Comparatismi 11 2026
ISSN 2531-7547
https://doi.org/10.14672/20263476

The irreducible multiplicity of sexes. A theoretical and comparative study on trans identities in literature and media

Fabio Vittorini

Abstract • The differences between the narrative construction of cis and trans identities depend on the archetypes they are based on. The traditional models of hero's journey, bildungsroman and autobiography provide cis narratives with structures that are centered on the hero's Ego: any possible decentering tendency is solved by a re-centering countertendency. For lack of any traditional model, trans narratives, even when centered on the hero's Ego, make the decentering process the primary narrative function: the re-centering attempts always appear provisional and other-directed. Trans narratives indirectly shed light on one of the oldest clichés of cis narratives: even when problematized, the Ego is a presupposition rather than an outcome, also because its gender identity lies ontologized and inert outside the limits of the narrative and often constitutes its horizon line. Only during the last two decades trans identities established themselves as autonomous subjectivities capable of elaborating their own narrative discourses, that is counter-discourses finally allowing them to write themselves into the discourses by which they have been written for centuries.

Keywords • Trans Identity; Cis Identity; Trans Studies; Narrative Structures; Trans Literature; Trans Cinema; Trans TV Series

Abstract • Le differenze tra la costruzione narrativa delle identità cis e trans dipendono dagli archetipi di riferimento. I modelli tradizionali del viaggio dell'eroe, del romanzo di formazione e dell'autobiografia hanno fornito alle narrazioni cis strutture centrate sull'Io dell'eroe: ogni possibile tendenza decentrante viene risolta da una controtendenza ricentrante. In mancanza di qualsiasi modello tradizionale, le narrazioni trans, anche quando sono centrate sull'Io dell'eroe, fanno del decentramento la funzione narrativa primaria: i tentativi di ri-centratura appaiono sempre provvisori e orientati verso l'Altro. Le narrazioni trans portano indirettamente alla luce uno dei cliché costitutivi delle narrazioni cis: anche quando problematizzato, l'Io è un presupposto piuttosto che un risultato, anche perché la sua identità di genere giace ontologizzata e inerte al di fuori dei limiti della narrazione e spesso ne costituisce la linea dell'orizzonte. Solo negli ultimi due decenni le identità trans si sono affermate come soggettività autonome capaci di elaborare discorsi narrativi propri, contro-discorsi che consentono loro finalmente di inserirsi nei discorsi da cui sono state scritte per secoli.

Parole chiave • Identità trans; Identità cis; Studi trans; Strutture narrative; Letteratura trans; Cinema trans; Serie tv trans

Ledizioni

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1. Preliminary

Over the last century, the progressive surfacing and development of a trans wave in Western literary and media narratives mainly consisted in a slow emancipation of the concept of trans identity from two biased and marginalizing cultural frameworks: 1) the psychopathological perspective established by the medical and criminological treatises published between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Schiebinger, 1993; Dreger, 1998; Schettini, 2012); 2) the voyeuristic sensationalism nourished by the press and by a few literary and cinematic genres, which reached its peak between the 1950s and the 1970s (Vittorini, 2024a, pp. 125-175). In order to affirm themselves and be entitled to a complete and authentic representation, trans identities had and still have to escape from the hidden cage of gender binarism, which ensures the stability of modern, bourgeois and capitalist culture by condemning non-conforming identities to a state of "abjection", that is a condition of "nonexistence and hallucination", a level of reality that, if acknowledged, could "annihilate" the reader or viewer (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). Throughout the 20th century the growth of a trans narrative ecosystem also consisted in a gradual elaboration of its own discursive strategies, namely peculiar thematic recurrences and specific stylistic features. That elaboration matured in the space where the main material and symbolic game of any trans narrative must be constantly played: the representation of the "queer body" (Holmes, 1994; Vittorini, 2024a, pp. 11-40). We will use the concept of queer body as the access key to the semiosphere of trans identities, since the body is the "deep structure" which any trans narrative (understood as a "superficial structure") at the same time "hides as a thing" and "reveals as a sign" (Lavagetto, 1985, p. 148).

2. The Thing. A theoretical frame

The *deep structure hidden as a thing* by trans narratives "is to be found at most as something missed", a void which can be filled only by provisional "objects" or "signifiers" through a "sublimation" process, like Jacques Lacan's "The Thing", that is the absolute Other in reference to which the subject "is constituted in a kind of relationship characterized by primary affect, prior to any repression" (Lacan, 1992, pp. 52-54), the phantasm of wholeness and fullness connected to the mother's body. We can try to define the main object/signifier risen by trans narratives "to the dignity of The Thing" (Lacan, 1992, p. 112) by borrowing some of the words used by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe the body tropes in carnivalesque literature. That object/signifier is the identity understood in a modern perspective as it was enclosed in an "entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 320). An ideal and standardized body that is regulated in all its parts or manifestations, offered as a humanistic essence, a complete ontological datum (the *id* of identity), whose surface can always be circumscribed and adjusted by filling its gaps and solving its inconsistencies. A body that

expresses an identity eliding "the biopolitical and contextual conditions of its production, which is precisely what enables its subjective experience as essential and transhistorical, a key modality for the work of biopower" (Valentine, 2014, pp. 103-104). A mythical body like the ones described in the first mainstream trans autobiographies. In *Man into woman. An authentic record of a change of sex* (1933), Lili Elbe, later protagonist of David Ebershoff's novel *The Danish Girl* (2000) and its cinematic adaptation (2015) by Tom Hooper, wrote: "the male organ was then removed, […] then I, Lili, was supplied with fresh ovaries from a woman of six-and-twenty, which 'normalized' my whole being and its functions, that henceforth I was and am a woman like other women" (Elbe, 1933, p. 284). In *Roberta Cowell's Story by Herself* (1954), she stated: "my body had changed completely, beyond recognition, and my personality had undergone an almost complete metamorphosis" (Cowell, 1954, p. 102). In *A personal autobiography* (1967), Christine Jorgensen described the body she finally obtained after she "completed the transition to womanhood": "I […] was as complete a person as I'd dreamed of being, both emotionally and physiologically" (Jorgensen, 1968, p. 228). In *Conundrum* (1974), Jan Morris enthusiastically described her sex reassignment surgery: "To expunge those superfluities, […] to scour myself of that mistake, to start again, to recapture some of that white freshness I used to feel […]! To alter the body! To match my sex to my gender at last, and make a whole of me!" (Morris, 1974, p. 50). Normality, completeness and wholeness are the qualities that these mythical tales attributed to the transitioned body.

The *deep structure revealed as a sign* by trans narratives is the identity understood as a signifier as such, standing for itself, in a metamodernist perspective trying to conciliate between modern referential fullness and postmodernist ironic demystification (Van Den Akker, Gibbons, Vermeulen, 2017; Vittorini, 2017). This identity emerges from a body that is not (and cannot be narrated as it was) formed once and for all, delimited, homogeneous and perfectly individual, but tends to go beyond its limits in the form of excrescence, ramification, evacuation. A body whose orifices are open to denote its incompleteness and imperfection, its need to unite with other bodies and the surrounding world; a body whose events "are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other […], at their points of intersection", generating "a two-bodied image" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 322). A body that presents itself as a posthuman device, a de-ontologized structure that can only be analyzed as an uneven and no longer circumscribable surface, in an infinite network of references to other bodies and identities (Morland, 2009; Sykes, 2011; Atkins, 2012). A body that can cause "a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2) by presenting itself as something that resists any recognition and threatens the viewer with annihilation through the absence of any familiar meaning. A body which Earl Lind (aka "Ralph Werther"/"Jennie June", pseudonyms of the writer Mowry Saben: see Cowan, 2024), author of *Autobiography of an Androgyne* (1918), the very first trans autobiography, defined "transitional": "The two sexes gradually merge into each other. Between the complete physical and psychical man and the similarly complete woman, there are innumerable stages of transitional individuals" (Lind, 1918, p. 8). A body which Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge* (1968), the first extensive and experimental trans novel, described as not coinciding with what a man is, but with "what he must become once he has ceased to be confined to a single sexual role, to a single person… once he has become free to blend with others, to exchange personalities with both men and women, to play out the most elaborate of dreams in a world where there will soon be no limits to the human spirit's play" (Vidal, 1968, p. 218). A body which Bakhtin defined "grotesque" and we define queer.

The queer body is always desiring and signifying a desire through which identity signifies itself as its subject (Arietti *et al.*, 2010, p. 80). The queer body is "a world of pleasure

waiting to be explored", a world "of infinite possibility" (Queer Nation, 1990), but also political, eager "to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present", to "dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds": it "contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity", since it is "also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future" (Muñoz, 2019, p. 1). The notion of queer reminds us that, if body, language and identity are not-coinciding and not-reducible to each other, the pre-cultural materiality of the body has the power to break the patterns of any language that tries to normalize identity by denouncing its ideological origin. The notion of queer reaffirms the aporetic multiformity of nature on the forced uniformity of culture. Severo Sarduy, author of the experimental trans novel *Cobra* (1972), wrote that the body is a signifier "structurally reflecting the inharmony, the rupture of homogeneity of the logos as absolute, the lack that constitutes our epistemic foundation": the body is the "structural reflection of a desire that fails to reach its object, a desire for which the logos has only set a screen that hides the lack" (Sarduy, 1999, p. 1403).

Like the queer body, gender identity in its whole spectrum is a performative construct whose shapes and meanings exist in a natively relational dimension. It cannot be defined as "a property of bodies or something originally existent in human beings" (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 3), but rather as "the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations" by the deployment of "a complex political technology" (Foucault, 1978, p. 127). Gender identity is "a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration": what we consider as "an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body", that is "a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures" (Butler, 1999, p. XV). If we de-naturalize and de-ontologize the "true discourses concerning sex" (Foucault, 1978, p. 67) and gender identity by highlighting their ideological origin, "the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality is unmasked as that which produces and reifies these ostensible categories of ontology" (Butler, 1999, p. XXVIII). If we deconstruct the "defining institutions" of "phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality" and oppose "the normative violence implied by ideal morphologies of sex" (Butler, 1999, pp. XXIX-XXX), we can deconstruct "the pervasive and often invisible heteronormativity" (Warner, 1991, p. 3) that underpins the binary system of genders and the socio-economical structures using that system as their indisputable postulate.

From the 1960s on, the "true discourses" on gender identity were questioned by the heretical practices initially enacted by the feminist movements and then by the gay liberation movements. The latter conveyed the instances of homosexual and trans people, a heterogeneous multi-community which thirty years later, during the AIDS crisis, gathered under the all-encompassing, political and theoretical label of queer (De Lauretis, 1991). The attempts to conceptualize the "new forms of gendering that have emerged in light of transgenderism and transsexuality, lesbian and gay parenting, new butch and femme identities" produced "a certain crisis in ontology experienced at the level of both sexuality and language" (Butler, 1999, p. XI) by disrupting "the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels… over gender categories" (Stryker, 2004, p. 212). In particular, trans bodies showed the power to put in check at the same time the phallus, logos and binarism by dismantling the reproductive obsession implied by heteronormativity, since the power of the masculine (phallus) and the power of language (logos) consist in (pro)creation or reproduction (of the species or reality). As the philosopher Luciano Parinetto stated in *Corpo e rivoluzione in Marx. Morte, diavolo, analità* (1977), the "polymorphous libido" manifested by the queer bodies "can be set to criticize the phallus-father, the phallus-boss,

and the entire vertically structured society" by means of a "corporeity finally liberated […] from the reduction of eros to pure reproductive genitality" (Parinetto, 2015, pp. 89-90).

Resonating with these new bodily and social experiences of gendering, postmodernist episteme, which was obsessed with freeing signs from the cage of referentiality and delivering them to the purest reversibility, assigned to the "sexual body" the "fate" of a cultural "transsexuality": "not in any anatomical sense, but rather in the more general sense of transvestitism, of playing with the commutability of the signs of sex, and of playing, in contrast to the former manner of playing on sexual difference, on sexual indifference: on lack of differentiation between the sexual poles" (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 20). Whether "the operation in question is surgical or semio-urgical, whether it involves organs or signs, we are in any case concerned with replacement parts, and since today the body is fated to become a prosthesis, it is logical enough that our model of sexuality should have become transsexuality" (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 20). It explains why Myra Breckinridge, who wanted to "become world dictator", aimed at "*the destruction of the last vestigial traces of traditional manhood in the race in order to realign the sexes, thus reducing population while increasing human happiness and preparing humanity for its next stage*" (Vidal, 1968, p. 41).

The "transsexual" dimension subordinated the primacy of a creationistic nature, modernly understood as a being expressing and reproducing itself through unchangeable differences, to the primacy of a laical culture artificially manipulating that being, which is now expressed and reproduced through ever changeable differences. By switching the nature/culture signs and removing them from the modern antithetical logic, postmodernism appeared as "the era of the Transsexual": even if "the conflicts linked to difference – and even the biological and anatomical signs of difference – survive long after the real otherness of the sexes has disappeared", the masculine and feminine "are in fact in league to short-circuit difference. They function like communicating vessels, according to the new machinic rituals of switching or commutation. […] Instead of a dual relation, sex becomes a reversible function. In place of alterity, an alternating current" (Baudrillard, 1996, pp. 118-119). Mario Mieli, a forerunner of the queer studies, in his posthumous novel *Il risveglio dei Faraoni* (1994) obsessively referred to the reversibility of the sexes: while seeing an "unknown bewitching boy", the narrator said that "he […] was virile and full of feminine grace, as if he were his own wife" (Mieli, 1994, p. 50); later, while looking at a painting, he asked: "who did this goose with a human face, which was neither a woman's nor a man's, look like? Looking at myself in a mirror that reflected the painting, I had the sensation of mirroring myself twice" (Mieli, 1994, p. 59).

3. The will to knowledge. A historical frame

Postmodernism challenged the modern progressive "metanarrative apparatus of legitimation" (Lyotard, 1979, p. 7), which regimented the proliferating, entropic and contradictory vitality of existence through an incessant ideological work of "semantic transformation", an "artifice of calculation" that reduced "a voluminous commodity" to "a condensed one" (Barthes, 1970, pp. 100-101). Modern knowledge preferred the synthetical to the analytical, the antithetical to the complex, the apodictic to the aporetic, the consistent to the discordant, the continuous to the discrete. On the contrary, given its progressive dispersion and democratization through the information technologies, postmodernist knowledge was no longer "an exclusive instrument of power", but also an instrument of potential mass liberation, which had a precious prerogative: "it refine[d] our sensitivity to differences and strengthen[ed] our ability to tolerate the immeasurable. Its very *raison d'être* [lay] not in

the homology of experts, but in the paralogy of inventors" (Lyotard, 1979, pp. 8-9). Postmodernist knowledge was methodological rather than referential and aimed at developing the cognitive skills necessary to accommodate the differences implied by the immeasurable multiplicity of reality. The descriptions of scientists (homologies), which economically reduced reality to its minimal components through aseptic and non-contradictory metalanguages, were flanked or outclassed by the inventions of narrators (paralogies), which reproduced the complexity of reality by creative languages operating through amplifications, shifts, associations, contradictions and estrangements.

Postmodernist knowledge entrusted to the redundant richness and erotic charge of aesthetic languages the knowledge of a reality whose incommensurability has been shown once and for all during the first half of the 20th century by history (the World Wars, the traumas of Holocaust and atomic bombs), philosophy (Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl), science (Max Planck, Albert Einstein) and psychoanalysis (still closely related to clinical medicine: Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung). In the latter area, in particular, the studies on sexuality, which during the second half of the 19th century already ventured to explore "abnormal" behaviors such as those of "hysterics", "pederasts" or "paraphiliacs" (Casper, 1852; Tardieu, 1872; Charcot, 1882; Krafft-Ebing, 1886), opened up to new reflections on sexual orientations and gender identities that began to question the male/female binary system, both in individual and social terms, developing unprecedented conceptualizations and taxonomies. The ferment of new ideas immediately translated into a sort of nomenclatorial anxiety, especially in Germany: it was necessary to save very delicate questions from nonexistence by giving them a name.

Between 1864 and 1865, in the first four volumes of his *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe*, the jurist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs classified sexual inclination ("*erotische Neigung*" [Ulrichs, 1864b, p. 49]) as a generic category that blended the notions to come of sexual orientation ("*geschlechtliche Liebe*" [Ulrichs, 1864b, p. 7]) and gender identity ("Körper" [Ulrichs, 1864b, p. 18]) by platonically hypothesizing the existence of three sexes:

1) Male, identified in heterosexual men ("*dioninge*": Ulrichs, 1864a, p. 1);

2) Female, identified in heterosexual women ("*dioningine*": Ulrichs, 1865b, p. 42);

3) Uranian (or intermediate or third sex), identified in homosexual men ("*urninge*": Ulrichs, 1864a, p. 1) and women ("*urningine*": Ulrichs, 1865b, p. 45), bisexual ("*uranodioninge*/*ine*": Ulrichs, 1865a, p. XXIII) and intersexual people ("*zwitter*": Ulrichs, 1864a, p. 8) (see also Kennedy, 2002).

In 1869 the journalist Karl Maria Kertbeny coined the term "*Homosexual*[*ist*]" to define men or women afflicted by a "passion [*Leidenschaft*]" that forbids "to escape the impact [*Eindruck*] exerted on them by individuals of the same sex" (Kertbeny, 1869, p. 37). In 1870 the psychiatrist Carl Westphal explained the same phenomenon introducing the concept of "inverted sexual instinct [*conträre Sexualempfindung*]" (Westphal, 1870, p. 73), immediately taken up by the Italian coroner Arrigo Tamassia (1878), the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and psychiatrist Valentin Magnan (1883), and the English poet John Addington Symonds (1883). The competition between the terms Homosexual, Inverted and Uranian, all aiming to replace the derogatory terms Sodomite and Pederast, continued until the 1950s, when the first term got the better of the others thanks to the definitive separation of psychological analysis from anatomical and biological studies within the discourses on sexual orientation (Beachy, 2010). Homosexuality was initially "transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul", then recognized as an orientation that has nothing to do with gender identity, appearing more and more as "one of the forms of sexuality". In the meantime, the *scientia sexualis*

incorporated the new territories discovered while mapping the distance that separated the continents of the masculine and feminine (Foucault, 1978, p. 43).

While the geneticist Richard Goldschmidt (1915 and 1917) kept the meaning of the term Intersexual to individuals previously called pseudohermaphrodites, born with both male and female sexual traits (chromosomes, hormones, gonads, external genitalia, etc.), the physician Magnus Hirschfeld, founder of the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (1899-1923), coined the interrelated terms Transvestite and Transsexual, variants of the phenomenon of "sexual metamorphism [*Sexualmetamorphismus*]" (Hirschfeld, 1910, p. 300), whose common assumption was the variable presence of male and female elements in each individual. Most men who "feel like women when they wear women's clothes" and most women who "feel like men when they wear men's clothes are fully aware that in reality they are not so", regardless of their sexual orientation. Yet some of these men "imagine – in this case the desire initiates the thought – that their skin is softer, their shape rounder and their movements more graceful than they are in men, but nevertheless they perfectly know the truth and are often depressed by the fact that they do not physically belong to the sex they most desire and love" (Hirschfeld, 1910, p. 235). Some of them, who are suffering from "transsexualism of the soul [*seelischer Transsexualismus*]" (Hirschfeld, 1923, p. 15), come to desire to take on the physical characteristics of the opposite sex (Meyerowitz, 1998; Hill, 2005). Some of these latter underwent the first hormonal therapies and sex reassignment surgeries at the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919-1933) founded in Berlin by Hirschfeld himself. Among the first ones who had orchiectomy and penectomy there were the female impersonator Charlotte Curtis Charlaque, the painter Toni Ebel, who was Charlotte's lover, and the waitress Dora Rudolfine Richter. The three of them also had the same experimental vaginoplasty as Lili Elbe later in Dresden (Meyerowitz, 2002, pp. 18-20). In 1933, the year Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party came to power, Charlaque, Ebel and Richter anonymously appeared in *Mysterium des Geschlechtes* by Lothar Golte. Even though it was advertised as an "important sexual research movie" dealing with "sexual problems (sex change) in an interesting and discreet way", it rawly mixed fiction (a girl and a boy, both medical students, fall in love and visit "a strange bar where they have the opportunity to study sexually abnormal people in their own environment") and documentary (detailed scenes of sex reassignment surgery and rejuvenating testicular transplantation borrowed from the movies *Die Steinach-Operation am Menschen* [1922] by Hans Schulze and *Gesetze der Liebe: Aus der Mappe eines Sexualforschers* [1927] by Hirschfeld and Richard Oswald) (Brunner, 2016).

The Nazi regime took reactionary countermeasures against the extraordinary libertarian ferment of the 1920s and 1930s: in 1933 Hitler ordered the destruction of Hirschfeld's Institut and the deportation of homosexual and trans people. After the Second World War, once Ulrichs', Kertbeny's, Westphal's, Goldschmidt's and Hirschfeld's new scientific words have given "things" (orientations, genders) the right to have a place in the "world" (of conscious thoughts and social discourses), those words pushed literary fiction to experiment new narrative forms in order to allow humanity, whose knowledge and freedom were growing exponentially, to represent the infinite reserve of its differences. In this context, many postmodernist novels appeared which featured or starred trans characters, underlining that any trans "discourse" is originally postmodernist, since "it subverts binarism, refuses closure, and foregrounds multiplicity" (Stone, 2014, p. 95). One can mention *Lolita* (1955) by Vladimir Nabokov, *La Poupée* (1956) by Jacques Audiberti, *L'Anonimo lombardo* (1959) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (1963) by Alberto Arbasino, *Naked Lunch* (1959) and *The Soft Machine* (1961) by William S. Burroughs, *Tristessa* (1960) by Jack Kerouac, *Rayuela* (1963) by Julio Cortázar, *City of Night* (1963) by John Rechy, *Last Exit to*

Brooklyn (1964) by Hubert Selby Jr., *Second Skin* (1964) by John Hawkes, *A Queer Kind of Death* (1966) by George Baxt, *Myra Breckinridge* and *Myron* (1974) by Vidal, *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) by Philip Roth, *The Edible Woman* (1969) by Margaret Atwood, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) by Christa Wolf, *Cobra* by Sarduy, *L'impuro folle* (1974) by Roberto Calasso, *Scende giù per Toledo* (1975) by Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) by Manuel Puig, *Le Bal des folles* (1977) by Copi, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter, and *Cima delle nobildonne* (1985) by Stefano D'Arrigo.

In the meantime, the studies on sexuality exponentially grew, with a predictable peak between the 1960s and the 1970s, while the sexual revolution exploded. Hirschfeld's theories and practices on transsexuality spread in the United States thanks to the publications of a few sexologists and were popularized through the great media coverage on some trans women's stories (Elbe, Cowell, Jorgensen, Coccinelle, April Ashley, etc.). In 1949 David Cauldwell defined "*psychopathia transexualis*" as an asymmetry between biological and psychological sex that can generate a desire for reassignment classified as a "disease": "When an individual fails to mature according to his (or her) proper biological and sexological status, such an individual is psychologically (mentally) deficient" and "determines to live and appear as a member of the sex to which he or she does not belong" (Cauldwell, 1949, p. 139). In 1955 John Money, a controversial pioneer of studies on "hermaphroditism" and surgical sex reassignment, empirically defined the concept of "gender role" as "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively. It includes, but is not restricted to, sexuality in the sense of eroticism", as well as "general mannerisms, deportment and demeanor" (Money, Hampson, Hampson, 1955, p. 302).

In 1958 Robert Stoller started the Gender Identity Research Project at the UCLA Medical Center; in 1963 he introduced the term "gender identity" during the International Congress of Psychoanalysis, and in 1968 he published the results of his research, defining comparatively "gender identity" and "gender role": "*Gender identity* starts with the knowledge and awareness, whether conscious or unconscious, that one belongs to one sex and not the other, though as one develops, gender identity becomes much more complicated, so that, for example, one may sense himself as not only a male but a masculine man or an effeminate man or even a man who fantasies being a woman. *Gender role* is the overt behavior one displays in society, the role which he plays, especially with other people, to establish his position with them insofar as his and their evaluation of his gender is concerned" (Stoller, 1968, p. 10).

In 1965 John Oliven coined the term Transgender as an alternative to transsexual, recalling the correlation between transvestism and transsexuality hypothesized by Hirschfeld: "Where the compulsive urge reaches beyond female vestments, and becomes an urge for gender ('sex') change, transvestism becomes transsexualism. The term is misleading; actually, transgenderism is what is meant, because sexuality is not a major factor in primary transvestism" (Oliven, 1965, p. 514). In 1966 Harry Benjamin published *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, where he described transsexuality as a psychosexual condition linked to transvestism (in the so-called "Sex Orientation Scale" [Benjamin, 1966, p. 16]) and medically treatable (through hormone therapy, surgery, etc.).

In 1972 Money, who in 1965 had founded the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic with Claude Migeon, definitively clarified the relationship between the concepts of "Gender Identity" ("The sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as male, female, or ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior") and "Gender Role" ("Everything that a person says and does, to indicate to others or to the self the degree that one is either male, or female, or ambivalent; it includes

but is not restricted to sexual arousal and response"), concluding that "gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity" (Money, Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 4).

While gender clinics policed patients' sexual practices and contained trans 'excesses' by allowing transitions only insofar as they reintegrated patients as 'normal' people whose sexuality resulted not too 'excessive' and (re)oriented them to heterosexuality, sexology strived to elaborate a coherent metalanguage ("homology") in order to economically and neutrally classify the newly discovered relations between sex, gender and identity. Obviously, "the old taxonomies" did not "disappear in a brutal way, leaving room for the emerging entries", but continued "to exist in a relationship of unstable cohabitation with the new categories" or were "'re-signified', that is redefined starting from the most recent notions" (Vázquez García, 2008, p. 117). The intersections of the categories of sex, gender and identity started to venture beyond the perimeter of the binary model, which was one of the "grand narratives of legitimation" of modern culture (Lyotard, 1979, p. 51).

As theoretical counterpart of postmodernism, (post)structuralist thought devoted itself to deconstructing those narratives. Within this deconstructionist framework, Michel Foucault's *La Volonté de savoir* (1976) analyzed "the production of discourses to which it has been attributed […] a value of truth" and came to the conclusion that that production "is linked to the various mechanisms and institutions of power" whose aim is to regulate the contents and forms of truth (Foucault, 2005, p. 8). The "true discourses concerning sex" (Foucault, 1978, p. 67) made by modern culture in the shadow of the all-encompassing binary notion of gender were more and more intensively deconstructed by postmodernist philosophers, who crossed different disciplines such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, semiotics etc. This crossing generated the cultural studies, and later the gender studies. The tipping point of gender deconstruction came with the publication of a few essays which radically redefined the concept: gender was no longer analyzed as a datum or essence, but as a construct or heuristic tool which could be used to map the area of symbolic intersection between the individual (identity) and the social (role) dimension of the subject's life (Spector, 1986; De Lauretis, 1987; Garrett, 1987; Scott, 1988; Butler, 1999; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Cranny-Francis *et al.*, 2002; Grebowicz, 2007; Krijnen, Van Bauwel, 2015; Soh, 2020).

Towards the end of the 1980s, with the advent of metamodernism episteme, "postmodernist anti-narrative fluidity, which deconstructed regimes, identities, genres, cultures, depriving them of the traditional narrative patterns of modern realism", was repositioned "within new narrative patterns, which mediated between the disenchanted derealization of postmodernism and the enchanted realism of modernity" (Vittorini, 2021, p. 7). Metamodernist fiction marked "a turn towards the story, but not merely to the story as entertainment, of which postmodern literature, especially low postmodernism, abounds, but as meaningful narrative that involves the audience, and answers some of its quandaries, thus aiming to either coax or shock the reader into regaining their humanity of concern, care, and compassion. It is a turn that restores to story its meaning, which somehow expresses the hope of restoring meaning to one's life" (Dumitrescu, 2007). Without completely renouncing postmodernist epistemology and aesthetics, metamodernist fiction retrieved the existential and ontological dimension rejected by postmodernism, reconfiguring narrative activity as "the privileged discursive expression of preoccupation" (Ricœur, 1980, p. 176), that is, the representation of life as a relationship with the world and a desiring and ethical tension towards the future. The abstract artificiality, undifferentiation, commutation and reversibility of the postmodernist "transsexual" condition described by Baudrillard are now translated into life, lowered into the material, spurious and contradictory lives of the human beings who

populate metamodernist stories. After all, the prefix *meta-* shares with the prefix *trans-* the asymmetrical meanings 'to go beyond', 'to be between' and 'to be with', defining the metamorphosis/transformation more as a process than as a result, as a passage from a state X to a state Y (to go beyond) that does not cancel X, but incorporates it, merging with it (to be with), so that the subject, even if identifiable on the surface with Y, in depth is always both X and Y (to be between).

Within the new wave of metamodernist fiction, we can mention a growing number of novels starring trans characters, such as *L'Enfant de sable* (1985) by Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Eva Luna* (1987) by Isabel Allende, *Patty Diphusa* (1991) by Pedro Almodóvar, *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) by Leslie Feinberg, *Travesti* (1994) by Mircea Cărtărescu, *Cock and Bull* (1994) by Will Self, *Princesa* (1994) by the trans woman Fernanda Farias de Albuquerque and Maurizio Iannelli, *Invisible Monsters* (1999) by Chuck Palahniuk, *Tengo miedo torero* (2001) by Pedro Lemebel, *Middlesex* (2002) by Jeffrey Eugenides, *Minchia di re* (2004) by Giacomo Pilati, *Italia De Profundis* (2008) by Giuseppe Genna, *La Virgen cabeza* (2009) by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, *Tiranan sydän* (2016) by Pajtim Statovci, *Nefando* (2016) by Mónica Ojeda, *Frankissstein* (2019) by Jeanette Winterson, *Llámenme Casandra* (2019) by Marcial Gala, *Cantico dell'abisso* (2021) by Ariase Barretta, and an increasing number of novels written by trans authors, such as *The Appointment* (2020) by Katharina Volckmer, *Sarà solo la fine del mondo* (2021) by Liv Ferracchiati, *Las malas* (2019) and *Tesis sobre una domesticación* (2019) by Camila Sosa Villada, *La mala costumbre* (2023) by Alana S. Portero, *Detransition, Baby* (2021) and *Stag Dance* (2025) by Torrey Peters.

These metamodernist trans novels break down the self-referential, nihilistic, and narcissistic autocracy of late postmodernism narrating/narrated subjects, who were the only children of a world that they rejected and replaced with their metanarrative fantasies, and problematically put the relationships between individuals, identities, genders, roles, and lived experiences back at the center. Those relationships, which often result incomplete or superfetating, encrypted or unfiltered, based on absences or hyper-presences, missing models or deadly clichés, are narrated by seeking a mediation "between postmodern[ist] irony (encompassing nihilism, sarcasm, and the distrust and deconstruction of grand narratives, the singular and the truth) and modern enthusiasm (encompassing everything from utopism to the unconditional belief in Reason)" (Vermeulen, van den Akker, 2010). Metamodernist fiction progressively abandons "tactics such as pastiche and parataxis for strategies like myth and *metaxis*, melancholy for hope, and exhibitionism for engagement" (Vermeulen, van den Akker, 2010), and initiates a new "structure of feeling" (Williams, 2001, p. 33) which tries to represent identity neither as "a sacralised inner sanctum, nor a pure socially shaped entity", but as "an 'in-between', a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects" (Braidotti, 2000, p. 159), in a fluid and "intersectional" perspective (Crenshaw, 1989).

4. New organs and desires: present trans narratives

In Western fiction, the substantial difference between the narrative construction of cis identities (which came from the centuries-old tradition of modernity and was reformulated during the 20th century by postmodernism) and trans identities (which finds its full formulation between postmodernism and metamodernism) concerns the archetypes they are based on and the history of their sedimentation.

The centuries-old models of travel literature (Homer), bildungsroman (Goethe), autobiography (Rousseau), and all the genres produced by the melodramatic mode in post-

Enlightenment modernity (Brooks, 1976; Vittorini, 2020), provided the authors of cis narratives with consolidated and varied structures capable of keeping the narration always centered on the Ego. Any eventual decentralization was followed by a decisive re-centering process, often supported by the theoretical and therapeutic paraphernalia of psychoanalysis (which makes the recentering process of the subject its primary purpose). The (self)representation and construction of "His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every daydream and of every story" (Freud, 1959, p. 150), could pass through the Other, but it always ended up going beyond, framing the relationship with the Other as a provisional draft of the final Text, all occupied by the Ego.

The first authors of trans narratives didn't have any historically stabilized model, so in many cases they recurred to biased and marginalizing cultural patterns, such as:

1) the psychopathological one established by medicine and criminology, exemplified by the novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) by Radclyffe Hall, the movie *Mysterium des Geschlechtes*, the novel *Psycho* (1959) by Robert Bloch and its cinematic adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock (1960), the movie *Dressed to Kill* (1980) by Brian De Palma: they tragically depicted trans identities as deviations leading to profound body modifications or disfigurements, and stigmatized their ominous otherness that threatened the binary norm;

2) the ludic one, exemplified by movies such as *The Masquerader* (aka *The Female Impersonator*, 1914) by Charlie Chaplin, *Viktor und Viktoria* (1933) by Reinhold Schünzel, *Some Like It Hot* (1959) by Billy Wilder, *Sesso matto* (1973) by Dino Risi, *La Cage aux folles* (1978) by Édouard Molinaro, and by novels such as *Il travestito* (1974) by Antonio Amurri: they comically depicted trans identities as disguises acting on the surface of unmodified bodies, and neutralized them as temporary suspensions and (re)confirmations of the binary norm.

In other cases, the authors of trans narratives borrowed more neutral cis models, sometimes aesthetically or critically problematizing them. The novel *Orlando. A Biography* (1928) by Virginia Woolf and its cinematic adaptation (1992) by Sally Potter are allegorically gender-questioning bildungsromans disguised as biographies. The novel *La pelle* (1949) by Curzio Malaparte is a historical homo-hysterical novel. The movie *Glen or Glenda* (1953) by Edward D. Wood Jr and the novel *City of Night* are bildungsromans involving real sex reassignments. The books by Elbe, Cowell, Morris and Jorgensen, as well as the latter cinematic adaptation *The Christine Jorgensen Story* (1970) by Irving Rapper, are autobiographies. The novel *I Want What I Want* (1966) by Geoff Brown and its cinematic adaptation (1972) by John Dexter, the movies *Splendori e miserie di Madame Royale* (1970) by Vittorio Caprioli, *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (1978) by Rainer Werner Fassbinder and *Miss Mona* (1987) by Mehdi Charef are realistic melodramas. The *mondo* movies, such as *Mondo nudo* (1963) by Francesco De Feo, *Rivelazioni di uno psichiatra sul mondo perverso del sesso* (1973) by Renato Polselli, *Sesso perverso, mondo violento* (1980) by Bruno Mattei, and other movies such as *I Was a Man* (1967) by Barry Mahon and *Let Me Die a Woman* (1977) by Doris Wishman, are pseudo-reportages.

At the peak of postmodernism, when "medical criteria for diagnosing transsexuality, the therapeutic confessional discourses of talk shows and the press, and the generic conventions of written autobiography" started to appear "as authorizing transsexual subjects by implanting normative narratives of sexed development, continuity, and coherence" (Amin, 2014, p. 220), the authors of trans narratives tried to elaborate new narrative patterns. One can mention novels such as *Ask Agamemnon* (1964) by Jenni Hall (and its cinematic adaptation *Goodbye Gemini* [1970] by Alan Gibson), *Myra Breckinridge* (and its cinematic adaptation [1970] by Michael Sarne), *Cobra*, *L'impuro folle, Scende giù per Toledo*, *El beso de la mujer araña* (and its cinematic adaptation [1985] by Héctor Babenco),

Le Bal des folles, *The Passion of New Eve*, *Cima delle nobildonne*, *Il risveglio dei Faraoni*, the trilogy *La maschia. La prima storia di una comune gay* (1979), *L'odalisco* (1989) and *L'animalo* (1995) by Vittorio Pescatori, as well as movies such as *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970) by Russ Meyer, *Women in Revolt* (1971) by Paul Morrissey, *Dr. Jekyll & Sister Hyde* (1971) by Roy Ward Baker, *Pink Flamingos* (1972) by John Waters, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) by Jim Sharman, *Le Locataire* (1976) by Roman Polanski, *Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* (1982) by Robert Altman, *Forbidden Zone* (1982) by Richard Elfman, *Stadt der verlorenen Seelen* (1983) by Rosa von Praunheim. These new narratives, still centered on the Ego, found their primary function in decentralization, which was the prerequisite of every transition; the re-centering process always appeared provisional and other-directed, also because of the lag of psychoanalysis in exploring trans identities. The (self-)representation and construction of "His Majesty the Ego" passed through the Other, but rarely they went further, making the relationship with the Other (and their ubiquitous gaze and desire) the final Text, of which the Ego was nothing but a provisional draft.

Thus, simply by acting as a mirror, trans narratives shed light on one of the major clichés of cis narratives, which always expressed a "false monopoly on gender certainty" masking lack and exclusion of everything that is not perfectly binary behind "discursive flexibility" (Carlson, 2010, pp. 65-66). Even when cis narratives problematized the Ego, they configured it as a presupposition rather than an outcome: its ontologized gender identity lay inert outside the boundaries of the representation, of which it often constituted the horizon line.

Until the 1980s in Western mainstream culture the existence of queer people if anything was suggested and in the best cases they were portrayed as "witty and charming people who keep [their] lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world" (Queer Nation, 1990). During neoliberal Reagan's and Thatcher's era, pop culture triggered the gentrification of queer imagery, until then strictly confined to urban subcultures: one can mention movies such as *Victor/Victoria* (1982) by Blake Edwards, *The World According to Garp* (1982) by George Roy Hill, and *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988) by Harvey Fierstein, or openly queer singers such as Boy George (Culture Club), Pete Burns (Dead or Alive), Holly Johnson (Frankie Goes to Hollywood) and Marilyn, or ambiguous looking singers such as Nick Rhodes (Duran Duran), Philip Oakey (The Human League), Thomas Anders (Modern Talking). That gentrification was later reinforced in a lobbying and consumerist perspective by the cultural processes related to the globalization and Internet. Between the mid-1990s and the 2000s, while trans studies started to conquer stable positions within American academia, queerness slowly began to be recoded, owing also to an increasing number of queer identities being represented in mainstream movies, where they were now assimilated as people who lead more or less eye-catching lives at the center of the entertainment and media world (Vittorini, 2024b, pp. 171-190).

If the movies from the 1980s mostly portrayed trans people as peripheral characters played by supporting actors, the movies from the 1990s increasingly starred trans characters played by lead actors, who mostly were cis people called to prove their skills with nonconformist and daring roles. One can mention movies such as *The Crying Game* (1992) by Neil Jordan, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) by Stephan Elliott, *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995) by Beeban Kidron, *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) by Kimberly Peirce, *Tiresia* (2003) by Bertrand Bonello, *Transamerica* (2005) by Duncan Tucker, *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) by Jordan, *Zerophilia* (2005) by Martin Curland, *XXY* (2007) by Lucía Puenzo. In a few cases the gender identity of the character corresponded to that of the actor/actress: see *Ich bin meine eigene Frau* (1992) and *Der Einstein des Sex* (1999) by Praunheim, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001) by John

Cameron Mitchell, and *Wild Side* (2004) by Sébastien Lifshitz. Since 2009 the talent/reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race* powerfully promoted the spread of queer imagery and the surfacing of trans people in American and global mainstream culture: while competing, some of the contestants came out as trans (Sonique, Carmen Carrera, Jiggly Caliente, Monica Beverly Hillz, Kenya Michaels and Gia Gunn), non-binary (Jinkx Monsoon, Aja, Valentina, Divina de Campo, Ginny Lemon, Violet Chachki and Sasha Velour) or genderfluid (Courtney Act and Kelly Mantle).

In 2013 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) published the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (DSM-5), which replaced the pathologizing "gender identity disorder" with the more neutral "gender dysphoria", defined as "the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender" (APA, 2013, p. 451). The most significant innovations compared to previous editions of DSM were two statements breaching the binary paradigm: the "experienced gender may include alternative gender identities beyond binary stereotypes" (APA, 2013, p. 453); "the incongruence between experienced/expressed and assigned gender" can be resolved "by partially living in the desired role or by adopting a gender role neither conventionally male nor conventionally female" (APA, 2013, p. 454). Even if "gender dysphoria" remains a contested medicolegal category used both to grant and deny trans people access to healthcare and legal protections against discrimination, that very category promoted "a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of gender identities […] from conceiving gender transition as a mental disorder to recognizing it as a human right and expression of human diversity" (Suess, Espineira, Crego Walters, 2014, p. 74). Somehow the shift contributed to make trans identities a viable topic for media discourses, as it is proved by the unprecedented exposure of trans actors/actresses such as Laverne Cox (series *Orange Is the New Black* [2013-2019] by Jenji Kohan), Michaela Jaé Rodriguez (series *Pose* [2018-2021] by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Steven Canals) and Elliot Page (*Close to You* [2023] by Dominic Savage), and by the production of movies such as *Gun Hill Road* (2011) by Rashaad Ernesto Green, *Mía* (2011) by Javier Van de Couter, *Tomboy* (2011) by Céline Sciamma, *Romeos* (2011) by Sabine Bernardi, *Laurence Anyways* (2012) by Xavier Dolan, *Tangerine* (2015) by Sean Baker, *Die Beautiful* (2016) by Jun Robles Lana, *Girl* (2018) by Lukas Dhont, *Lola vers la mer* (2019) by Laurent Micheli, *Alice Júnior* (2020) by Gil Baroni, *Unicorns* (2023) by James Krishna Floyd and Sally El Hosaini, *Nimona* (2023) by Nick Bruno and Troy Quane.

A growing number of contemporary literary and media narratives are able to establish a real "transgender gaze", that is "a set of strategies (each with different consequences) for representing transgender bodies, capturing transgender looks, and theorizing transgender legibility" (Halberstam, 2005, pp. 78-79) in a perspective where trans people are not only "bearer of meaning", but also "maker of meaning" (Mulvey, 2014, p. 360). In the novel *The Danish Girl* and its cinematic adaptation, and in the movie *Boy Meets Girl* (2014) by Eric Schaeffer, trans identities access their agency to self-display or show themselves to others instead of being violently revealed by the cis gaze as in the past. The movie *L'immensità* (2022) by trans director Emanuele Crialese represents the path of trans (dis)identification through a transmedia device: the relationships between different "aesthetics, politics, and technologies of cultural representation" (cinema and tv) express the different "dimensions of transgender and gender-nonconforming experience" (Chen, Olivares, 2014, p. 245). The movie *Orlando, ma biographie politique* (2023) by trans director and writer Paul B. Preciado, inspired by Woolf's novel, takes up "abjection as a constructive political strategy" (Phillips, 2014, p. 20) by rejecting psychiatry's monopoly on the definition of trans sanity and staging gender dysphoria instead as a poetic resource for collective critique and

survival. The novel *Tesis sobre una domesticación* and its cinematic adaptation of the same name (2024) by Van de Couter open a space of free transitions between all sorts of genders, orientations and relationships (a trans actress marries a homosexual lawyer, and they adopt an HIV positive child). The series *What It Feels Like for a Girl* (2025), adapted by the trans journalist Paris Lees from her memoir of the same name (2021), is an intersectional coming of age: at the beginning of the 2000s the teenager Byron is stuck in a small and poor British working-class town, tortured by his homophobic father and peers, until he starts freeing himself through a more and more wild expression of his (trans)sexuality.

In particular, the novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) by Jeanette Winterson radically de-ontologizes and queers the representation of the body. It intertwines two parallel diegetic lines, both narrated in the first person: in 1816 Mary Shelley conceives her masterpiece *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818); in 2018 at the International Robotics Fair in Memphis the young homosexual trans doctor Ry (defeminized diminutive of Mary) Shelley meets Ron Lord, an entrepreneur who trades female-looking robots designed to satisfy men's sexual desires by doing without women (the XX-Bot), and Victor Stein, a robotics engineer who lectures on the development of AI and dreams to "make copies of [him]self – upload [his] mind and 3D-print [his] body" (Winterson, 2019, p. 30). Ry has a very clear perception of himself:

> When I look in the mirror I see someone I recognise, or rather, I see at least two people I recognise. 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 (Winterson, 2019, p. 89).

Ry deconstructs the modern notion which made the identity coincide with the natural body and elaborates a posthuman vision, clearly inspired by Donna Haraway's cyberfeminist theories (1991):

> I am liminal, cusping, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental, a start-up (or is it an upstart?) in my own life. […] My mind idled around the difference between desire for life without end and desire for more than one life, that is, more than one life, but lived simultaneously. I could be me and me too. If I could make copies of myself – upload my mind and 3D-print my body, then one Ry could be in Graceland, another Ry at the shrine of Martin Luther King, a third Ry busking the Blues in Beale Street. Later, all my selves could meet, share the day, and reassemble into the original self I like to believe is me (Winterson, 2019, pp. 29-30).

While Ry tries to understand the visionary theories elaborated by Stein, with whom he falls in love, he opens up to the idea that identity, not unlike AI, can be understood as an "emerging system" (Morowitz, 2002), whose overall properties cannot be explained by adding up the properties of its components (body, consciousness, gender, orientation, etc.), since they are additional levels of signification deriving from non-linear interactions between the components of the system itself.

As trans artist and academic Sandy Stone wished, in these new narratives trans identities can finally assert themselves as autonomous identities capable of elaborating their own gaze and discourse, or rather a "counterdiscourse" that avoids the rhetoric of the birth in a "wrong body", and placing themselves "outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible" (Stone, 1991, p. 295). By renouncing invisibility (not being seen, not being read), trans identities begin "to be consciously 'read', to read [them]self aloud—and by this troubling and productive reading" they begin to write themselves "into the

discourses by which [they have] been written" (Stone, 1991, p. 299) for centuries. They ultimately defy the dominant liberal humanist perception of the subject as a unified rational mind with a body as a possession rather than a part of the subject by exposing the porousness of the mind and the plasticity of the body. By venturing out of binary thinking and representing gender ambiguity as a signifier of Otherness which collapses other categories (race, ability, religious affiliation) into itself, contemporary trans fiction de-ontologizes gender identity and problematically places it within the confines of the representation of the Ego (Vittorini, 2024b, pp. 327-330), asking us to "rethink the ways in which bodies are entwined in (un)becoming rather than presuming that they are simply mired in being unless they undergo explicit, visible and transformational procedures" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 561). This fertile rethinking starts what Preciado calls "the jubilant and apparently antiscientific affirmation of the irreducible multiplicity of sexes, genders, and sexualities", which opens "a revolutionary terrain for the invention of […] new subjectivities that cannot be represented by the means of identity politics" (Preciado, 2018, pp. 4, 15).

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