Bodies that trans-inhabit supposedly fixed and binary categories (by being at the borders, in between, in two categories successively or simultaneously) are constructed as more visible and in need of scrutiny. As this visibility is negotiated textually through the relationship between descriptions and omissions, having a voice (as narrator) can correlate with having more agency over this negotiation. Re-narration is also the expression of a voice, a speaking 'first' in order to re-arrange elements of one's story after they have been codified in supposedly universal narratives. Making visible, through these re-narrations, what has been excluded, veiled, or kept out of focus, remains an important goal for creating a more inclusive multiplicity of cultural narratives about gender-variant experience.

Speaking and seeing have been entwined throughout my discussion as related ways to negotiate agency and self-determination. Genette originally proposes a distinction between narrator and focaliser because of the need to separate "the question *who sees?*"

and "the question *who speaks?*" (*Discourse*, 186, emphasis in original).[102] More than a decade later, as the 1990s saw a proliferation of narratological approaches that both adopted and questioned the structuralist tendencies of the discipline, Manfred Jahn argued that these "strict compartmentalizations" proposed by Genette should be "undermine[d], or at least soften[ed]" (258). In this project, I am concerned with undermining 'strict compartmentalisations' of gender as much as of narrative phenomena. The gender-variant narrator is indeed precisely concerned with adopting, redefining and questioning strict compartmentalisations. In Jahn's model, the narrator and the focaliser are one and the same as they look through "windows of focalization" (243): in his expansion of a metaphor by Henry James, narrators are "the 'watchers' standing at the windows of the 'house of fiction'" (251). Over the course of my discussion, I referred to windows as the permeable borders through which the narrator approaches their story – looking in, present on the scene, crossing between inside and outside, or dwelling on that threshold. Like Suvin's glance into an unfamiliar set of norms, this positioning with respect to the storyworld entails *both* a seeing and a speaking. Accordingly, I have used the terms 'speaking' and 'seeing' as sometimes distinct, sometimes interchangeable ways of enforcing or subverting hierarchies of power. The distinction between who narrates and who focalises has, in some cases, been crucial for unpacking the dynamics of power at work in a text; at other times, the narrator/focaliser is one and the same role, that of one who has the agency to shape how, when, and which events and objects are presented to others. While 'speaking' and 'seeing' are metaphorical when it comes to written narratives (no vocal cords or optic nerves are involved, except those of flesh-and-blood readers), the embodied actions that they reference have consequences in the world outside the text.

The agent from whose 'mouth' and 'eyes' we primarily experience the narrative is, in the texts I have discussed, the first-person narrator. As I anticipated in the Introduction, focusing on first-person narration allows us to consider simultaneously the implications of this subjective position for narrative and for trans studies. As a non-gendered pronoun, the I opens up the possibility of a trans-inhabitation of gender: the entity designated by

[102] While Genette later argues that the question of "who sees?" should be replaced with "who perceives?" (*Revisited*, 64), the articulation of focalisation as vision remains central to discussions of this narrative element.

it can belong within, be outside of, or be at the borders of normatively defined categories, and these positionings can occur successively or simultaneously over the course of one narrative. The I is also a deictic term, and its referent can remain ambiguous (be any instance of the experiencing-I or the narrating-I); when an autodiegetic narrator, this referent exists across and between diegetic levels. The term 'first-person' has connotations related to both temporality and embodiment, two key topics I have focused on. 'First' resonates with the need to redress circumstances in which the gender-variant subject has not been allowed to speak first; 'person' implies that textual participants resemble flesh-and-blood individuals, and this can have consequences for these individuals in the real world. First-person narration demands that attention be paid both to the stability and presence of the I (an embodied character, approximating an embodied person, from a group that is marginalised because of their embodiment) *and* its slipperiness and multiplicity (an ambiguously referenced subject, and one who flits at the borders of the storyworld). When gender-variant subjectivity is narrated through specific forms, it draws out and exploits certain characteristics of these forms. First-person narration, for the reasons I have just outlined, allows both the affirming of a substantial (visible and vocal) identity *and* the articulation of an I that is fragmentary and in flux.

Other narrative forms are re-narrated and trans-inhabited (*i.e.* re-worked in a relationship of ambiguous belonging) in texts about gender-variant subjects. The *Bildungsroman* trajectory of the maturation of the experiencing-I into the narrating-I is both employed and questioned by a trans *autobiographical I*; the negotiation of a linear progression draws attention to how the acquiring of gender is viewed normatively as a narrative process, proceeding from unruliness to assimilation. The question of what happens after the ending, which is persistently asked by trans authors, can be put to all *Bildungsroman* narratives. The multiplication of subjectivities that occurs with a *haunted I* can unsettle existing models of collective and individual narration, exposing the porosity of the boundary between the two and the relation between (multi-vocally) speaking and being (multiply) embodied. The *fluid I* draws attention to the ways in which, and the reasons why, narrators may be more or less textually visible, and to the relationships of closeness and distance that an autodiegetic narrator has with their characters and storyworld. The ambiguously gendered existence of the *fluid I* reveals that trans-inhabiting gender categories may lead to challenging other categorisations and

compartmentalisations. In narratives with an *alien I*, I have argued, the supposedly unfamiliar world of the narrator is rendered intelligible through the glance of a first-person and a style that reduces estrangement. In this way, non-human narrators reveal that dominant linguistic structures and visual epistemologies produce some humans as (racialised and gendered) aliens: letting these characters see and speak, then, becomes a strategy to address real-world marginalisations. When discussing the *exposed I*, I have noted that an unequal distribution of agency and authority can exist between two versions of the same I (*e.g.* experiencing-Callie/narrating-Callie), especially when a text is invested in maintaining a boundary and a hierarchy between binary genders. On the other hand, a multiplication of intra- and extra-diegetic subjects who speak or decline to speak, who reveal themselves or hide, can have the effect of centring a community of voices that recognises the gaps and tears in its history but makes this history its own. The heterogeneous way in which I have invoked narratological terms and distinctions throughout this project reflects the gender-variant narrator's questioning of fixed taxonomies: this narrator does not fully do away with categories of narrative and gender, but they negotiate their boundaries, applicability, and multivalences.

Just like metaphors can voice and make visible while also silencing and occluding, narrative classifications and descriptions need to be interrogated for their power to exclude and discipline as well as to articulate and illuminate; this interrogation has been prompted for me by gender-variant narrators' ambiguous fitting-in into the 'shelters' of normative spaces. A methodology at the intersection of trans studies and feminist/queer narratology – as well as the notions of trans-inhabitation and re-narration that I have proposed – can be employed to analyse texts that are not explicitly about gender-variant identity. Transformations of identity in narrative, the simultaneous desire for and suspicion toward a stable self, the representation of narrative bodies, and negotiations with normative spaces through which an individual ''journey' is both sought and questioned, are some of the narrative situations that can benefit from this methodology. The lessons from gender-variant narrators can help reveal how all narrators have ghostly, ambiguously embodied, borderland, and multiple existences, and how all texts work with temporal structures that are at the same time enabling and exclusionary. Similarly, tying metaphors to their material context, and textual gazes and voices to visibility and vocality – as I have done in this Conclusion – is an operation that extends

beyond a focus on gender-variant identity. The tension between rootedness and movement, embodiment and transcendence, substantiation and transformation, that is articulated in trans forms becomes the basis of a broader interrogation of how identity, the body, narrative, and social structures are understood.

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