“Sex was some forgotten atrophy”: Imagining Intersex in Woolf’s *Orlando* and Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*

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Abstract

This thesis considers the treatment of early twentieth-century intersex bodies in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. It takes into special account the prevalence of eugenic discourse during the modernist period, noticing eugenicists' interest in categorical imperatives for the purposes of statistical analysis and surgical alteration. Their aims were human perfectibility. This thesis argues *Orlando* and *Absalom, Absalom!* imagine bodies existing, loving, and dreaming in between male and female, and outside of the violence of surgical "correction."

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Chapter One

"A horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs": An Introduction

In her article "The case of Karl M.[artha] Bauer: Narrating 'Uncertain' Sex," Jana Funke argues that case studies printed in sexological research documents, as well as published autobiographical narratives of sex changes, present an opening for public discourses regarding different sex embodiments and sexual practices, making it easier for other people to talk about, and engage in, similar acts and sexualities. In addition, she claims that sexological case studies are – like Freud's writings, which have always been analyzed by literary critics and others as texts with literary merit and value – in need of discussion and analysis. Funke quotes German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld who "hoped that the literary and not strictly referential employment of words could not easily be positioned in pre-established [sexual] categories" (141). Therefore, by publishing case studies told by the subjects themselves, Hirschfeld anticipated that those who read these accounts may be less privy to judge and exclude others they may encounter who exhibit similar behaviours, desires, or biology as those described in the case studies. While autobiographical texts and sexological case studies are, as Funke explores, useful in opening up critical space for bodies who would otherwise feel excluded to be included within a discourse, these texts would not have been distributed as widely as mainstream literary texts, namely novels. So, what of the potential for novels to perform similar work?

In the beginning of the twentieth century, eugenicists were attempting to normalize bodies, to make them fit into "pre-established categories" in order to strategically include or exclude bodies based on how "fit" they were to be part of the national image. Such attempts were in direct opposition to the normalization of sex changes, hermaphroditism, or homosexuality hoped for through the publication of personal sexological narratives. As Funke explains, many

bodies whose physical sex did not match their gendered performance or sexual desires were deemed "unfit," "because degenerative [eugenic] models conflated physical and intellectual development, intelligence – the very ability to structure and present thoughts coherently and sensibly – could be read as a sign of physical and mental health" (139). These people were seen by eugenicists as confused, unable to be "sensible" regarding their physical bodies or sexualities, and therefore "degenerative."

This thesis will examine the ways in which the British and American governments respectively attempted to disseminate their own eugenic propaganda, how the Americans took British theories of eugenics and ran away with them, sterilizing tens of thousands of people they deemed "unfit." This thesis will consider how Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner deny eugenic doctrine through their literary work. Both of these writers reject the statistical boundaries put on bodies, especially those which defined sex, sexuality, and gender. This introduction will define eugenics, give a brief history of the science in both Britain and America, and then lay out the groundwork for the following discussion of how Woolf's *Orlando* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* reject eugenic doctrine. Most importantly, this introduction will imagine how these two texts can be placed alongside one another to illuminate how we may begin to untangle eugenic claims of bodily normalization and perfectibility, especially concerning physical sex, that continue to plague our contemporary understanding of bodily distinctions. In short, this thesis will show how these two novels, like sexological case studies which showed difference and thus questioned "pre-established" sexual categories, provide space for bodies that eugenicists defined as different, unacceptable, and in need of surgical interventions, to potentially live, in Judith Butler's words, a "livable life" (8).

Eugenics was a concept coined by Francis Galton. In 1883, in his text *Hereditary Genius*, he first presented the term "eugenics" (Black 16). His theories grew out of a long history of social unease about the increasing numbers of the pauper class as well as a surge of immigrants coming from all over Europe to England (Childs 3-4). In addition to concerns about the state of English society, Galton's theories relied on previous scientific studies into the inheritance of hereditary traits, such as drunkenness, and physical and mental ailments, which may be seen to inhibit the lower class's ability to be self-sufficient and financially successful. Early British eugenicists such as Galton endeavoured to find ways to minimize the number of people in Britain who depended on social programs through selective marriage partnerships – the "fit" should only marry the "fit," and produce as many children as possible, while the "unfit" should refrain from having children. Galton's so-called positive theory of eugenics[1], he admitted, was not proven, but only a hypothesis. What if, he wondered, people with the strongest physical, mental and creative traits only married others of their ilk? What if we bred people like we did cows, wheat, or flowers? It seemed logical to Galton, but he needed proof of the hereditary nature of human traits. He never got it, despite creating a centre focused specifically on the study of eugenic theory at University College London. Furthermore, Galton thought, it would be impossible to legislate ideal marriages. Instead, eugenics would have to become a kind of religion, permeating people's psyches and ways of life. Galton's ideal was that eugenics become British religious doctrine, and this way the future of the British national identity as being one of strength, ingenuity and creativity could be maintained (Childs 3).

But, given the political climate of Britain, in particular an increase in immigration from other countries as well as migration to the cities – which resulted in a significant strain on social

[1] Daniel Kevles explains that eugenics was divided into "at times overlapping approaches: 'positive eugenics' which aimed to foster more prolific breeding among the socially meritorious, and 'negative eugenics,' which encouraged the socially disadvantaged to breed less -- or better yet, not at all" (*Name* 85).

programs – Galton's theories did not remain benign, only considering prudent marriage. Instead, another kind of eugenics was born: negative eugenics, which advocated for the mass sterilization and isolation of people categorized as unfit as well as proposed euthanasia of many who were seen as too great a burden on society. While legal sterilization never did take place in Britain, from what we know, ideas of both positive and negative eugenics became a popular topic of British conversation. In his recent book *Modernism and Eugenics,* Marius Turda outlines how eugenics became intricately woven with modernism because many people in many different strata of the social make-up became fascinated with the notion that their society could be "bettered" in such a radical way (2). Many British artists and writers, as Donald J. Childs catalogues, took up the mantle of eugenics, advocating for it in their literature as well as in their direct communication with others. Yet, some authors fervently denied eugenic doctrine, including James Joyce who, as Childs explains, allows Stephen Dedalus to speak his concerns in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (12):

> He caricatures eugenicists […] for whom eugenics has become the new religion: in his new 'gaudy lectureroom,' the eugenicist stands with 'one hand on the *Origin of Species* and the other on the new testament' and 'tells you that you admired the great flanks of Venus because you thought she would bear you burley offspring and admired her great breasts because you felt she would give good milk to her children and yours.' (12)

Joyce's characterization points out the negation, within eugenic doctrine, of sexual desire in favour of choosing a sexual partner based on hereditary traits and rational, careful, calculation of heteronormative reproductive potential.

When eugenics spread to the United States, the ideas of positive eugenics seemed to fade into the background. Instead, negative eugenics took precedence, and advocates like Charles

Davenport, a zoologist and fervent racist who "saw ethnic groups as biologically different beings – not just physically, but in terms of their character, nature and quality" (Black 35), led the Cold Springs Station for Experimental Evolution as well as birthed the ideal of the Eugenics Record Office which aimed to catalogue the "genetic background of all Americans" (Black 45). Harry Laughlin, a strange and energetic advocate for eugenics who orchestrated the research of the Eugenics Record Office, in tandem with Davenport and eventually many other influential men and women, began their *War against the Weak* (the title of Edwin Black's detailed account of the American eugenics movement). They targeted people they called the "unfit" and suggesting solutions such as sterilization, isolation, and in some extreme cases, euthanasia.

Black explains: "eugenics was nothing less than an alliance between biological racism and mighty American power, position and wealth against the most vulnerable, the most marginal and the least empowered in the nation" (57). The question was raised, and still remains: who exactly were these so-called "unfit"? A firm definition was never created. Instead, the Eugenics Record Office spread their field workers across the country, cataloguing a variety of people who were deemed "morons," "epileptics," "diseased," "degenerates," or simply "different." The evidence gained by these excursions was widely published and distributed, creating a culture of exclusion and suspicion. Eugenicists suggested that every person interrogate their potential partner's blood line for "defective germ plasm" (Laughlin 1) before agreeing to marry and reproduce with them. Books like T.W. Shannon's *Eugenics*, were distributed to marrying couples to teach them the proper behaviour of men and women respectively, and in particular to show women how they were to raise their perfect children (Shannon 2). There could be no mistaking the national duty one had when it came to their offspring. The United States, as well as Britain,

saw themselves as white, Nordic nations who were mentally and physically capable. There was no room in the ideology of the nation for any person who did not fit the mould.

Sexuality played a dominant role in both British and American eugenics considering the importance placed on the reproduction of desirable children. Many sexologists doubled as eugenicists, most famously Britain's Havelock Ellis, who defended "sexual inverts" (a contemporary term for homosexuals or people who did not adhere to heteronomative gender dichotomies), while at the same time pathologizing their "condition" as abnormal, for if it was not, the human race would become sterile (Crozier 189). Homosexuality was illegal in both countries during the writing of both the novels I will be discussing, making conditions hostile for any person who chose to live outside of proscribed norms of sexuality or gender. Cross-dressing, too, was illegal. What then, if a body physically defied sexed categories? A "wolf in sheep's clothing," as they were often described in both the US and Britain, hermaphrodites[2] had potentially the most dangerous anatomy during the era of eugenics. Their condition was associated with a disruption in the natural process of evolution. Indeed it was "as if Nature did not complete her work of differentiation in the development of the sexual organs, as if she hesitated mid-way and left the work only half done" (Anonymous qtd. in Reis 90). Elizabeth Reis, in her book *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex*, writes:

> Doctors were of two minds regarding hermaphrodites and marriage. They generally wanted to ensure that their patients' bodies were properly equipped for heterosexual penetration, should they indeed marry. But some were convinced that hermaphrodites should not marry at all, given their ambiguous condition. One anonymous writer in the

[2] I use the terms intersex and hermaphrodite throughout this thesis. I use the term hermaphrodite to connote the historical, medical use of the term, and intersex when describing the embodiment of an intersexed position more generally. I use the term intersex over the contemporary term "Disorders of Sexual Development" (DSD) because I believe "DSD" encourages the continued perception of intersex as a "condition" in need of medical treatment, instead of being a part of a larger spectrum of sex embodiment.

> *Medical Record* had explained back in 1892 [shortly after the coining of the term eugenics], "Socially an unfortunate object, and much to be pitied, the hermaphrodite belongs to the dangerous classes, and society should be warned accordingly. Humanity is either masculine or feminine…Before the civil code it would be well to consider the hermaphrodite absolutely neuter, thus excluding the possibility of legal marriage in cases of doubtful sex." (89)

Hermaphrodites were subjected to painful surgeries to correct their anatomies. "In [surgeons' minds], they were fashioning complete men or women out of 'unfortunate creatures,' a commonly used term that epitomized their paternalism and distaste. And so with the lofty goal of creating 'real' men and women, they tried one surgical procedure after another, without thoroughly considering the medical or the psychological risks of the operations" (Reis 92). Usually these surgeries resulted in the inability to gain pleasure from sexual intercourse, especially in the case of people with what were perceived to be phalluses, who were surgically constructed to become "acceptable" women – their too-large "clitorises" were completely removed, or if not, too filled with scar tissue for stimulation to be pleasurable.

Genital mutilating surgeries were also performed on other "unfit" bodies, in some cases simply sterilizing them through tubal ligations, or vasectomy but also through the complete removal of the gonads on males so that they could no longer be a "sexual menace" (Black 69). What these surgeries attempted to do was to deny bodies, that were seen as unfit or socially unsettling for some reason or another, the ability to create more of their kind. Medical men, in the interest of the future of their national image, surgically cut bodies in order to cure them or save them from themselves, as it were. Woolf and Faulkner work to destabilize eugenic rhetoric through the construction of their narratives, both of which are fluid, questionable, and difficult to

categorize, as well at their characters, which are equally as ambiguous. In this way, both authors attempt to limit the surgical violence enacted on intersex bodies in the early twentieth century.

Chapter one discusses Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and how it negotiates a variety of different subversions of dichotomous gender and sex through the characters of Orlando, Shelmerdine, and The Archduke/Archduchess Harry/Harriet. Orlando, a want-to-be-writer and the focus of the novel, is presumed a sexed-male at the onset of the story which begins in the early sixteenth century and continues until the time of the novel's publication. Through the course of Orlando's male-identified existence, he becomes lover to the Queen, is broken hearted by a Russian woman named Sasha, courted by Duchess Harriet and then retreats to Constantinople, where he transitions quite fantastically into a female. After Orlando's transition she returns to England to experiment with her new sex distinction, falls in love with a sailor Shelmerdine whom she marries, has a child, publishes her novel, and becomes fascinated with the technologies of modernity.

I will argue that Woolf's novel rests on sex/gender transitions and that these transitions, in conjunction with the fact that they occur outside of a medical discourse, disrupt both medical authority and eugenics. I read Orlando's body as representative of a hermaphrodite body, but also of other gender/sex non-conforming bodies such as transgender bodies. Current criticism makes much of Orlando's transgenderism, whereas I deny a transgender conceptualization as being the only way of reading Orlando's body. Instead, Orlando's body is better understood as being hermaphrodidic, or intersex as we would say now, after Orlando's fantastical transition because of her bisexuality, as well as the overt denial of the medical gaze. Orlando's denial of the medical categorization of her body opens up space for similar behaviours by readers who understand *Orlando* as more of a trope than a humorous, fantastic tale. In a time when bodies

like Orlando's (upper class, beautiful, talented, and moneyed) were expected to reproduce as much as possible and thus adhere to traditional gender/sex roles, *Orlando* denies this kind of categorization and oppression. In addition, she does give birth to a baby boy, but without the assistance of medical men, and without conforming to the eugenic ideals of how a mother should behave – she has lesbian sex, dresses up as a man to go out at night, never makes clear the paternal parentage of the child she bears, further confusing eugenic ideals of traceable genealogy.

Chapter two examines Rosa Coldfield, whose intersex is coded throughout her personal monologues, as well as other instances of the destabilization of bodily categories in the text, in particular possibilities of one character occupying two bodies, or bodily distinctions becoming fluid and movable. Faulkner's text catalogues the trials of the Sutpen family. Thomas Sutpen arrives in Jefferson County with a few slaves, an architect, and plans to build a great plantation, Sutpen's Hundred. The nation of Sutpen, as some critics have referred to the plantation, is a trope for the construction of the American nation. Thus, the characters admitted to and barred from Sutpen's Hundred are interchangeable with those who would be admitted and barred from the American nation in the era of eugenics. For example, Wash Jones, the "white trash" character in the novel, is not permitted access to the Sutpen house despite working on the plantation. Sutpen, in a sense, becomes a Charles Davenport-type character, classifying bodies he sees as unfit, and closing the door to them.

Faulkner's complex novel provides an interesting analysis of eugenic categorization because it never allows for a clear delineation between what is true and what is hearsay; the narrative is completely made up of second-hand bits of stories that cannot be substantiated by any facts. It is and is not what would traditionally be called a novel, making way for further

exploration of traditional narrative categories. The medium Faulkner uses is already questioning what we know – in this case, what we think we know about narrative form – and therefore allows for constant questioning and revaluating of the facts, plot, characterization, and bodies in the novel. Faulkner's text is "just incredible. It just does not explain. […] you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you just bring [the letters] together again and again nothing happens; just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy, inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs" (*AA* 80). We cannot know the truth about Rosa's physical sex. However, this not knowing allows for a questioning of what knowing really proves, or what knowing really is. Does knowing Rosa's physical sex help us distinguish her character? Perhaps. But should it? Instead, Faulkner is suggesting that it is better to take the person as he/she is, as he/she presents themselves to us, not as we read them with our preconceived notions of what a body should be, and then to immediately wonder if what we read is an ideal body. Faulkner does not entertain preconceived notions about what a novel is, never mind what a body is. Faulkner's text calls on his reader to question every body, to analyze what we think we know about even our own bodies. Mouths tell lies, and bodies keep secrets. So how do we know, and how did eugenics ever hope to classify, all that a body is? And how ludicrous, then, to assume to deny reproductive rights to some and hold up the same rights to others.

The reason I have placed these two specific texts together is because they both examine bodily difference in ways that speak to their countries' specific eugenic ideology. Faulkner, through *Absalom*, critiques America's negative eugenic aims, specifically notions of inclusion/exclusion into the nation, as well as distinct bodily categorizations of male/female. Woolf, through *Orlando*, deconstructs positive eugenics and its reliance on heteronormative

male/female reproduction. *Orlando* was published at the time of a lawsuit against and attempt to censor Radclyff Hall's serious treatment of sexual inversion in *The Well of Loneliness*. Instead, as Adam Parkes argues, Woolf publishes a fantastic, humorous account of sexual difference in order to allow it to slip past the censors. Similarly, *Absalom* insinuates its anti-eugenic message through complexity and dense language, a denseness which is necessary for the work the novel will do. Faulkner examines the history of the United States through the construction of Sutpen's Hundred and asks the question: How have we gotten here, to this place of overt exclusion and hatred? *Orlando* asks the same question of Britain through Orlando, whose life spans over many hundreds of years, examining the way gender and sexuality change and meld over time. Both novels conclude in the era of eugenics, Orlando questioning modernity, and Quentin, the narrator of the second half of *Absalom* left shaking in his bed, on the verge of suicide, unable to incorporate the knowledge of Sutpen's exclusionary practices into himself.

These two novels allow for a questioning of what eugenics took for granted: that there is a truth of the body, and that that truth can be exploited. They both question the very notion that bodies can be placed in categories in order to be statistically analyzed, violently surgically altered, or segregated and expunged. This thesis will explore how both of these texts manage to undertake such a complicated task and be successful in doing so. It will pick up the current criticism on both texts and notice a lack where the discussions of eugenics and intersex might be. And finally, it will endeavour to imagine how current understandings of these texts as anti-eugenic could assist in a subversion of current eugenic (genetic) research and allow us to ask similar questions of ourselves: Are we attempting to know the truth of bodies, and what, if anything, would that truth achieve but a re-enactment of the violence of the early twentieth century?

Engaging in interdisciplinary work is always a challenge. Moving outside of our discipline can be rewarding and intimidating. In her contribution to a keynote address at the 22nd Annual Virginia Woolf Conference at the University of Saskatchewan in July of 2012 entitled "Interdisciplinarity and Institutional Practices," Jana Funke addressed interdisciplinary problems that are particular to intersections between history and literature, in particular medical history and literature. She claims that we, as literary critics are "not historians," but even so we approach history arrogantly, believing that because literary criticism is, in itself, an interdisciplinary field, that we know how to "do" history. We do not. Funke claims that historians and literary critics have unique viewpoints, and she uses the example of modernism to highlight this issue. She suggests that the word "modernism" connotes differently in history and in literature – we use a different language. She impresses our need to acknowledge our strengths as well as our weaknesses in both disciplines. This thesis is an attempt to see literature through history, to apply history to literary texts and see what can be gained from such an experiment. In particular this thesis hopes to imagine a way that literature can open up a new history – a unique way of perceiving the treatment of intersex bodies in the era of eugenic categorization and exclusion. In so doing, I hope to show how literature has the potential to question other disciplines, in particular to this thesis science and medicine, so as to protect against a re-emergence of eugenic language, violent categorization of bodies and resulting surgical intervention, and the prioritizing of some bodies over others as being more "desirable" or "fit" for inclusion into a nationalist image.

Chapter II

"Different though the sexes are, they intermix": Intersex in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

> The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch and violence. The body can be the agency and the instrument of all these as well, or the site where "doing" and "being done to" become equivocal. Although we struggle for the rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine.
>
> -- Judith Butler *Undoing Gender*

On 8 November 1912, a seventeen year old S.B. appeared before noted British Obstetrical and Gynecological surgeon William Blair Bell for reasons not stated in Blair Bell's resulting case study "So-Called True Hermaphroditism." S.B had been menstruating regularly since her fourteenth year, but since then the menstruation had stopped and his/her "voice [had] been getting deeper." An initial examination resulted in hormone treatment, but in August of 1914, S.B. returned. Blair Bell decided to do an internal examination, taking samples from both of S.B's gonads. The results from the laboratory showed one small ovary and another gonad which exhibited what was thought to be a cancerous tumour. However, these results were not sufficient for Blair Bell. He "re-opened the abdomen on September 22, 1914, and removed both ovaries, the tubes, and the fundus of the uterus. The patient made a good recovery, but subsequently suffered from slight menopausal symptoms." When Blair Bell began to study S.B.'s removed organs more thoroughly he discovered "that the left genital gland was […] an ovo-testis, and not the seat of a malignant growth as reported" (91).

Blair Bell explains S.B's case thus:

> It is particularly interesting to note […] that the patient commenced life and passed puberty as a normal girl, menstruating regularly for eighteen months; that menstruation had then ceased and masculine characteristics developed, and that in spite of this she

> suffered from menopausal symptoms after operation. At the present time, nine months after operation, a complete change is to be notice in "her" appearance: the moustache has fallen out, all the hair on the legs has vanished, the voice is less deep, the skin less coarse, and her figure is in general much more feminine in regard to plumpness and outline. This, surely, is a dual sex characterization if ever there were such a thing. (92)

What Blair Bell attempts to prove through the use of this case study was that true hermaphroditism, "if there ever were such a thing," does not and cannot exist. Instead, he argues "glandular partial hermaphroditism" is possible but only in a very small number of cases (93). In the years to come Blair Bell would continue to deny true hermaphroditism, and to assert that a "true sex" could be found and lived by the patient (as he claims in the case of S.B.'s supposed femininity). Blair Bell, and others like him, wanted to deny sexed ambiguity. The "one body, one sex" rule would have to be strictly adhered to, and enforced by physicians and surgeons in an effort to maintain social order (Dreger 30).

In 1928, another British physician named Harold Hartley claimed that he had indeed discovered a true hermaphrodite, named "XY" by Hartley because of the confusing disconnect between XY's sex organs and secondary sex characteristics. XY had what seemed to be testicles but had female external genitalia, and otherwise appeared to be a woman. He questions "the advice to be given as regards the bringing up of hermaphrodites. Most British authorities […] advise that they should be treated as males. But in such a case as that of 'XY,' and remembering that the habits, feelings, and desires depend chiefly on the surroundings of early life, it seems better to agree with Blair Bell and let the anatomy of the external genitals decide. Anyhow, 'XY' had been left in ignorance of her most unhappy fate" (343). Blair Bell did not take much time to respond to Hartley's case study or comments. Only six days later Blair Bell retorts: "I have [...]

recommended that partial hermaphrodites should be brought up in accordance with the predominance of secondary sex characteristics." He goes on to say that with his process of gender identification, "I have known more than one happily married." He concludes that while surgical intervention on hermaphrodite bodies can be problematic, "it is a highly important matter from the legal point of view in regard to inheritance and marriage" (407). Alice Dreger, a predominant historian and scholar of the medical treatment of intersex bodies, emphasizes the fixation on dichotomous gender identification in Blair Bell's diagnosis of S.B. as "partial glandular hermaphroditism in a *woman*" – "this way there would still be only two sexes on the streets as well as in the books. Tuffer and Lapointe [two French surgeons interested in intersex] made the point explicitly, and Blair Bell emphatically agreed: 'The possession of a [single] sex is a necessity of our social order for hermaphrodites as well as for normal subjects'" (161).

Katrina Karkazis, in her sensitive and engaging book *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, explains:

> The whole reason intersex even exists as a category is because these bodies violate *cultural* rules about gender. These rules assume an agreement among a series of somatic characters (chromosomes, gonads, genitals, and secondary sex characteristics) and more phenomenological processes such as gender identity, gender role, and sexuality. The debates over when to perform surgery and how best to decide gender assignment obscures the fact that in trying to make [bodies] with intersex diagnosis "normal" boys and girls [and men and woman], physicians […] are necessarily drawing on cultural ideas about what constitutes male and female. (4)

While Karkazis's argument is about contemporary treatment of intersex, it also sums up the complex history of intersex diagnosis. Intersex bodies destabilize notions of dichotomous sex,

notions which are firmly planted in our culture as well as in our legal and political structures. It is difficult to deny that physicians were trying to help these "poor" bodies who needed assistance in order to live productive lives – including and, in many cases, most importantly – "happy marriage[s]." For example, Blair Bell was right to comment that there was no legal room for sexually ambiguous bodies in marriage or inheritance laws in 1928, complicating many aspects of life for intersex bodies. That said, it is equally as difficult to underestimate the physical and psychological impact their discourse and surgeries had on sexually questionable bodies. What is interesting in both Hartley and Bell's description of their case studies is what is absent from their analysis and diagnosis, such as: Why did S.B. and XY seek treatment? What was the patients' response to their treatment? What happened to these people after they were left surgically altered? Blair Bell includes a photograph of S.B. fully nude and standing in front of the camera, expressionless. What, the reader is left to wonder, is he/she thinking before the flash?

In 1928, the year Blair Bell and Hartley engaged in their tête-à-tête regarding the treatment and classification of intersex bodies, the pseudo-science behind some of the worst human rights violations in western history was underway in both Britain and the United States. Eugenics, which relied on a long history of hereditary research, provided the framework for strict boundaries between races, classes, and sexes in order to maintain bodily order and to create nations of strong, able, and socially independent citizens. Published in 1738, John Byrom's poem "Drink" humorously considers human heredity, drawing on a long line of such questioning:

> When our distempers did their names receive,
>
> (One instance more, good doctors, by your leave),
>
> Some chronic matters, such as gout and stone,
>
> That would the fare of no arcane own,

To save their Credit, these, the learned dons,

Cried out, were fix'd hereditary ones:

If a man's father, grand- or great-grand sire;

Had the same, 'twas needless to enquire;

Plain was the case, and see the doctor's fame;

The poor old ancestors bore all the blame. (qtd. in Waller 461)

From the 1738 Chambers' *Cyclopedia,* which "referred to heredity as the inheritance of 'good or evil qualities'" (461), to literary representations of the "sins of the fathers being visited on their children," to Alexander Walker's many editions of *Intermarriage* (1838), which advised on the "proper choice of marital partners" and "called for the inception of a new science that would allow couples to predict the chances of their offspring being blessed with 'beauty, health and intellect,' and preserved from 'deformity, disease and insanity'" (464), heredity was a topic much discussed before the famous publication of Galton's *Hereditary Genius*. In 1798 Thomas Malthus, an English economist, published a "watershed theory on the nature of poverty and the controlling socio economic systems at play," commenting on the "proliferation of poor houses, lunacy asylums, orphanages, health clinic, epilepsy colonies, rescue shelters, homes for the feebleminded and prisons" which enviably lead to the "turn[ing] of Christian charity into what began to be viewed as a social plague" (Black 11). Mathus's theories called for "population control by moral restraint," and that one should deny charitable contributions to the so-called less fortunate, because charity "promoted generation-to-generation poverty and simply made no sense in the natural scheme of human progress" (12). It is clear that Francis Galton's theories of eugenics were long in the making and drew on many previous theories that called for the control and eradication of what were viewed by scientists as undesirable hereditary traits.

Galton's theories stemmed from his rapacious love for statistics and mathematical certainties. Galton made impressive contributions to the fields of meteorology (through his statistical analysis of weather patterns), as well as criminology (through his investigation into fingerprint analysis). Eventually, Galton became interested in the "patterns of various qualities of human beings" (Black 14). After researching the genealogy of many successful artists and scientists, "[he] postulated that heredity not only transmitted physical features […] but mental, emotional and creative qualities as well" (14). Galton did not support Mathus's notions which focused mainly on the repression of undesirable human characteristics, but encouraged marriage unions that would create superior offspring (15). Eugenics, Galton stated, "may be defined as the science which deals with those social agencies that influence mentally and physically, the racial qualities of future generations" (Turda 21). Carolyn Burdett explains his theories thus:

> The only way to improve human life is to insure that the best – the fittest – members of the population reproduce more than the less fit. Galton believed that in modern "civilized" societies, the struggle for resources had become less and less efficient, as humans sought kinder and more human ways of ordering their lives. In consequence, weaker members of their society were protected and able to pass on weakness to their offspring, thus imperiling improvement and progress. (165)

The importance that heteronormative, reproductive sex played in eugenic discourse is evident in this passage. Pressure was placed on bodies, especially upper-class bodies, to produce and raise and nurture children who would then reproduce and do the same. The emphasis, of course, was on heteronormative reproduction and on a strict adherence to behaviours that were seen as suitable for people living within a "civilized society." Thus, those who refused to adhere to rules of heteronormativity, or who were seen as deviating from the norm (being queer), could not

participate in the creation of an ideal national image. What become of bodies that did not belong to this narrative? If we consider the case of S.B., one solution is evident – surgical, or medical adjustment.

As Alice Dreger so aptly puts it:

> after even a cursory study of the phenomenon of sex-sorting, one soon discovers that a significant motivation for the biomedical treatment of hermaphrodites is the desire to keep people straight. That phrase – keeping people straight – should be taken figuratively, but literally as well: medical doctors, scientists, hermaphrodites' parents, and other lay people have historically been interested in sorting people according to their sexes to avoid or prevent what might be considered homosexuality. (8)

Dreger goes on to describe many instances in Britain and France where cases of ambiguous sex were resolved only on the basis of sexual desire, excluding the possibility of homosexuality. If a person of ambiguous sex desired women, then her sex would be changed to male in order to fit into a narrative of heterosexuality. After all, "Post-Darwinian French and British thinkers often declared that sexuality – specifically heterosexuality – was a natural outcome of the evolution of the two supposedly distinct sexes." In 1894, Charles Debierre a professor of anatomy stated that the "sexual encounter" between males and females would "bring new life to the species," making heterosexual sex a necessity for the survival of the human race (Dreger 113). Within an evolutionary discourse, these medical men and scientists argued, homosexuality just did not make logical sense.

Made clear by Blair Bell's comment regarding "happily married" intersex people who had been under his care, a "happy" (we can easily read heterosexual) "marriage" seemed to have been an acceptable goal for physicians who treated intersex people. To make an intersex body

legible so that it could become a viable body within the society to which it belonged seems to be the goal of the treatment as presented in both Blair Bell and Hartley's case studies. Eugenics only served to strengthen social focus on the importance of marriage and reproduction. Bodies that could not reproduce were not seen as valuable to the nation because they could not promulgate the ideal of that nation through their offspring, the importance of which we can see in Galton's theoretical framework. Lymann B. Sperry writes in his 1900 book *Confidential Talks with Husband and Wife: A Book of Information and Advice for the Married and the Marriageable*:

> Eunuchs, effeminates, and the sexually abused and mutilated are, in the nature of things, mentally and morally defective; they are cynical, selfish, grovelling, and unfit for the kingdom of God, -- certainly insofar as it relates to this world. (qtd. in Richardson 44)

Sperry's words raise the question of the role of the abuser and the mutilator: where do they fit into the "nature of things"? Does the surgeon who would operate on an intersex person become a mutilator, making the object of his mutilation "cynical, selfish" and "unfit," to be in "this world," never mind being able to consider marriage and having children? The sexually or sexed "unclassifiable" body, Sperry is suggesting, cannot be considered an acceptable part of society even if they are surgically refigured. The language of eugenics was spreading far, attaching itself in particular to the "Married and Marriageable," and questioning any body that sought to be part of that category.

Galton believed that in order for eugenics to be successful it would have to become a national religion, permeating every part of the nation's psyche, from the marriage partner one chose, to how they would raise their children. Galton famously stated that

> [eugenics] must be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion. It has, indeed, strong claims to become an orthodox religious tenant of the future, for Eugenics co-operates with the works of Nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races. What nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly and kindly. (qtd. in Childs 3)

While Galton believed that people must accept eugenics as a kind of religious doctrine in order to secure that they made the best choices in marriage partner, he did not believe in implementing this plan until his theories could be scientifically proven. He did not manage to compile sufficient proof, and while his theories began traveling throughout the world justifying some of the most horrible treatment of human bodies, Galton continued to remind those who engaged in such behaviours that eugenics was still an unproven theory (Black 27).

After Galton's death in 1911, his notions of eugenics had been, as Edwin Black describes, "successfully dethroned" (207), replaced by more aggressive American eugenics. While most of my discussion of American eugenics will occur in the following chapter, the adaptation of American-style eugenic discourse in Britain after the very beginning of the twentieth century, and the profound effect of the ingratiation of American eugenic research into the knowledge base of British eugenicists make it important to discuss briefly here. American eugenicists did not use the rigorous system of data collection and analysis on which Galton had prided himself. Galton also did not have the financial support that American eugenicists did, provided by the likes of "Carnegie, Rockefeller and Harriman" who "financed unprecedented eugenic research and lobbying organizations that developed international reach" (208). American eugenicists were intent on changing public policy and doing it quickly. After Galton's death, British eugenicists were eager to follow suit; "Quaint theories of felicitous marriages among the

better classes, yielding incrementally superior offspring, were discarded in favour of wholesale reproductive prohibition for the inferior classes" (208).

In Britain, the line between positive eugenics – the suggestion of prudent marriage in order to produce the most desirable offspring, and negative eugenics – the forced sterilization, segregation and potential destruction of the unfit – was clearly drawn. Galton had stood for positive eugenics, warning that "over-zeal leading to hasty action would do harm, by holding out expectations of a near golden age, which will certainly be falsified and cause the science to be discredited" (Black 209), while others like H.G. Wells, called for the "sterilization of failures" (qtd. in Black 209). Ultimately, eugenics in Britain did not become anything more than discourse, a ramped and prolific discourse that permeated every level of society, but eugenicists were not successful in affecting official policy that managed to inflict real change. In the US, each state was responsible for its own laws regarding sterilization, whereas in Britain the Parliament decided such matters. Instead of supporting the cause of negative eugenicists, Parliament reminded eugenicists of the 1861 Offense Against a Person Act which prohibited "unlawful wounding" (211). However, in 1914 the Mental Deficiency Act was passed, allowing for the institutionalization of "idiot[s], imbecile[s], feebleminded[s], and moral defective[s]" (218). The Act, which was seen by eugenicists as a watered-down version of what it should have been, rejected the part of the proposed act which included marriage restrictions for those considered mentally unfit. Yet, it was soon interrupted by World War I, leaving few resources available for the construction of the planned institutions which were meant to segregate the feebleminded from the rest of society. Furthermore, political and social attention turned away from eugenics and other domestic affairs and refocused on international concerns.

Eugenic scientists, physicians, and legislators were not able to get eugenics into practice successfully in Britain, not only because of a lack of funding, but also because they lacked formal support in parliament – especially from members representing the labour party (who believed that eugenics was aimed at the elimination of the poor), and the Church (mainly the Catholic church, who were vocal in their opposition of eugenics) (Black 232-233). Eugenic ideas did enter the national language as Galton had hoped (though it is clear American-style eugenics was not what he had in mind), regardless of official legislation. As Marius Turda explains, eugenics was not only a science that promised national improvement, it was also "equally a social and cultural philosophy of identity predicated upon modern concepts of purification and rejuvenation of the human body and the larger national community" (1), making it very attractive to those in British society who saw an increase in the number of "lower-class" citizens who required social assistance – those members of their society that were deemed unfit. Many writers were heavily involved in the eugenics debate, such as H.G. Wells, who was an avid proponent of negative eugenics, as well as D.H. Lawrence, and Bernard Shaw. Donald Childs quotes D.H. Lawerence as writing:

> If I had my way, I would build a lethal chamber as big as the Crystal Palace, with a military band playing softly, and a Cinematograph working brightly, then I'd go out into the back streets and main streets and bring them all in, all the sick, the halt, and the maimed; I would lead them gently and they would smile me a weary thanks. (10)

The eugenics debates raged within the drawing rooms of the upper-classes, filling the minds and the pens of many writers.

Virginia Woolf had a difficult relationship with eugenics, and there has been some evidence that she even supported it. Childs dedicates a chapter of his book *Modernism and*

Eugenics to her complex relationship with eugenics, specifically noting her private comments made on the matter, such as the following which was written in her journal thirteen years before she would publish *Orlando*:

> We met & had to pass a long line of imbeciles. The first was a very tall young man, just queer enough to look at twice, but no more; the second shuffled & looked aside; and then one realised that everyone in that long line was a miserable and ineffective shuffling idiotic creature, with no forehead, or no chin & an imbecile grin, or a wild suspicious stare. It was perfectly horrible. (23)

She concludes this journal entry with "they should certainly be killed" (23). Whether or not it is fair to believe that because she wrote these thoughts down in her private journal that they are either static or conclusive is unimportant. Instead, it is sufficient to suggest that the practice and discourse of eugenics were very much on Woolf's mind. It would be difficult to state that anyone in Britain was immune from public discussion of eugenics, either before or after the passing of the Mental Deficiency Act. As Michel Foucault famously argues, eugenics was a form of biopolitics which "assumes the dissociation and abstraction of life from its concrete physical bearers. The objects of biopolitics are not singular human beings but their biological features measured and aggregated on the level of populations" (Lemke 5). Thus, eugenics played out and affected individuals through the ideology of populations. Eugenics affected large masses of people, and how they came to view themselves, their bodies, and other bodies they may encounter, as it does so evidently in Woolf's journal entry. Eugenics allowed for the ideology that created the language she uses. Without the knowledge of the potential extermination of "imbeciles," Woolf's ability to write "they should certainly be killed" would not have been possible.

Judith Butler argues about the treatment of othered bodies that within the context of biopolitics the livability of their lives is put into question. She writes "the human is understood differently depending on its race, and legibility of that race, is morphology, the recognizability of that morphology, *its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex*, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity. Certain humans are recognized as less than human, and that form of qualified recognition does not lead to a viable life. Certain humans are not recognized as human at all, and that leads to yet another order of unlivable life" (emph. added 2). If a body cannot be read within bodily categories, categories that eugenics sought to make firm and static, it is deemed less than human, limiting its rights and sense of agency. Thus, enacting surgeries on such bodies in order to clarify their body within the male/female dichotomy was done with a sense of social necessity instead of medical need.

Butler goes on to comment that the movement to end "coercive surgery" on intersex bodies "rectify[ing] the erroneous assumption that every body has an inborn 'truth' of sex that medical professionals can discern and bring to light on their own," (6) "offers a critical perspective on the version of the 'human' that requires ideal morphologies and the constraining of bodily norms" (4). Intersex defies the very limits of what constitutes the human, through the question of "what is it to be" within the confines of normative definitions of sex when one inhabits an inbetween space (58). "[The] relationship, between intelligibility and the human is an urgent one; it carries a certain theoretical urgency, precisely at the limits of intelligibility itself" (58). Therefore, it is possible to see how increased prioritization of the "intelligibility" of bodies in the early twentieth century lead to a culture of dichotomous categorization of bodies according to the physical sex that was readable by society, making way for an even more "unlivable" environment for people whose physical sex was in question. Their humanity, and thus their rights

and agency, are always being given less of a priority than the social urgency that their "legibility" within a bodily category demands.

In addition, the meaning of what it is to be human is put further into question if we consider the historical significance of the notion of evolutionary movement. Forward motion, evolution suggests, is a move toward the "perfect" human, while backward motion is a move toward the animal, denying humanity. Angelique Richardson furthers Butler's point by analyzing just this kind of evolutionary logic. She writes: "For those who saw differences between the sexes as fundamental, the erosion of difference was not only unnatural, but could be seen as an evolutionary falling away from higher organization. Sexual differentiation was increasingly seen as a marker of evolutionary progress, humans had left hermaphroditism behind" (41-42). Richardson goes on to quote a report from an 1898 issue of *Popular Science*, which reads: "Among the humbler groups of the animal kingdom the whole reproductive task is performed by all members of the species. In other words hermaphroditism prevails. As we ascend to higher groups the sexes are separate, and the species becomes dimorphous" (42). If hermaphrodites were seen as a "humbler species," then the nature of their humanity, and evidently the ability of their lives to be livable within this discursive framework, comes into question. A new discourse would have to be created in order to make space for these lives to become livable outside of the structure of normalization through surgical intervention. As Butler reminds us, "the critique of gender norms must be situated within the context of lives as they are lived and must be guided by the question of what maximized the possibilities for a livable life, what minimizes the possibility of unbearable life or, indeed, a social or literal death" (8). It is within an anticipation of this Butlearean "livable" possibility that Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner construct their texts.

What is important to remember is that eugenics relied on the categorization of bodies, it was not simply a denial of human rights without a larger ideological structure to support it — something people could perceive as "provable" science. Statistics had to provide the basis for eugenic theories, otherwise they would never be legitimized through public legislation. The hereditary nature of hermaphroditism (or psudo-hermaphroditism as it was usually called, given the aforementioned rejection of true hermaphroditism for reasons already mentioned) was up for debate.[3] But, in order to discuss whether or not pseudo-hermaphroditism could be passed down from generation to generation it had to be defined in relation to so-called normal bodies. Furthermore, the ambiguity of a hermaphrodidic body had to be made legible either as male or as female, and as developments in the field of surgery and medicine continued to be made, surgeries on bodies deemed as "unique," or questionable, were highly prized and published on. The bind between eugenics and the social, medical, and surgical treatment of ambiguous bodies in the early twentieth century shows a cultural reliance on categorization, which writers like Virginia Woolf (and William Faulkner, as we will see in the following chapter) seek to confuse in an effort to free bodies from the confines of corporeal imperatives.

Virginia Woolf's character Orlando, like the many intersex people described in early twentieth-century medical text books, begins life as one sex and later transforms into the other. The complexities of Orlando pre- and post-transition sex and gender signifiers are vast, and his/her sexuality constantly in flux, denying the medical and eugenic claims to strict gender and sexed classification. The novel opens with a sixteen-year-old want-to-be-writer Orlando, the "sixteenth century had still some years of its course to run" (13). Orlando is soon made the British Queen's lover. The novel then follows Orlando through a love affair turned sour with a

[3] See in particular G. Archdall Reid's discussion of the inheritance of hermaphroditism in animals and insects in his *Laws of Heredity*, pages 190-192 as well as Charles Davenport's discussion of the heredity of hermaphroditism in humans which I will discuss further in the following chapter.

Russian princess during the Great Frost, an avoidance of the Archduchess Harriet, to a time in Constantinople where Orlando transitions from being declared by his/her biographer as male to being declared female. After his/her transition, Orlando returns to England to grapple with her new identity, including cross-dressing, taking both male and female lovers, and continuing work on his/her writing. Additionally, Orlando is reacquainted with the Archduchess Harriet who reveals him/herself to now be the Archduke Harry. After shunning Harry's proposal of marriage and resigning him/herself to being alone, Orlando meets Shelmerdine, a sailor and adventurer whose sex, like Orlando's, is ambiguous but whom she comes passionately to love and marry. But, Shelmerdine is once again called to the sea and he leaves Orlando. During Shelmerdine's absence, she continues to work on her writing, and eventually has a male child who can become the heir to her property and continue on her lineage. The novel never really concludes, suggesting that Orlando's life continues past the current moment, 1920s England. Shelmerdine returns to an awaiting Orlando, and it would seem that they live happily ever after. What is striking about the novel is that it takes place over five centuries, cataloguing the changes in attitudes about gender, the dress of both genders, the changes in Britain's national image, changes in writing and writers and so on, "mobiliz[ing] cross-historical reverberations by landing its protagonist in different historical settings, bodies, and genders" (Coffman par 24).

Previous criticism of *Orlando* has focused on lesbian desire, taking into account Woolf's own profession that the text was written for, and about, her friend and romantic interest Vita Sackville-West. Sherron E. Knopp's essay "'If I Saw You Would You Kiss Me?': Sapphism and the Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" published in 1988, examines how *Orlando* is connected specifically to the relationship between Sackville-West and Woolf, how the construction of the text relies heavily on their high-profile romance, but most importantly how

their self-professed "sapphism," (the term preferred by Sackville-West [25]), both inspired the writing of *Orlando* as well as how it negotiates the controversial issue of lesbianism. Interestingly, Knopp suggests that prior to the writing of her essay, there had been a great deal of "critical ambivalence" surrounding the novel, likely spurred by Woolf's own comments that the novel was nothing more than an "'escapade', something written 'for a treat'" (24). Knopp calls other critics into action, presenting *Orlando* as a kind of undiscovered realm for queer criticism.

Enter Victoria L. Smith's article "'Ransacking the language': Finding the Missing Goods in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" in 2006, which picks up on the lesbian relationship between Sackville-West and Woolf, but also moves towards an attempt to understand Orlando as a female character. Smith asks: "What is Orlando? Is she a Woman? If so, how can she be represented?" She answers: "the text echoes the difficulty of representation in the difficulty of representing woman for herself, as herself. The consequences of this doubling of and in the text are profound: Woolf re-animates the form of biography, produces a text where Vita can both read and see herself, as can Woolf, and enables both women to have compensatory stories of their own. Woolf's work, then, suggests that a doubleness is needed to produce the self as woman, to represent (her)self" (58). While Smith's questions about the text are useful in a consideration of what *Orlando* might bring to the relationship between Woolf and Sackville-West, it does not approach an understanding of Orlando as more than always already a woman. Yet, by presenting Orlando in this way we are denied an understanding of the maleness of Orlando that begins the text. If Orlando is representative of a woman only, then what are we to make of the sex/gender transition? Is it a transition between two supposed halves of a woman – a masculine and a feminine half – that represent a "doubleness" required to represent a unique and ideal womanness? Smith's reading presents a beginning, but a reading which necessarily must account

for Woolf's romantic relationship before approaching the text as something unto itself, not something which relies on something else to make sense of itself. It does not work to unpack the complexity of the work *Orlando* does to unsettle sexed identities.

Furthermore, Smith states that "because of the complex interplay between the deeply personal and the overtly public and political, any consideration of *Orlando* needs to take biographical and autobiographical issues into account" (60). And yet, we can ask, must every critic be tied to Woolf and Sackville-West while writing anything about *Orlando*? Must the *Orlando: A Biography*, always be the biography of Sackville-West, instead of being the biography of Orlando? This chapter argues that Orlando must be read as a character to him/herself in order to see other frameworks at work and under contestation in it. *Orlando* must be read as a text which can be separated from Woolf's biography, and from her life, otherwise it is nothing more than another one of her journals and it is not a public text. The text itself needs to be free to do its own work, to make its own statements, without the restrictions of being simply a code for the "truth" of a relationship or a person. Stef Craps in particular laments this limited treatment by critics and its author. He writes: "Orlando, far from being an insignificant *jeu d'esprit*, is in fact a radical text, whose subversion of deep-seated and taken-for-granted assumptions about gendered behaviour is suppressed by its reduction to an escapade or a mere tribute to Vita Sackville-West" (175).

Criticism of *Orlando* has also attempted to keep the discussion of the character Orlando on the idea of androgyny. George Piggford published "'Who's that girl'?: Annie Lennox, Woolf's *Orlando*, and Female Camp Androgyny" in 1997. Piggford argues for Orlando as a character who "mocks and ironizes gender norms in order to undermine the gender assumptions of [his/her] specific cultures" (par 3). However, Piggford returns to Sackville-West through an

analysis of the photographs that grace the pages of *Orlando*. Photos which, critics have now begun to discuss are of Sackville-West.[4] Piggford argues: "the photographic representations of Sackville-West as the androgynous Orlando in the pages of Woolf's novel suggest the possible beginnings of a specifically female tradition of androgynous gender performance. Sackville-West […] does not appear as a hermaphroditic body dressed in various clothes – [in this performance the viewer is not] perceiving an organism that possesses the sex organs of both sexes. Rather, it is the tension between perceived biological sex and the style of self-representation that creates a moment of disorientation and uncertainty" (par 20). Furthermore, Piggford attempts to show that *Orlando* is "an instance of high camp that Woolf employed to interrogate Freudian theories of sexual identity" (par 23). Piggford is apt in his analysis of Woolf's distaste of Freud's non-complex reading of gender, and it is possible that *Orlando* seeks to destabilize Freud's reading of gender and sexuality specifically. However, Piggford's use of the term "organism" when describing hermaphrodidic bodies strikes one as problematic. Piggford is so sure of Orlando's physical sex that he is willing to say that he/she does not possess both sexed organs. But how, this chapter will ask later on, is this reading possible without acknowledgement, on behalf of Orlando nor of the narrator, of which sex organs Orlando possesses before or after the transition?

Karen Kaivola in her 1999 article "Revisiting Woolf's Representations of Androgyny: Gender, Race, Sexuality and Nation" attempts a similar argument to Piggford's, stating that "Orlando's identity is androgynous, and that androgyny is mobile not static: presenting not a smooth synthesis of oppositions but a more chaotic hermaphrodidic 'intermix'" (235). Kaivola argues that Orlando is a kind of bodily hybrid which disturbed the ideology of "inductive

[4] Sean Starke argued in his conference paper entitled "'A Crude Statement of Fact Addressed to the Eye': Portraits of Invisible People and Woolf's Image-Texts" that Sackville-West's portraits in *Orlando* represent a kind of "generic cross-dressing" that does not support the critique of heteronormative gender roles that the text clearly engages in.

science, to produce strong (and dangerous) commitments to racial, gendered, and sexual purity" (241) at the time of its publication. She rightly states that "by foregrounding hermaphrodidic intermixes, Orlando constitutes a playfully subversive response to cultural forces that took such disruptions of gender dichotomies and sexual dimorphism extremely seriously and reacted to them with fear and hostility" (240). What Kaivola is attempting to discuss in her article is the language of eugenics, and the ties between science and nationalism. While Kaivola approaches both an understanding of eugenic rhetoric, she does not include the term specifically in her article. Additionally, her reading of hermaphrodite bodies does not acknowledge the embodiment of hermaphrodite experience. Instead, through her reading, a hermaphrodite becomes a kind of trope, a figure which stands in as a metaphor for "intermixture" instead of a body which was surgically altered in order to fit into the notions of, what Kiavola rights comments, "gendered purity" due to the "fear and hostility" that surrounded ambiguity.

Similarly, Craps and others, such as Chris Coffman, have begun discussing *Orlando* as a "radical text" with its "subversion" of "gendered behaviour," though, their reading is through the lens of trangenderism. It is easy to see why this reading may be gaining momentum in recent criticism: Orlando transitions from male to female instead of being ambiguous from birth as an intersex person would be; Orlando plays not only with physical sex but also gender representation, including clothing; Orlando is fluid in his/her sexuality, preferring "the love of both sexes equally" (221). Craps's article "How To Do Things With Gender" takes his reader through a careful close-reading of many passages in the novel which deal with Orlando's transition: not only the moment of transition, but also Orlando's difficulties *becoming* a woman, so to speak. Craps argues that Orlando's post-transition requires Orlando to attempt to "pass" as a woman, as transgender and transsexual people do after their respective transitions (181). This

attempt to pass, Craps argues "reveals the extent to which the 'normally' sexed person is in fact a contingent practical accomplishment" (181). "By making gender trouble," Craps concludes, "the text hopes to effect a rearticulation of the terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility which would result in gender configurations being proliferated outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality" (188).

Coffman, like Craps, reads Orlando as transgender, but more specifically focuses on the transgender reading of *Orlando* itself, discussing a kind of critical "turf war" over *Orlando*, arguing that "[it] has been claimed by both feminist theory and by a queer theory that privileges sexuality, but has largely been policed away as an inappropriate object for trans studies" (par 11). Coffman then goes on to map the history of *Orlando*'s criticism, citing in particular trans scholar Jay Prosser who suggests that Woolf's "defiance of realism in *Orlando* leaves her protagonist 'free to move beyond h/er body' and to 'break through the limits of the flesh' as 'h/er narrative propels h/er through four centuries of history'" (par 12). Yet Coffman contends that Orlando's transition is still embodied, that Orlando transitions from being an "unambiguously male" to "unambiguously female" (par 13), going further to suggest that "Woolf's experimentalism involves not as much an escapist evasion of the question of embodiment as it does a critical interrogation of it" (par. 15). Yet, while the issue of embodiment discussed by Coffman is vital to an understanding of Orlando's transition as well as to the novel as a whole, both Craps and Coffman focus on gender identification instead of sexed identification, leaving out an important piece of Orlando's identity.

A transgender reading opens up potential for a discussion of Orlando's questionably sexed body, yet it does not quite reach the critique of Woolf's contemporary understanding of the medicalization of ambiguously sexed bodies which this thesis attempts to accomplish. It is

important to discuss *Orlando* within its historical context, understanding the medical and scientific discourses that surround it and are present within it, especially when we consider the treatment of ambiguously sexed bodies that were linked to hermaphroditism, androgyny, same-sex desire, and "sexual inversion" – a term coined by sexologist and eugenicist Havelock Ellis, and popularized through the publication of Hall's *Well of Loneliness* just prior to the publication of *Orlando*, an issue that I will return to later on in this chapter. Sex, sexuality, and gender were very tightly tied together during early twentieth-century sexological, eugenic, and medical research. Dreger contends that Blair Bell was the first surgeon to suggest a differentiation between gendered behaviour and physiological sex in 1914, but she admits that further discussion of this nature was not prevalent (30). If we consider the lack of differentiation between sex, gender, and sexuality at the time of *Orlando*'s writing then it does not follow to critique *Orlando* as a text which only considers Orlando's body as being transgender. That is, unless we consider transgender as a larger umbrella category which includes intersex within its definition.

Susan Stryker's definition of transgender, through her definition of transgender studies, is helpful here:

> Most broadly conceived, the field of transgender studies is concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, articulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood. (3)

It is clear from this analysis of transgender, in particular if we consider how the intersex body "disrupts, denaturalizes […] normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body," as well as the inclusion of a number of articles on intersex in the anthology from which this excerpt from the introduction is drawn, that transgender studies, and thus the definition of transgender can, and should, also apply to intersex bodies. In light of this, it is vital to keep Stryker's caution in mind as a discussion of *Orlando* as a trans/intersex text is explored: "Transgender studies, at its best, is like other socially engaged interdisciplinary academic fields […] that investigate questions of embodied difference, and analyze how such differences are transformed into social hierarchies – without ever losing sight of the fact that 'difference' and 'hierarchy' are never mere abstractions; they are systems of power that operate on actual bodies, capable of producing pain and pleasure, health and sickness, punishment and reward, life and death" (3). While transgender had traditionally been associated with a subversion of gender only, transgender has also come to signify transsexual as well as a plethora of othered bodies, as Stryker explains. *Orlando* complicates even these distinctions, confusing notions of the transsexual, who Coffman acknowledges "usually need approval of the medical establishment in order to obtain sex reassignment," and intersex bodies, who in many cases have been denied their ability to have agency over medical interventions through removing Orlando's transition from a medical discourse all together. Although transgender and intersex people currently debate the extent to which the medical establishment should be permitted access to their bodies (Butler 6-7), there are many similarities in how their bodies have been viewed, categorized, and oppressed due to their ambiguity. As has been discussed, the lurking potential of homosexuality could not be tolerated, neither could bodies who defied traditional gender or sexed dichotomous imperatives. Coffman and Craps's

transgender engagement with *Orlando* will become increasingly valuable to the discussion of the text as a subversion of normalizing medical, sexological, and eugenic discourse and therefore it is vital to keep in mind the link between transgender bodies and intersex bodies, the significance of their similar disturbances of bodily categories to *Orlando*, as well as *Orlando*'s disruption of the early twentieth-century treatment of both transgender and intersex bodies. In other words, while this thesis focuses primarily on intersex bodies, it also considers more broad conceptions of transgenderisms as Stryker's definition lies out.

Woolf writes in "The Narrow Bridge of Art" that "it is as if the modern mind, wishing always to verify its emotions, had lost the power of accepting anything simply for what it is" (16-17). The modern mind, skewed by rapid advancements in technology, and war, cannot perceive accurately, and thus is able to make up all kinds of fantasies in order to explore the ever-changing modern world. James Harker writes in his "Misperceiving Virginia Woolf" that "the modern author makes use of the inability to perceive accurately, the partial information of the senses and the errant understandings of character and motivation as materials for a kind of fiction that lays bare the imperfection of one's knowledge of the external world and of the inner life" (5). Woolf's modernist perception of bodies may be at fault for writing a text like *Orlando*, which confuses, blurs, and intentionally obscures the nature of that which could be easily taken for granted: sex, gender, sexuality, embodiment. Yet, this obscuring is a happy fault because it allows for a kind of activism in the writing, because Woolf's "stylistic difficulties," which are often attributed to literary modernity, allow for the writing of difference. Harker quotes Melba Cuddy-Keane when exploring the necessity for Woolf's stylistic experiments thus: "Woolf's supposedly difficult 'highbrow' discourse functions as an activist response to a pressing social need: the need to reject clichés, to shake off the nation's 'priestliness,' and to learn to think in

flexible, relational, intelligent ways" (19 n4). It is possible to substitute many words into the position of "priestliness," but each would connote a similar kind of oppressiveness, and a concern for a kind of structured morality, something eugenicists tried very hard to establish as they attempt to pass marriage legislation.[5]

Woolf's writing style in *Orlando*, which adheres very much to the difficult obscuring of both language and the conventions of narrative structure in modernism, allows for a similar disturbance of boundaries and essential categories. Woolf's *Orlando* is told by an unreliable narrator who, fitting in with other of Woolf's characters as described by Harker: "[is] constantly observing and thinking as [he/she] navigate[s] the world" (2). The same can be said for Orlando, who too spends many pages, if we can believe the narrator, pontificating the nature of life, of love, of gender, of sex, and of writing. Through these philosophical considerations, the reader is taken along on a journey of thought and exploration of the concepts both Orlando and the narrator are considering. Coffman contends that "*Orlando* refuses to require narrative coherence or the positing of an essential gender identity to make sense of its protagonist's subjectivity, and instead embraces plurality and contradiction" (par 20).

Yet, this lack of coherence also provides a certain amount of distance between the novel and the reader. We do not have much sympathy for Orlando because a certain detachment is set up between Orlando and the rest of the world, as well as between Orlando and the reader. We see Orlando through the eyes of the narrator, so Orlando's actions and observations are already once negotiated before the reader gets to them. Additionally, the narrative is meant to be humorous, fantastical, whimsical even. As Adam Parks writes, this humour is meant to mask the more

[5] Several states in the US were successful in passing marriage legislation, making unions between non-white and white couples illegal. In Britain, the focus was on making sure couples were aware of their partner's hereditary traits. Some eugenicists suggested that every couple should have to submit themselves to a historical tracing of their heredity before being permitted to wed.

controversial issues in the text such as same-sex love, the nature of Orlando's transition, "mock[ing] all normative sex and gender codes, destabilizing the very grounds on which sexological as well as legal conventions were founded" (3), the same issues that led to the censuring of a more "earnest" *Well of Loneliness* by Radclyff Hall. Hall's book "pleads the cause of sexual inversion by taking up an aggressively polemical stance" (1). What offended the British public and the courts about Hall's book, which could not be said for Woolf's, is that the book was written in an "earnest tone that sought to deny the possibility of either laughter or moral censure." Furthermore, the courts felt that Hall's text "had some literary merit […and] might even have a strong moral influence" (2). Woolf took a decidedly different stance in writing a novel whose main character was not approachable, in an aloof and humorous style, and that is utterly fantastical. And yet, if we peel away these conventions, we can see the ways in which Woolf is critiquing the world around her, especially concerning the idea of a static physical sex, gender, and sexuality.

Orlando begins with a curt denial that the text will concern itself with gender or physical sex. As Stef Craps explains, the novel begins by "protest[ing] too much" (177): "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex" (*Orlando* 11). Craps continues, observing that the beginning brings the "reader's attention immediately to gender," setting the stage for the direction the novel will take, which will be to "force the reader to reconsider virtually everything we thought we knew about gender and sexuality" (174-75). And yet, Craps does not suggest that perhaps physical sex is also caught up in this initial statement. While Woolf's opening does "protest too much" and set up the novel's complicated constructions of gender and sexuality, it also bring the reader's attention to Orlando's physical sex. "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex" implies, if we take "sex" to connote a specific set of physical sex markers, in this case a penis, especially if we

consider the historical context in which the novel was written which, as has already been stated, would not have had a complex system of differentiation between sex, gender, and sexuality. Thus, "he" constructs a penis between Orlando's legs, and therefore forecloses further debate over Orlando's sex, despite the ambiguities which will crop up even before his successful transition. However, Woolf continues "though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it [his sex]," (11) complicating what seems to be a very definitive statement of Orlando's sex. What happens by stating that Orlando's sex was "disguise[d]," is a confusion of what the reader conceives as sex. Is the disguise a disguise of the penis? Or, more likely, does the fashion of the time accentuate the more "female" attributes of Orlando's body, in particular his legs which are referenced constantly throughout the novel as being desirable? A definitive answer to these questions is impossible, but what is more interesting than the answer is the fact that the novel forces us to ask these questions in the first place. What is immediately intriguing about *Orlando* is that it begins with a sentence which excludes the answer to the questions it will continue to raise throughout the text. Why, the reader is left to wonder, is there no doubt of Orlando's sex? What about Orlando makes him so unambiguous? Why does the narrator make this exclamation the first sentence of the novel? With all this "protesting too much," the reader is forced to ask these questions, and the act of questioning Orlando's sex spurs a continued questioning up until the moment of Orlando's transition. What exactly makes Orlando a man? It is this question: what makes a man or a woman that the novel asks, as well as to continue to disturb any attempt at an easy answer.

We arrive at the moment of Orlando's transition through a series of clues, despite the fact that many critics have described it as having been born from nothing. Kaivola writes about Orlando's transition that "the change is unanticipated, undesired, and, at least initially, Orlando

finds that despite the change of sex, she remains fundamentally the same" (235). This reading, although common, presupposes the novel's narrator as being clairvoyant. However, it is clear that this is not the case. In fact, he/she (for we have some doubt of his/her sex as well, according to Craps [177n2, 183]) is read by Christy Burns as being "incompetent" (342). However, according to Kathryn Benzel, the text would not be as engaging as it is without the gaps in the narrator's knowledge, which serve "not [as] a handicap but rather becom[es] key to understanding the multiplicity of Orlando's character and thus the novel itself" (par. 8). It is up to us, the readers of *Orlando* the text and Orlando the character, to make our own informed assumptions about Orlando's desires and character, based on the knowledge that our narrator is not reliable, and the text itself is thus rendered unstable, making Orlando a character who deconstructs ideas of permanence and easy categorization.

Because the narrator lacks knowledge about Orlando's deepest thoughts, we cannot be certain that Orlando did not desire or anticipate a change in his/her sex. The narrator admits to being shocked by the change, and unsure of how to talk about it. He/She professes:

> And now again obscurity descends, and would indeed that it were deeper! […] Would that we might here take the pen and write Finis to our work! Would that we might spare the reader what is to come and say to him in so many worlds, Orlando died and was buried. But here, alas, Truth, Candour and Honesty, the austere Gods who keep watch and ward by the inkpot of the biographer, cry No! […] The Truth and nothing but the Truth! (99)

It is clear from the narrator's discomfort that any indication of Orlando's desire for a change of sex would have, and did, go unnoticed or unacknowledged because of the foreclosure of such a possibility in the narrator's mind. In fact, as will later be argued, it is possible to Orlando's

previous long sleep as an unsuccessful attempt at a sex change. Though the narrator is adamant that the work of a good biographer is to "keep pace" with its subject despite "unthinking passionate foolish actions and sudden extravagant words in which [the subject may indulge]" (34), it becomes more apparent throughout the progression of the novel that the narrator cannot always "keep pace" with all Orlando does or thinks.

A careful reading of *Orlando* before the transitions renders the fascination the text has with transitions more generally, making apparent a momentum in the text which will lead to Orlando's sexed transition half-way through the novel. The first important reoccurring transition is Orlando's mood which changes suddenly and without much provocation. In one moment he basks in the love he has for Sasha, the next he "fling[s] himself face downwards on the ice and look into the frozen waters and think[s] of death. For the philosopher is right who says that nothing thicker than a knife's blade separates happiness from melancholy" (33-34). The second transition is described in the quick shifts between night and day: "at one moment the woods and distant hills showed green as on a summer's day; the next all was winter and blackness again" (40). The third and most significant transition is the extreme change in weather during the Great Frost: "the Great Frost was, historians tell us, the most severe that has ever visited these islands. Birds froze in mid-air and fell like stones to the ground. […] The fields were full of shepherds, ploughmen, teams of horses, and little bird-scaring boys all stuck stark in the act of the moment […]" (26). And then the Frost leaves as quickly and astonishingly as it came: "suddenly he was struck in the fact by a blow, soft, yet heavy, on the side of his cheek. The blow was repeated a dozen times on forehead and cheek. The dry frost had lasted so long that it took him a minute to realise that these were raindrops falling; the blows were blows of the rain" (44). These transitions create a dramatic tension, which pulls the reader along wondering when the next unexpected

switch will occur. The reader is always in suspense, questioning if anything described in the novel is permanent or easily definable. It is through this suspension of disbelief, as it were, that allows for the believability of Orlando's transition. If seasonal weather is so easily adjusted, night and day so close to one another, as are melancholy and happiness, then what of male and female? It is possible, then, that only a "knife-blade" separates them as well and that a transition between the two is always being made possible?

Orlando's transition occurs in Constantinople during a violent civil uprising. The narrator describes three apparitions entering Orlando's chamber, Purity, Chastity, and Modesty (these three apparitions can easily be read as the ideal qualities of a sexed woman), who then "retired in haste, waving their draperies over their heads as if to shut out something that they dare not look upon and close the door behind them." It is then that "we are left entirely alone with the sleeping Orlando," who upon waking: "stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! We have no choice left to confess – he was a woman" (102). Although we can assume that Purity, Chastity, and Modesty were the ones who "changed" Orlando, they leave "in haste," attempting to "shut out something they dare not look upon." Whether this description is accurate we cannot know, because of the unreliable nature of our narrator. Nevertheless, the description is interesting. Why would these spirits not want to see what they created? The transition is complex and confounds notions of physical sex. If sex is so malleable as to change overnight, as Orlando's does, then when was, or is, sex stable? The spirits cannot look upon the confusion and complication they may have caused. And yet, when Orlando awakes, she does not seem confused, despite the refusal by the narrator to refer to Orlando as the "she" he has become, but instead as "he" and later the neutral and yet double, "they." Critics have treated the narrator's choice of pronouns as

proof of the narrator's hegemonic vision, and who "vainly tries to get a hold on his elusive subject. He casts himself as an objective reported engaged in the factual exploration of a fixed identity" (Coffman 178). Coffman continues:

> Indeed the narrator makes it clear that labeling Orlando either "he" or "she" signals nothing more than the compliance with the social compulsion to tie human beings to one of two genders: "in future we must, for conventions sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she for he" (Woolf 133). What is revealed in the moment of unveiling, then, is the arbitrariness and the instability of the binary system of gender differentiation. (179)

But what the narrator, or Coffman for that matter, really fails to notice or identify is that the transition is a sexed transition, not only a transition of gender. The gender transition happens more gradually throughout the remainder of the text as Orlando learns to socialize as a woman (Craps 180-181). But the sex transition is confused too, because all we are told is that Orlando has transitioned to be a woman; we are not told the physical realities of what that transition may have entailed. The narrator sees the transition on Orlando's naked body, implying that the narrator has seen Orlando's genitals. However, we cannot be certain. Unlike a physician's report of a hermaphrodidic body of the time, the narrator's account of sex does nothing more than suggest a vision in the reader's mind. What is fascinating in the projection of the reader's assumption of Orlando's sex is that perhaps we each perceive physical sex differently. Perhaps some might envision a female body as being curvaceous, and have breasts, while others might think of a vagina and clitoris. By leaving this identification open-ended, through a refusal to describe the differences in Orlando's physical body post-transition, there is an ambiguity set up for the reading or Orlando's body for the rest of the novel.

It is important to acknowledge the repetition in this passage, the passage in which the narrator is forced to acknowledge Orlando's sexed transition, of the long dash that separated the "he" from the rest of the text at the onset of the novel and here separates "— he was a woman." The long dash forecloses Orlando's sexed signifier from ingratiating with the rest of the text. The sexing of Orlando, at least initially, must be separated from the rest of the text in order that it be paid sufficient attention and be allowed the weight to requires to be substantial. We consider Orlando's sex, in these initial moments of identification, away from the rest of his/her identifiers. While in the first sentence of the novel, the "he –," is described as a cross-dresser, or perhaps as a member of Braitain's colonial past and future (in that he is pretending, violently, to cut the head from a Moor [1-2]), the emphasis is on his sex. After the transition, Orlando could be described as aloof, or as a coward, who has refused to fight in the battle that raged around him/her during the transition, but before we make any such suggestions, "—he was a woman" must be taken into account, separate from other considerations.

Woolf leaves the discovery of Orlando's body to him/her and the reader, leaving out both the narrator, who seems not to want to engage with it, and the medical establishment, which clung, in the era of eugenics, to finite distinctions between men and woman. The narrator fails to explain to the reader what has happened during Orlando's transition, and Orlando, it would seem, does not do anything to cause alarm at his/her transition. Instead, the narrator tells the reader:

> The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it. Many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove (1) that Orlando had always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man. Let

> biologists and psychologists determine. It is enough for us to state the simple fact Orlando was a man till the age of thirty, when he became a woman and has remained so ever since.
>
> But let other pens treat of sex and sexuality; we quit such odious subjects as soon as we can. (103)

What this passage so aptly does is unequivocally state that Orlando's sex is now changed, that she is a woman, but at the same time denies the inclusion of a medical gaze upon Orlando's body. The "odious subjects" of sex and sexuality are treated of by those who would seek to define and pathologize them instead of allowing for an ambiguity to exist. The boundaries which seem to eugenicists a natural part of reproduction are blurred here, allowing Orlando to explore her new sexed identity without the eyes of the physician on her and without the reader's subconscious need to have Orlando's sex change explained to them through the lens we would expect – the medical lens.

To return for a moment to the historical case of S.B. in order to further illuminate Orlando's transition and the importance of his/her denial of the medical gaze, we can recall that there is no account given of S.B's gender nor sexed identity. In fact, S.B. is not permitted full anonymity (we are given her initials), nor full disclosure. We, those reading the account now, cannot be sure of S.B.'s wishes with regard to her treatment, the preferred outcome of his/her visit to the physician's office, or the amount of agency given to him/her throughout the examination, documentation, or surgical processes. We can imagine that Orlando would be treated in kind if taken into a physician's office. There is, embedded in Blair Bell's account, a photo of S.B., naked except for a pair of boots, looking directly at the camera with a complicated expression that hints at a moment of submission. The photographs of "Orlando," we are provided

in Woolf's text do not present a humiliated subject. On the contrary, "Orlando" is poised and beautiful without the violent oppressiveness of a physician who aches to know the truth about him/her, as they did about S.B.. Moreover, Orlando is spared the torture of losing any part of her anatomy so she may be considered "normal," unlike S.B. whose surgical "normalization" left her with a proscribed bodily identity and the loss of potential reproduction, which as we have deduced from both S.B.'s case study and other historical documents, would have been preferred anyway. The effort to control S.B.'s body, and to normalize it, is not permitted in *Orlando*, and is denied adamantly by the narrator, as if there is a knowledge of the urgency of such alterations within the medical community. In other words, to make a point to deny medical access to the body is to acknowledge that such attempts at medical cooption of the body were already looming.

Orlando's long sleeps (both the pre-transition sleep which does not result in a change of sex, as well as the one that does), further emphasize Woolf's rejection of the biopolitical control of eugenics and medicine. Orlando's long sleep represents two things: (1) a parody of the medical use of sedation drugs for the expressed purpose of helping patients withstand moments of pain and/or suffering, and (2), an attempt, both a successful and unsuccessful one, by Orlando, to remove him/herself from the social moment in which he/she finds herself through a change in sex. In the early twentieth century, physicians were using a variety of different substances to sedate their patients in moments of pain and extreme stress (which is a state in which Orlando finds him/herself before both sleeps). They were even beginning to use these methods during a woman's labour and childbirth. This moment of sedation during childbirth was called twilight sleep – a moment of in-between sleep and awake – enacted on women at the onset of labour by medical men. The example of twilight sleep further emphasizes the unnecessary interventions of

behalf of physicians and eugenicists, who were fervent advocates of twilight sleep, to control bodies which *Orlando* clearly rejects.

> For example, Professor T.W. Shannon writes in his manual on eugenics for families: The hour of childbirth is for the mother a most critical time, and only at the cost of great physical suffering and danger does she realize the joys of motherhood […]. Civilized women of the most highly nervous and intellectual types suffer most. The reason being the pace at which we live in modern days has left a definite impress on womankind making such drafts on their stores of nervous energy that it has shown as increasing severity of labour pains. (452)

Shannon describes this process of twilight sleep as "the Telephone wires (nerves) leading to [their bodies as] hav[ing been] disconnected (in some way inhibited from acting)" (457) which is produced by the routine dosing of a patient with "scopolamine" a "hydrobrolomide of an alkaloid obtained from the scopolo plant" which is used to "produce the sleep." Shannon goes on to say that "it is claimed that the majority of patients undergoing this sleep waken at the conclusion of labour with no recollection, or at least very little, of any pain, consequently free from the exhaustion such pain produces and therefore make a quick recovery" (455). While Shannon's description applies specifically to twilight sleep, it also suggests a general desire for the detachment of mind and body during times perceived to be distressing, or particularly of the body – leaky, noisy, unpredictable. While the desire to relieve pain during childbirth can be understood as an honourable pursuit in some ways, it must be also understood within the context of eugenics and medical power. When births were being performed at home, they existed in the realm of the body and were unpredictable, and unstable. When moved into the hospitals, labours could be monitored, and, many thought, made safer. The delineation here is between the female

realm, the home, and the male realm, the hospital. Additionally, there is a suggestion within medical discourse, that labour itself must be made more predictable, and the body controlled more rigidly. When a woman underwent twilight sleep she was no longer an advocate for her own body. The doctor was free to manipulate her body, cut her perineum, and insert forceps as he saw fit without concern for the woman's desires – he knew best. Similarly, we can wonder if patients like S.B. were told what organs were to be removed before being medically sedated.

Orlando sidesteps the medical discourse surrounding pain and uncertainty which would endeavour to medicalize her pain by showing how the body can enter a similar so-called distressing state – "he lay as if in a trance, without perceptible breathing" (50) – without the assistance of scopolamine or any other drug. Indeed, Orlando's trauma, the loss of Sasha and his "disastrous winter which saw the frost, the flood, the deaths of many thousands, and the complete downfall of Orlando's homes – for he was exiled from court; in deep disgrace with the most powerful nobles of the time" (47), is managed by Orlando alone. The acknowledgement of the body's power to perform what is required of it in a time of distress emphasizes Orlando's rejection of the medical gaze: Orlando sleeps when he wishes and rises when he wishes both in the first and second long sleep. The "remedial measures – trances" (50) are not performed with the help of the doctors nor can they be easily explained by them (50-51). Yet again, Orlando's body is rendered ambiguous, unexplainable by medical men.

As for the suggestion that the first long sleep is an early attempt at a sex change: Kate Bornstein points out, by way of Butler, that transgender desire to "become a man or a woman is not to be dismissed as a simple desire to confirm to established identity categories. […] It can be a desire for transformation itself, a pursuit of identity as a transformative exercise, an example of desire itself as a transformative activity" (8). Furthermore, often transgender may not always

have to do with gender, but may have to do with associating with that which is other – removing oneself from society's current, as it were. In the case of the sleep which is not sex-transformative, Orlando is attempting to remove him/herself from the prevailing social moment: In the first attempt at a transition he is shunned by his social group, and thus retreats to the country, broken heart in tow. The Constantinople transition is a response to a civil uprising, and to a would-be attempt on Orlando's life which is halted by the perception by the attackers that the sleeping Orlando is dead. Both sleeps, more so the sleep that results in a successful sex transition, allow Orlando to remove him/herself from the social moment, distancing himself further from society, "living a life of extreme solitude" (*Orlando* 51). Furthermore, Orlando enters a state of the in-between sleep and death, showing no signs of life besides breath. It is a liminal and unexplainable state, a state during which he cannot be defined by medicine, and is woken from just as easily: a twilight sleep, the twilight as an in-between, which is not brought on by anything but by Orlando his/herself. The in-between which is exists as another transitionary state, existing on the "knife's edge."

In some ways, however, Orlando's transition and subsequent marriage and childbirth make him/her less sexually ambiguous than the gendered and sexed construction of other characters in the novel: Sasha and the Archduchess/Archduke Harry/Harriet. Sasha is also representative of a body that questions firm sexed destinations – an intersex body. In the novel Sasha is presented as a boy/woman, blurring the boundaries of both gender and sexed performance, which are embodied and hold special significance in eugenic discourse. First, Sasha's appearance confuses both Orlando's sex and sexual desire, as well as the complex portrayal of the "ideal" female body as at once womanly and boyish, melding the sexed body of

a male and a female. Orlando is struck by his desire for Sasha, because of first seeing her as a boy:

> A figure, which, whether boy's or woman's for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity[6]. The person, whatever the name or sex, was about middle height, very slenderly fashioned [...]. But these details were obscured by the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person. [...] A melon, an emerald, a fox in the snow – so he raved, so he called her. When the boy, for alas, a boy it must be – no woman could skate which such speed and vigor – swept almost on tiptoe past him, Orlando was ready to tear his head with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question. But the skater came closer. Legs, hands, carriage, were a boy's, but no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts; no boy had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea. (27-28).

There are several interesting things happening in this passage. First, the seductiveness, which is attached to Sasha's body either as a boy or a woman, undoes notions of heterosexual desire which disturbs notions of productive sex prioritized by eugenicists – to have both sexes in one body was both impossible and unreadable. Second, the deconstruction of Sasha's body into parts: those which are deemed female, and those deemed male. Similar visual dissections of intersex bodies took place often in medical discourse. Take, for example, Blair Bell's description of S.B. post-operation: "the moustache had fallen out" (facial hair as male), "all the hair on the legs had fallen out" (body hair as male), "the voice is less deep" (a deep voice is male), "the skin less

[6] Orlando dons a similar dress after her transition, making her gender performance ambiguous beneath loose fitting dress. For a further exploration of the significance of clothing and gender in *Orlando* see Jane DeGay's conference paper "'though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it': Staging Gender in Woolf's *Orlando*."

coarse" (soft skin is female), "her figure is in general much more feminine in regard to plumpness and outline" (a rigid figure is coded as male, while a more curved body is coded female). What this passage in *Orlando* confuses is the necessary attachment of certain bodily characteristics to essential sex. The characteristics which make Sasha boyish also make her more attractive to Orlando, enough so that the desire for her continues throughout the ages of Orlando's life. These secondary sexed characteristics (shape of "legs," "hands," "carriage" and so on) justified Blair Bell's position that the body has a true sex that can be read as if the body would always render a truth about its sex. Woolf questions these essential distinctions by disallowing any of her characters to occupy one sexed position – they are all in some way intersex, between sexes.

The Archduchess/Archduke Harriet/Harry further confounds notions of easy bodily distinctions. Not only is Harry/Harriet represented as both male and female, but also human and non-human animal, even further destabilizing bodily categories. When we first meet Harry/Harriet, he/she is described by Orlando as: "resemb[ing] nothing so much as a hare, a hare startled, but obdurate; a hare whose timidity is overcome by an immense and foolish audacity; a hare that sits upright and glowers at its pursuer with great, bulging eyes; with ears erect but quivering, with nose pointed, but twitching." (83). Later, Orlando describes him/her as an "obscene vulture," and a "fatal fowl" (131). By describing Harry/Harriet as reminding Orlando more of a non-human animal than any of the human kind, Woolf is destabilizing yet another embodied category, and placing a body in the realm of the animal – a position not favoured by eugenic physicians. We know that eugenicists believed that intersex was a kind of evolutionary step-backward toward the animal, moving away from the notion of the animal as being imperfect, and the human as perfectible through science and logic. By confusing Harry/Harriet's

sex as well as defining him/her through animal characteristics, Woolf is forcing a rethinking of eugenic progress as being a move toward a false notion of unique, human perfection. Orlando is lustfully drawn to Harry/Harriet, "it was Lust the culture, not Love the bird of Paradise that flopped, foully and disgustingly, upon his shoulder. Hence he ran; hence he fetched the footman" (87). This desire becomes abject, forcing Orlando to flee his/her house for Constantinople. If we rightly see Harry/Harriet as an example of a body not desired by eugenics because of its nature as an evolutionary backwards step and thus Orlando's rejection of her is justified, then the reader would not feel sorry for Harry/Harriet, and yet we do.

Our pity for Harry/Harriet and resulting displeasure at Orlando's rejection of him/her is even more tangibly felt upon Orlando's return from Constantinople. Harry/Harriet reveals him/herself to be a man, and admits to deceiving Orlando and having been a man the whole time. And yet, the narrator continues to confuse pronouns (calling the Archduke an Archduchess even after his maleness has been exposed), as well as admitting that "*she* must in future be known as the Archduke" (emph. added. 132), even further confusing the sex of the "she," the man, the Archduke. The Archduke/Archdutchess professes his/her love for Orlando, crying and begging for Orlando to be his wife, and Orlando calls it "ridiculous" (132), eventually rejecting the Archduke/Archduchess and embarrassing him/her enough that he/she departs from Orlando in tears (135). The reader is forced to feel sorry for Harry/Harriet, as Orlando cries "Heaven be praised!" at Harry/Harriet's final departure (136). After all, it becomes clear to the reader that Harry/Harriet's transition from male to female, as well as his/her departure from his/her home in Romania was all for the love of Orlando (132). The Archduke/Archduchess calls attention to the conflation of intersex and interspecies, questioning how it serves to further marginalize such uncategorizable bodies. In this case, Orlando is the gate keeper of bodies who can enter and exit

"legitimate" human positions. She denies access to her body as well as her home to the Archduke/Archdutchess, and we are left to question Orlando's actions. Is this act of exclusion justified? Forcing this line of questioning is vital to the destabilization of similar eugenic discourses of exclusion and disgust.

Yet, the character whose sex is the most questionable in the text is perhaps Orlando's eventual marriage partner, Shelmerdine, because he/she is no more male than Orlando is female. And yet, unlike the other sexually ambiguous – intersex – characters, we are not privy to Shelmerdine's transition or any other indication of why the text chooses to make his/her sex questionable. Upon their meeting, which is presented in a very traditional Victorian style – the man arriving to find a woman who has fallen down in the woods (183), Orlando exclaims: "'You're a woman, Shel!' [...] 'You're a man Orlando!' He cried. Never was there such a scene of protestation and demonstration as then took place since the world began" (184-185). And yet, the actual demonstration of love and of bodies is veiled, unseen, and not described. Shelmerdine and Orlando recognize something in each other which allows them to see the other's intersex position, and yet that signifier is not shared with the reader.

Shelmerdine, also like Orlando, is presented as a person out of time, with a ruined castle "in the Hebrides," but also a person out of place: "he had been a soldier and a sailor and had explored the East. He was on his way now to join his brig at Falmouth" (184). Both characters exist in boundary spaces, not occupying the world as static human bodies, but as always fluid and fluctuating, and almost magical entities. And yet, the narrator constantly brings us back to reality, reminding us of the worldliness of their attachment: they become engaged, they discuss the making of an omelette, or "where to buy the best boots in London" (185). Therefore the reader is able to read them as embodied instead of purely cerebral creations of Woolf's, making

their critique of eugenic marriage ideals both enlightening and subversive. The coupling between Shelmerdine and Orlando would deem to construct Orlando as heterosexual and to normalize her body as female, but Woolf disturbs that by having them both proclaim the other as being the opposite of their gendered construction as male or female.

What is curiously missing from their exclamations of each other's "true" sex is an admission of sexed or gendered confusion. It is simply "You're a woman"/ "You're a man." Neither character acknowledges the other as female *and* male but essentially one sex, potentially undoing Orlando's transition, and Shelmerdine's male gender performance. These undoings put into question the heteronormativity of eugenically supported marriage which was the crux of British eugenics. Sex is never "sorted out" for the reader, nor easily explained away, forcing the reader to constantly question the stable bodily categories on which eugenic marriage ideals relied. What is prioritized in *Orlando*, instead of eugenic marriage, is passionate love between two people regardless of physical sex, gender, or sexuality: "I am passionately in love with you" Orlando claims (185). What their love ultimately shows the reader is the coupling of two bodies whose reproductive potential is unknown, a completely unacceptable state for two people who would be relied on because of their class stature, wealth, and education, to promulgate the national identity.

The reader is never told in which ways Orlando was a woman post-transition, so Shelmerdine's accusation of her maleness although surprising may allow for a similar accusation by the reader – we know now, we understand, he was always a man, no transition really took place. We can be comforted in this affirmation of normalcy, and yet after being with Shelmerdine for some time Orlando thinks "'I am a woman, [...] a real woman at last'" (185), confusing us again. What is a "real woman"? How can Orlando be a "real woman" if

Shelmerdine just finished accusing her of being a man? Woolf only allows for a static definition of Orlando's sex assignment as male for less than a page before disturbing it, speaking to an unwillingness to allow for a definite reading of Orlando's body.

Orlando's biology is never expressly shared with the reader. We know from S.B's case, the naming of an intersexed body's physical anatomy was of the utmost importance to the assigning of gender to a body. We are simply told post-transition that "Orlando stood stark naked. No human being, since the world began, has ever looked more ravishing. His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace [...] Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discomposure, and went, presumably, to his bath" (102). The usual descriptions of a body whose sex is in question are not presented (despite the usual confusion of pronouns on behalf of the narrator): there is no description of his/her secondary sexed characteristics such as her breasts, buttocks, legs, ankles, hands, vagina, clitoris, facial features, cheek bones, lack of facial hair, consistency of hair on the body in particular on the arms and pubic hair. These features were vital to a physician's assessment of his patient's physical sex (Dreger 166). However, Orlando's bearing of a child confirms a materiality of her corporeal femininity, one which, as we know through Shelmerdine's accusation, is still complicated. Orlando's entrance into motherhood, like her transition, is stated factually and without embellishment. The text meagrely states: "'It's a very fine boy, M'Lady.' Said Mrs. Banting, the mid-wife. In other words Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning" (217). In a time when midwives were becoming less and less acceptable as health-care practitioners in the eyes of the state, and when hospitals were implementing the aforementioned twilight sleep, Woolf writes Orlando's birth of a son in the mid-nineteenth century without the care of a physician. A

conscious choice, Woolf again denies physicians access to Orlando's body, the practice of twilight sleep preferred by eugenicists (the fact that Shannon includes a long chapter on twilight sleep in his eugenics manual is a telling indicator of eugenic support of the practice), and finally the use of medical implements popular at the time, in particular forceps (Gaskin 230). Orlando's body is left veiled, private, and intact, permitted to be "mother" while not allowing that role to render her always female. We are aware of Orlando's previous male embodiment and that knowledge allows for a questioning of motherhood as the job of an only female body, bringing Orlando's body to bear both on traditional notions of the mother and of the female role in reproduction. Additionally, Orlando's ability to mother from an intersexed position allows for a questioning of the potential for intersex bodies, as well as other questionable bodies and non-heteronormative bodies to reproduce. We are left to wonder, perhaps, if Orlando's body possesses both functioning organs – if, Woolf asks us to consider, Orlando is the "true hermaphrodite" that caused so much anxiety for physicians. Orlando's body puts into question the very notion of being able to decide on one physical sex for a body. There is no definite "male," no definite "female." Certainly the idea of being able to assign sex to a body becomes absurd within the context of the novel, and through the lens *Orlando* presents, it is also absurd within the discourse of medicine and eugenics.

It would seem the narrator, despite the long journey with Orlando over centuries, is never able to settle on his/her sexed identity. The narrator claims "whether, then, Orlando was most a man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided" (182). What this quote points to – along with "for the time being, she seemed to vacillate; she was a man; she was a woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each. It was a most bewildering and whirligig state of mind to be in" (152) – is that sex can never truly be "known" because there is no definition for

sex, or for gender, or for sexuality. The text explores this notion through the constant fluctuation and disturbance of these categories, but most strikingly of sex, something thought to be of the body, to be static, and definable. Yet, what is sex really, but a set of bodily signifiers which when added up may or may not represent a legible whole? The body exhibits many characteristics which have been arbitrarily associated with one sex or another, and our genitalia are only but a few of these signifiers. *Orlando*'s beginning, "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex" already anticipates dispute, "though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" confirms that dispute. The fashion, it would seem, is yet another signifier of sex, but a confused one, as they all are, because they change and "vacillate" over time.

Through the construction of Orlando's body as ambiguous, and what we would now call intersex, through the questioning of these bodily signifiers, the twentieth-century reader, as well as the contemporary reader, is able to imagine a space for bodies that have been denied access to a livable life, either through surgical reconstruction or through social exclusion. Eugenic discourses sought to control society through a complex biopolitical system that penetrated both the private action of families, as well as the medical treatment of "unfit" bodies through surgical sterilization. *Orlando* presents a unique perspective in which a variety of different bodies are permitted to experiment with physical sex, gender, and sexuality and to allow those experiments to happen outside of a scientific discourse of conformity. Woolf's text deconstructs notions of what it means to be male; what it means to be female; and ultimately what it means to embody a sex: what it means to have a penis, a vagina, or both, and how we, as individuals define ourselves and our bodies in relation to what we consider "maleness" or "femaleness." Woolf considers, through Orlando, the potential of having either male or female genitals, or neither, or both, and still being productive, human, "normal," versus being read as sterile, monstrous, animal,

abnormal. In so doing, *Orlando* allows for an undoing of boundaries constructed by eugenic ideals. What *Orlando* claims is that a body and an identity do not belong within one narrative, or to a school of narrators, but that the body is instead a complex text unto itself, up for interpretation and flexibility, fluidity and livable ambiguity.

Chapter 3

"Tore Violently" Through Sutpen's Hundred: Eugenics, Intersex and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

Eugenics has reference to offspring. The success of a marriage from the standpoint of eugenics is measured by the number of disease-resistant, cultivable offspring that come from it. Happiness or unhappiness of the parents, the principle theme of many novels and the proceedings of divorce courts, has little eugenic significance; for eugenics has to do with traits that are in the blood, the protoplasm.

-- Charles Davenport *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*

"*I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. Looking for them ain't going to do no good. They're gone*" (*SF* 73). So we discover Benjy's lack of testicles in Faulkner's 1929 novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy, one of the narrators of the text, is coded an "idiot." More than just a testicular lack, Faulkner presents the absence from Benjy's body as a mysterious, unexplained, disappearance of sexual organs. Benjy is left to stare at what he is missing in the mirror, crying over the absence of something we cannot be sure he fully comprehends. Regardless, there are parts to his body that used to be present and now they are absent after what can only be imagined to be a painful surgical cutting and subsequent physical healing. The rationality for the removal of Benjy's sex organs is not given in the passage, but instead there is an acknowledgement by Faulkner that Benjy is aware of, and mourns, the loss of his body parts. The inclusion of this scene in the novel speaks to Faulkner's interest in the analysis of the many repercussions of surgical castration of "idiots" during the rise of American eugenics. The scene also interrogates physical absence, as well as the physical, emotional, and psychological pain present as a result surgical cutting in general, and the spectre of physical violence hanging over any body which exhibits a departure from "normality."

With the rise of routine surgical practice for a variety of perceived ailments in the early twentieth century, bodies came under the scalpel more regularly and with less concern for the physical and psychological repercussions of these procedures on the patients. Sexual surgeries began to be used in the treatment of everything from hernias to insanity. Orificial surgery, defined as a set of "homeopathic" surgical procedures, was being performed for just such non-physical "defects." In particular, orificial surgery was seen as a successful cure for "sexual perversions" such as homosexuality and masturbation (Ordover 76). Furthermore, such sexual perversions were seen to be distinguishable through obvious physical markers on, or of, the genitals which could be surgically adjusted upon their being noticed, but preferably in infancy so that no person be subject to "masturbation and sexual excess" (446). Take M.B. Williams of Lake Forest, Illinois who wrote into the *Journal of Orificial Surgery* in 1900/1901, for example. Williams writes: "I have seldom examined a case, either male or female, brought to me with this habit [masturbation], without finding some congenital malformation of the genitals" (447). Williams's observation speaks to the pathologization of the body; the biology can be blamed for the behaviour – it is the cause. But since the biology can be "fixed" through surgical means, and through the biology the behaviour and abnormality, the saviour of the human species lay in physicians' ability to reconstruct the body, at least that is what modern science hoped. A branch of modern science, eugenics, was growing in popularity in the United States, and eugenicists were relying on modern surgery to help them solve the various problems of an unfit population that they perceived to be plaguing their nation.

In Britain, as was explored in the previous chapter, eugenicists did not reach their goal of sterilizing the "unfit" (Black 232) – a surgical "fix" for the nation, disallowing a variety of

bodies from reproducing more of their kind. However, in the United States, tens of thousands[7] were legally sterilized in order to preserve the nation from the promulgation of their "germ plasm" (Ordover xvi). Drawing on a long history racism and exclusionary practice, the United States was a prime location for the mass distribution of eugenic ideas. As Edwin Black argues in his well-researched *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, "breeding was in America's blood. America had been breeding humans even before the nation's inception. Slavery thrived on human breeding. Only the heartiest Africans could endure the cruel middle passage to North America. Once offloaded, the surviving Africans were paraded atop auction stages for inspection of their physical traits" (21). While this image is harsh, it nevertheless details the beginning of how bodies would be treated in the "new world" which was, in many ways, an ideological location, a place where the sins of the past could be erased and a fresh start made. However, the question of exactly who had access to this dream would never truly be settled.

"America was ready for eugenic breeding precisely because the most established echelons of American society were frightened by the demographic chaos sweeping the nation" (Black 22). The "demographic chaos" Black describes was the mass influx of new immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century, which followed the long and violent history of the exclusion of Native Americans to reserves, the enslavement of millions of African slaves, and the Chinese

[7] In the United States thirty-six thousand people had been legally sterilized by 1941, many of whom were already institutionalized as mentally unfit. Kevles notes that "through the nineteen-twenties, the national sterilization rate had annually run between two and four per hundred thousand. In the mid-thirties the rate shot up to fifteen and climbed to twenty by the end of the decade" (*Name* 117). (*Absalom* was published in 1938, at the height of the popularity of sterilizations in the US). In addition to mental institutions, eugenic surgeons also performed sterilizations on twenty thousand inmates in California between 1909 and 1979 (Stern 5). "The [sterilization] laws tended to discriminate against poorer people and minority groups. In California, for example, the sterilisation rates of blacks and foreign immigrants were twice as high as would be expected from their representation in the general population" (Kevles,"Eugenics" 436). The total number of legal sterilizations in the United States is reported at sixty-six thousand within thirty-three states (Stern 1).

Exclusion act of 1882 (which barred citizenship from a group of people who had successfully expanded the west through the construction of the railway as well as closing off immigration of new Chinese workers to California). Freeing those who had been enslaved did not mean easy incorporation into the already existing society. The social unease caused by the liberation of African American slaves created a rift caused by anxiety and fear of an unknown relationship between predominantly white society and those who had been, and would continue to be, oppressed. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, these issues had not yet been resolved. The precarious category of "white trash" had been added to the list of those who could not be tolerated by society. Black reports "3,224 Americans were lynched in the thirty-year period between 1889 and 1918 – 207 white and 2,522 black. Their crimes were as trivial as uttering offensive language, disobeying ferry regulations, 'paying attention to [a] white girl,' and distilling illicit alcohol" (23). Unlike Britain, whose eugenic focus derived from a long debate regarding class and financial assistance of the lower classes by the upper classes, the United States's eugenic policies circulated around issues of racial difference already present in the country. The immigration of those seen as unworthy of their place in the US only intensified social anxieties, bringing nationalism into play with eugenics.

While American eugenicists gladly followed the research of Francis Galton, they also heralded another man's work: Gregor Mendel. Mendel researched in a garden, focusing in particular on peas. He had more than thirty thousand plants, and he watched them each closely as he cross-bred them to assess their genetic strains. Mendel posited that there were some "dominant" and "recessive" characteristics. Daniel Kevles explains this theory thus:

> Mendel posited that, in his pea plants, there were two elements for every character – eg. height. According to the segregation law, they were separated from each other in the

> formation of gametes i.e., sperms or eggs. According to the law of independent assortment, the elements for one character recombined independently of those for another. The recombination of the various elements which was made possible by the sexual union of the sperm and eggs cells was thus determined by the laws of combined probability. The frequency of occurrence of the hereditary elements among the offspring of a hybridized group of plants could, in fact, be predicted in the same manner as the distribution of marbles of different colors drawn randomly from two bags, each containing a known proportion of each color. (*Name* 41-42)

Mendel found that some characteristics such as height were more prevalent, suggesting that if a plant contained the element for "tallness and another for shortness" one would always dominate in the offspring. "The tall-tall combination would yield a tall plant; the short-short, a short one. But though a tall-short union might have been expected to produce a plant of intermediate height Mendel observed that it regularly yielded a tall plant" (41-42). Mendel's theories were brought to the U.S. by way of biologists and agriculturalists, in particular a breeder named William. J. Spillman, "a plant scientist at Washington State college, who in 1902, in the course of developing a variety of true winter wheat, discovered that the results of his crosses displayed an astonishing regularity explicable by Mendel's theory" (43).

Mendel's theories proved vital to American eugenic research. Charles Davenport, the man who would become the face of eugenic "science" in the US, wanted to perform Mendelian testing on human characteristics, but in order to do that he would need to find large amounts of data regarding peoples' characteristics as well as their familial lineage. "Wherever the family pedigrees seemed to show a high incidence of a given character, Davenport concluded that the trait must be heritable and attempted to fit the heritability into a Mendelian frame. He observed

that single Mendelian elements – he called them 'unit characters' – might well account for such abnormalities as brachydactyly, polyactyly, and albinism, and for such diseases as hemophilia, ostosclerosis, and Huntington's chorea." He also argued that the same Mendelian principle could be applied to behavioural characteristics such as "insanity, epilepsy, alcoholism, 'pauperism,' criminality, and, above all, 'feeblemindedness' – a catchall term of the day, used indiscriminately for what was actually a wide range of mental deficiencies" (Kevles, *Name* 46).

It was vital that the Eugenics Record Office, the main hub of eugenic research and where much of the collected eugenic data was collected an analyzed, be well-funded because the cost of conducting the research, including the cost of case-workers who interviewed the bodies under study, did not come cheap. Unlike in Britain, where eugenics efforts were poorly funded, the US eugenic movement was well-moneyed, and was thus allowed to embark on a variety of research projects which sought to prove eugenic theories. Davenport led the charge to find funding for the eugenic cause, and approached the Carnegie Institution for a major sum. They agreed (Black 38). What began as a Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor funded by Carnegie, opened in 1904 (43), sparked the idea for the Eugenics Record Office (ERO), headed by Henry Laughlin and funded by Mrs. E.H. Harriman (wife of E.H. Harriman of Wells Fargo and Union Pacific), and opened in 1910 (45-48). The goals of the ERO were to (1) track families of "deficients," (2) monitor the status of sterilization laws in different states and the repressions thereof, (3) the study of individual traits such as epilepsy (Davenport,"Work" 314). The goal of most American eugenicists, Charles Davenport included, was to present eugenics to the public as a legitimate science so that their research could convince legislators to write policy to limit reproductive ability to those deemed "unfit." Davenport (and Henry Laughlin to even a further extreme though not as powerful to influence popular thought as Davenport), wanted to legalize

the sterilization of "human failures," so that there would be no fear that their traits could be passed on to subsequent generations. The idea was that "in the 'civilized' world, natural selection had all but ceased and could no longer move forward without hands-on human intervention" (Ordover 10). Eugenicists aimed not only to control the reproduction of human bodies in their country but also, in a similar fashion, to control immigration to the US, thus defining both bodily boundaries between bodies, but also geographical and political borders.

Eugenics became a pseudo-scientific way of controlling those bodies that caused social anxiety. Most of the anxiety present at the rise of eugenic research was the unknown future of the bodily identity of their country. With an increase in immigration came the potential for a non-white American identity, a miscegenated identity. Nancy Ordover writes "eugenicists were […] believers in and tabulators of blood quantum. The Great Migration, along with the entry of large numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants would, as Grant [a layman intensely interested in and vocal about barring further immigration] wrote in 1916, 'produce many racial hybrids and some ethnic horrors that will be beyond the power of future anthropologists to unravel'" (xvii). Grant's claim speaks to a fear of racial mixture, of the unknown, the fear of an inability to label and categorize bodies, a process that was vital to eugenic research, as well as a weakened nation state, easily invaded by difference. For example, Henry Laughlin published a "Supplemental Congressional publication" included therein was a list of "sixty-five racial classifications to be employed," some listed include:

> Classification #15 was German Jew, #16 was Polish Jew, #17 was Russian Jew, #18 was Spanish American (Indian), #19 was Spanish-American (White), #25 was North Italian, #26 was South Italian, #29 was Russian, #20 was Polish (Polack), #61 was Mountain

> White, #62 was American Yankee, #63 was American Southerner, and #64 was Middle Western American. (Black 190)

Such categorizations did not allow for ambiguity or intermixture. Each body was placed into a specific category according to their lineage but also according to their socio-economic status, especially in the case of white Americans, such as "mountain white[s]." Any body which did not fit neatly was squeezed into a category without consideration of how such pigeon-holing would affect the person in question. Take, for another example, Walter A. Plecker's (an avid racist touting the pseudo-science of eugenics) attempt to erase a "category," namely the category of "Indian." Plecker states that "we do not recognize any native-born Indian as of pure Indian descent unmixed with negro blood," placing all aboriginal people into the category of "colored" (Black 178). Plecker's goal was to bar marriage between white people and anyone with even a drop of black blood. By limiting other racial categories, Plecker increased the category of "colored," thus severely limiting who a white person may be permitted to marry.

Furthermore, eugenics "served and was served by" strong ideals of nationalism (Ordover xiv). Eugenicists prided themselves on their concern for what the nation would look like: "surveying which women were bearing which men's children, tabulating (and frequently fabricating) hereditary disabilities, asserting biological determinants of sexual and political behaviour, and zealously guarding the entryways to America's bloodlines" (Ordover 6). Feelings of nationalism and national identity allowed for some of the more heinous crimes of eugenicists, mainly the surgical sterilization of tens of thousands. They did it, so they claimed, for the good of the US, and its future as a global power. It is important to keep in mind the importance placed on female reproduction and the surveillance by eugenicists of women's bodies and sexual

behaviours – "surveying which *women* were bearing which men's children." Women are active in eugenic scenarios, for they do the bearing, and thus must be carefully controlled.

Possibly the most famous case of sterilization, and the case which would spark mass sterilization not only in Virginia but in many other states as well, was the case of *Buck vs. Bell*: Carrie Buck was committed to the Virginia Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded in Lynchburg, deemed a "moral imbecile." Carrie's mother was also at the institution and was also "certified to be feebleminded." Carrie had conceived a child out of wedlock named Vivian. Eugenicists now had three generations of Bucks to test in order to assess their theory of heredity feeblemindedness. Both Carrie's mother Emma and Carrie were given IQ tests and were assessed to have the mental ages of nine and eight respectively, classifying them both as "morons." The Colony's board of directors ordered Carrie sterilized in September 1924. However, the decision was appealed, and the decision would have to go in front of the Virginian court. Laughlin inspected all three women before the appeal and stated that they "belong to the shiftless, ignorant, and worthless class of anti-social whites of the South" (qtd. in Kevles, *Name* 110). Vivian was, indeed, classified as of below average intelligence for a person of her age (which was seven months). In 1925 the Virginia Supreme court upheld the decision to sterilize Carrie Buck and in April of 1927 it was argued before the United States Supreme Court. Daniel Kevles continues the story:

> The Court was persuaded not only that Carrie Buck and her mother were "feebleminded' but also – because Vivian was, too (or so all the experts said) – that the feeblemindedness was heritable. The Court […] upheld the Virginia statute by a vote of eight to one […]. The decision declared that sterilization on eugenic grounds was within the police power

> of the state, that it provided due process of law, and that it did not constitute cruel or unusual punishment. (111)

The surgery performed on bodies in order to sterilize them happened for women in one of two ways: salpingectomy or tubal ligation (Kevles, *Name* 93). Men were often submitted to vasectomy. However, some men were indeed castrated because, as Davenport argued, that "castration, unlike vasectomy 'cuts off the hormones and makes the patient docile, tractable and without sex desire'" (53).

Eugenicists' interest in categorization, as well as their passion for a white national identity, also led to the categorization and exclusion of other kinds of bodies: in the minds of eugenicists, bodies were either feebleminded or they were not, morons or not, white or not, and unequivocally male or female. There was no room for ambiguity between the two positions. As Elizabeth Ries contends in her ground-breaking work on the treatment of hermaphrodite bodies in the United States *Bodies in Doubt*, a "true hermaphrodite [someone who was both male and female] defied the natural laws of humanity, which is reproductive sex between male and a female" (178). The following case study which Ries provides, is typical of the treatment of ambiguous bodies in the US during the era of eugenics:

> A seven year old boy [Frank] was admitted to the Johns Hopkins Hospital in October 1925, diagnosed with undescended testicles and hypospadias [the opening of the urethra is on the under side of the penis instead of at the tip]. The child had been raised in an orphanage as a boy, even though authorities knew he was physically "abnormal." In addition to a penis, the boy had a short vagina and no visible testicles, though doctors though that they might be undescended and still in the abdomen. Had they found testicles

> they would have repaired the hypospadias and left the child to live his life as male. What they discovered instead, though, was a "normal-looking ovary" on one side. As the presence of internal reproductive organs took precedence in deciding the true sex of a person, the report read, "it was decided that the patient was definitely female, with vagina, uterus, left ovary, two Fallopian tubes, no right ovary, testicle or ovo-testis being found, and with marked enlargement of the clitoris, simulating a penis." What was once seen as a boy's penis when a physician first examined the child was now seen as a large clitoris. The patient was now read as a girl because of internal organs. (93)

Reis's explanation of Frank (now Frances)'s case goes on to note that Frank/Frances returned to the hospital after his/her diagnosis, complaining of the inconvenience of the large clitoris, as well as admitting to engaging in frequent masturbation. The doctors, in an effort to "help" Frank/Frances engage in a "normal" life, including from what was discerned about the treatment of hermaphrodites in the previous chapter, a heteronormative coupling, decided to remove her clitoris/penis. "No longer would Frances, the girl be able to masturbate or perhaps experience any sexual sensation at all." However, that was not the end of the story. Four years later Frances notices a "mass in her lower abdomen." As well as the mass, Frances admitted that she wished to live out her life in "male attire" and "learn a mechanical trade." "Upon learning of Frances's plans to live as a man, the doctors began to see Frances differently, admitted certain elements of masculinity that they had hitherto ignored when convincing themselves Frances was female." These characteristics included height, prominent facial hair, and male-type breasts. Upon surgical exploration, the physicians found testicular tissue as well as what would have been as vas deferens. Frances changed his name to John and began working as a truck driver (93-94).

There are many similarities to draw between the case study presented in the previous chapter of S.B. and Frank/Frances. Both were surgically explored more than once without indicating either subject's desires or protestations to such exploratory actions (especially in the case of Frank/Frances who was surgically cut open after surgery just to confirm his/her claims to a male gender identity). Both S.B. and Frank/Francis are portrayed in photographs, standing naked except for stockings/boots, staring into the camera blankly and compliantly, like insect specimens in a petri dish. Both cases include an underlying language of deception. The body is hiding something. The internal organs cannot be known without surgical interference; there may be undescended testicles, for example. What is within the body is hidden, and thus possibly deviant. The ovarian tissue was the wolf, and the clitoris/penis the sheep's clothing. This metaphor, a wolf in sheep's clothing, was used often by surgeons who described hermaphrodite patients, as if the person were intentionally "concealing" their true sex from the physician when, in many cases, the person is simply confused or in pain, seeking clarity or treatment. The body, as it were, is divided from the person. The body lies. The body cannot really be known. It is the body that is addressed in the surgeon's comments, not the whole person. The body is the culprit, separate from the person who is embodied.

Hermaphroditism was not unnoticed by eugenicists. Charles Davenport takes issue with three biological conditions "Cryptorchism," "Hypospadias," and "Prolapsus of the Uterus and Sterility" in his 1911 *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*. He writes of Cryptorchism:

> Cyrptorchism, or retention and atrophy of the testicles. This condition, a semi-"hermaphrodidic" one, is characterized by the fact that the normal descent of the testis into the scrotum fails to occur. […] In the third generation one boy out of four is normal. This trait is probably inherited just like hypospadias.

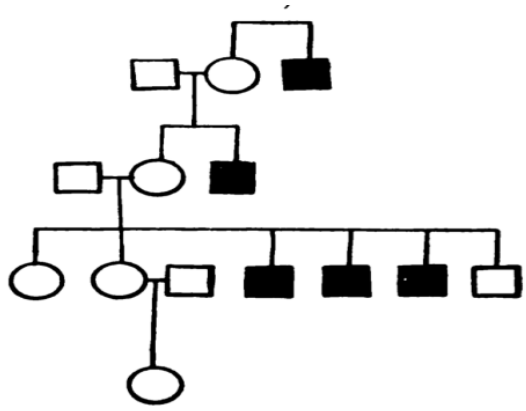

FIG. 150.—Pedigree of cryptorchism. Affected persons represented by black symbols. On account of the sterility of the males all affected persons are derived from sisters of affected persons. All affected persons are natural eunuchs. BRONARDEL, p. 169.

Figure 1. Figure 152 page 170 from Charles Davenport *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*.

He writes of hypospadias:

> Like the last this is evidence of an imperfect development of the external secondary sex characters and possibly indicates an imperfect stimulus to sex dimorphism. The defect is characterized by the more or less complete failure of the male genital papilla to close along the median raphe up to the apex of the glans. An affected man may have by a wife who belongs to a normal strain some or all of his sons affected. His normal daughters may have abnormal sons even when the father belongs to a normal strain. It seems that there is an inhibitor to complete sex-differentiation in the males. Usually males who show no trace of the inhibitor when married into a normal strain have normal sons. But occasionally apparently normal fathers in whom the "inhibitor" is inactive may have abnormal sons. The eugenical conclusion is that females belonging to the hermaphrodidic

(hypospadic or cryptorchitic) strains, if married, will probably have at least half of their sons defective, particularly if they have defective brothers; but normal males of such strains may marry females from unaffected strains with impunity. (170)

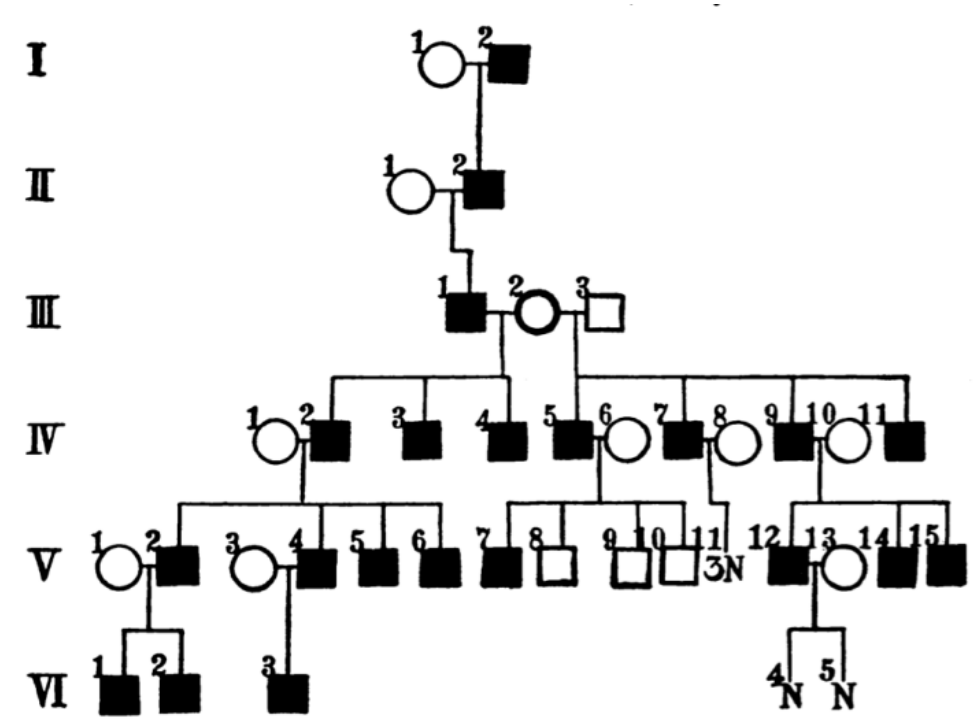

FIG. 151.—Pedigree of hypospadias (black symbols). Inheritance from affected males and unaffected females, III, 2. LINGARD, 1884.

Figure 2. Figure 152 page 171 from Charles Davenport *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*.

And, of Prolapsus of the Uterus and Sterility:

Corresponding in a way with incomplete development of the male reproductive organs is the polapsus of the uterus in the female. This is also definitely inherited but the trait is never affected by affected females since they are sterile. (170-171)

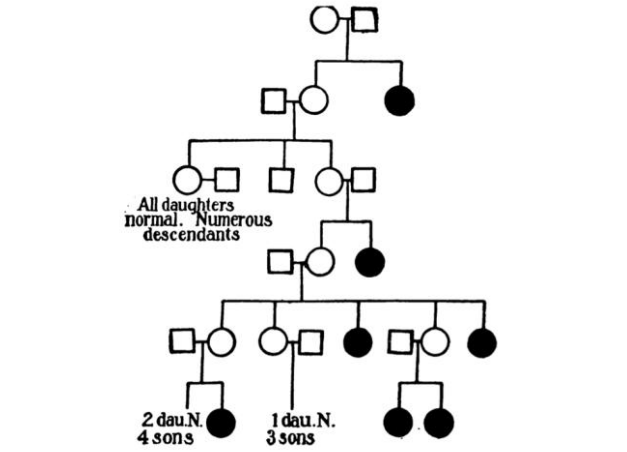

FIG. 152.—Pedigree of a family showing prolapsus of the uterus (females) and sterility. Inherited like the *absence* of a character, with probable consanguinity in marriage. BRONARDEL, 1900.

Figure 3. Figure 152 page 172 from Charles Davenport *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*.

The language of normalization is prevalent throughout Davenport's descriptions of these various "hermaphrodidic" conditions. Each body must have a clear and distinctive sex, any deviance from these poles, male on one end and female on the other, is an indicator of "imperfect development." Luckily for Davenport, such imperfections could be fixed. However, just fixing the problem was not enough for eugenicists, the shame of difference would have to be deeply ingrained into hermaphrodidic bodies so that the fear of their reproduction (and passing their "defective" gene onto future generations) would no longer threaten the bodily ideals eugenicists strived for.

The relationships between eugenics, intersex, and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* will become apparent in the coming pages. However, before doing so it is important to address the absence of critical inquiry into both subjects when considering literary texts of the beginning of the twentieth century in The United States. Susan Currell in the introduction to her *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* explains that

> critics of American culture in the 1930s have failed to address the influence of eugenics on the cultural productions of the era. […] The history of eugenics has become a twentieth-century horror story that does not fit neatly or clearly into liberal paradigms of the past or historical representations of the Great Depression. Characterized as a period of social reform in which cultural workers strove to highlight societal problems and document images of poverty, the 1930s have not been fully examined for vestiges of the eugenic movement that were clearly part of the intellectual climate of the time. (2)

Furthermore, eugenics has become so intensely associated with Nazism that it is easy to forget its origins in Britain, its incubation in the United States, and its international repercussions. Additionally, eugenics has been tied, not wrongly but perhaps too stubbornly, with racism in the contemporary imagination – Hitler did target the Jews specifically, and American eugenicists did target blacks and Native Americans. However, as has already been discussed below, it also intensified the categorization of bodies according to physical sex, gender, and sexuality. The treatment of intersex bodies in particular would continue to be based on a firm sexed dichotomy, which sought to include both gender and sexuality into its list of sexed signifiers. Physician John Money's treatment of intersex bodies beginning in the 1950s which defined the accepted surgical reassignment of intersex infants is well documented, and now, intensely criticized by intersex activists like Cheryl Chase.[8] However, how intersex treatment beginning in the late nineteenth century, its intensification during the popularity of eugenics, and its effect on the literature of the time has not been adequately discussed, nor has this time period's effect on Money's, nor

[8] See Cheryl Chase's article "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Wittle. New York: Routledge, 2006. 300-315. Print., as well as Judith Butler's "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Wittle. New York: Routledge, 2006. 183-194. Print. for further discussion of contemporary intersex treatment and activism, as well as – in Butler's case – an account of Money's techniques of bodily normalization.

contemporary reincarnations of, surgical normalizations of intersex bodies. William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, as well as other authors yet to be discussed by critics, through their literary work, allowed for openings in the dominant discourse of sexed dichotomies and bodily normalization, how this was made possible and its potential affect on both discourses requires further exploration and analysis.

There are a few critics who have discussed Faulkner and eugenics. Among them is Barbara E. Ladner who argues in her article "The Descent of Yoknapatowpha: Eugenics and the Origins of Faulkner's World" that "Faulkner's treatment of the families that peopled and configured his world – struggled for control and inheritance of it – did not reflect an embrace of eugenic 'wisdom' but a rejection of its horrors and misguided logic. Indeed, the imagery and rhetoric of eugenics gave Faulkner a nexus for his themes – decline, family, race, inheritance, incest, in-breeding, sex, and the irrational impulses that surround them all" (176). Ladner argues for Faulkner's critique of heredity, lineage, and "racial betterment." She notices, too, the classification on which eugenic science relied but instead of focusing on sexed embodiment, Ladner discusses intelligence classifications:

> With his [Henry Goddard] 1912 book *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, he did much to codify the eugenic theories that would so influence laws and policies in the United States for several decades. Using a three-part classification system for intelligence that labelled feebleminded mental "defectives" as "idiots," "imbeciles," or "morons," he diagnosed a young girl at the training school as feebleminded, specifically a moron; morons were considered the most dangerous variety *because they might appear normal*. (emph. added) (171)

Ladner's article relies on eugenic classifications of intelligence as well as criminality for her discussion of eugenic rhetoric in *The Sound and the Fury*, taking into consideration Benjy's classification as "idiot," as well as *Flags in the Dust*/*Sartoris*, *Father Abraham*, *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*. Ladner does not discuss the issues of heredity and lineage in *Absalom*, sidestepping the potential to discuss Sutpen's design and its connection to eugenic discourse. Michael Wainwright similarly avoids *Absalom*, in his *Darwin and Faulkner's Novels: Evolution and Southern Fiction*, calling it "overly quoted" (xi). Additionally, Wainwright excludes a discussion of eugenics in his text, which speaks to eugenic haunting of Darwinian theory (a theory which some academics like Wainwright and Andrew Hoogheem, believe should be as predominant a discourse in literary theory as deconstructionism or psychoanalysis[9]). The exclusion of *Absalom* from both discussions speaks to a lack in the criticism, which raises the question: why not discuss eugenics in relation to Faulkner's oeuvre, or for that matter, why the lack of literary criticism in regards to eugenics as a whole?

Absalom tells the story of the Sutpen and Coldfield families, their tragedy, and their legacy. At the centre of the novel is Thomas Sutpen, a mysterious stranger who comes to Jefferson, Mississippi to erect his mansion – Sutpen's Hundred – and to fill it with his progeny ("he did want, not the anonymous wife and the anonymous children, but the two names, the *stainless* wife and the unimpeachable father-in-law, on the license, the patent" [added emph.][39]). He marries Ellen Coldfield, sister to Rosa Coldfield, who as this chapter will discuss, and has two children Judith and Henry. In addition, Sutpen has a daughter with one of his black slaves, Clytie. As the text evolves we learn that Sutpen has made his money in the West

[9] See Hoogheem's article "Secular Apocalypses: Darwinian Criticism and Atwoodian Floods" *Mosaic* 45.2 (2012): 55-70. Print. As well as Joseph Carroll's *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature and Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Indies, where he marries a woman and has a child with her – Charles Bon – before finding out she is part black and leaves her. Charles Bon and Henry meet at University, and Henry invites Bon on a number of vacations. It is unclear whether Sutpen realizes Bon is his estranged son, and whether this is the reason Henry and Charles flee Sutpen's Hundred before the Civil War. Regardless, upon returning to Sutpen's Hundred after the war to (we think) claim Judith as his wife, Bon is shot by Henry. Watching all of this unfold, and witness to the rest of the story's unfolding, is Rosa Coldfield who is deeply in love with Charles Bon, whom she has never seen.

After Bon's shooting Sutpen's Hundred is unable to sustain itself. It has lost both sons, one to death and the other to estrangement. Without a son to carry on his lineage, Sutpen searches for another wife. He turns to Rosa. She denies him. The rest of the story is chaos – the downfall of Sutpen, who is eventually killed by his foil Wash Jones, the self exile of Rosa, Judith's death, the arrival and demise of Bon's son Charles Etienne, the tragedy of Charles Etienne's son Jim Bond, and the reclusion of Clytie. The last half of the text is narrated by Quentin Compson and his Canadian roommate Shrevlin McCannon (Shreve). Quentin, as we discover in *The Sound in the Fury*, takes his own life shortly after completing his story. *Absalom* is a tragedy not only of the characters in the novel, but a tragedy of the violent construction of the United States, and the horror of its anticipated downfall.

Like Woolf's *Orlando*, William Faulkner's text defies categories, both in its thematic construction as well as its style. It is difficult to definitively define *Absalom* as a novel. It is not linear, its plot structure is not clearly laid out, everything we learn about the characters or the plot is relayed to us by a character who was either told the story or only witness parts of it, therefore fragmenting the narrative but also destabilizing notions of what is "truth" and what is a "lie," what is knowable and what is kept secret. *Absalom* explores stream-of-consciousness

narration, defying conventions of storytelling, but also of accessibility. When first published, *Absalom* was thought to be Faulkner's "lamentable" experiment (Spoth 245), selling few copies.[10] The text is a slippery creature, a bar of soap that pops out from between our figures just as we feel we have gotten a grip on it. It speaks to the unknowability of bodies, of categories, and defies easy explanations. The text moves fluidly, backwards and forwards between time, between narrators, genders, genres, and locations. The text itself is queer, a space outside of the realm of the normal, or the expected. The history Rosa recounts is queer as well, according to Norman Jones (340), but so is the story that Quentin recounts and Shreve disturbs through his constant interruptions and reinterpretations. By creating a text that is always already queer, it queers, destabilizes and disturbs all of that which we already think we know.

Like *Orlando*, which opens with a "protesting too much" and thus setting up the gender and sexed questioning to come, *Absalom* opens with a coffin, a conflation of the living and the dead, the body in a liminal space: "a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened." "Opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew, sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair" (3). The space we enter is a crypt, a living and dead space, of absence and death and things which are unexplained and "not – ." Rosa is presented both as a living body with agency and a tongue to speak and tell her story, but also as a ghost, as the undead. She begins as a body in question, setting up the destabilization of bodies the novel will work to perform.

[10] Interestingly, *Absalom* was translated into German by Hermann Stresau and published in Germany in March 1938 by Rowohlt Verlag, putting further into question the political power of *Absalom* to subvert fascism, but also eugenic racism, categorization, and oppression. Daniel Spoth takes up *Absalom*'s political significance in Germany in his article "Totalitarian Faulkner: The Nazi Interpretation of *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom*!." *ELH* 78.1 (2011): 239-257.

Current scholarship on *Absalom* has focused on similar notions of ambiguity and of sites of queerness in the text. Betina Etziminger' article "Passing as Miscegenation: Whiteness and Homoeroticism in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!,*" for example, discusses the intersections of race and sexuality, which allows for an interesting reading of the parallel relationships between Charles Bon and Henry, and Quentin and Shreve. Etziminger is sure to point out the ambiguity in the text itself to set up her discussion, "Through [Faulkner's narrative] techniques, the narrative's blurring and crossing of boundaries unsettles the culture's insistence on seeing other types of difference, such as those related to race, gender, and sexuality, in black and white" (91). Etziminger argues that the fear of and obsession with miscegenation clouds the more pressing matter of homosexuality in the text in both the Charles/Henry and the Quentin/Shreve relationships. However, her analysis does not go far enough in discussing the ambiguity to which she obviously points. Instead, she maintains the binaries between blackness and whiteness and homosexual and heterosexual by relying on these definitions being always already fixed, denying her previous claims that Faulkner's text seeks to disturb these boundaries instead of enforce them. If any category is made unstable by Etziminger, it is only "the powerful cultural forces of whiteness" (103).

Christopher Peterson engages more fully with the impact of miscegenation and homosexuality in his "The Haunted House of Kinship: Miscegenation, Homosexuality and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*." Peterson argues first that Sutpen's Hundred stands in for the US Nation and includes and excludes according to a nationalist vision. However, Peterson complicates an imagined white US nation by claiming that because "all bodies are related in a chiasmatic way, then all bodies are in some sense miscegenated." Further to this notion, he comments: "The white body, like the body of the nation, is always divided in itself by precisely

that which it excludes" (230). Plecker's desire to recategorize bodies according to their racial heritage in order to exclude the category of Native American by saying that they are all black because at some point their blood would have mixed with black blood speaks to these claims of every body being always already miscegenated. If we consider Plecker's claims alongside Peterson's, then how ludicrous to assume that we are all not miscegenated, all pure in our whiteness. The spectre of blackness, of miscegenation, haunts us, Peterson rightly asserts, putting into question what were previously considered firm boundaries between white and black. How black is black and how white, white? Interestingly, the answer to the question of black origin, and the blame for the spreading of blackness, lies in the wombs of women: "In the Reconstruction South, white women were thought to be the sole carriers of racial identity. […] As the receptacles of racial purity, the wombs of white women had to be protected from black insemination" (238). Vital to this argument, Peterson argues that Sutpen, too, is obsessed, haunted, by the threat of racial "contamination" writing: "by the 'house of Sutpen,' we mean not only the material structure that he tears out of the Louisiana swamp, but also the house as lineage or race" (240).

Second, Peterson argues that the novel presents miscegenation as its chief concern, but lurking beneath is the spectre of homosexuality. "Homosexuality," he writes "emerges as both bastard offspring and genitor of a paternal will that essays to transmit its seed in a nonaberrant form." For Sundquist via Peterson, "the problematic of the failed union – together with the possibility of its final over-coming – circulates as the novel's central metaphor" (249). Homosexuality presents a "failed union" in its inability to produce offspring. It too haunts Sutpen's Hundred's obsession with lineage. As a non-productive union, homosexuality also haunted eugenics – the act of sexual coupling should produce offspring. Homosexuality

undercuts these notions, undoing notions of national duty and identity through a refusal to engage in reproductive sex. Peterson's essay makes way for a discussion of the novel's constant interest in reproduction, both its failure and its success, as well as its inability to articulate homosexuality through a barring of non-reproductive activity. Rosa, then, becomes a fascinating site of queerness for she rejects reproduction and miscegenation, instead fantasizing about both while constantly reaffirming her whiteness, an issue this essay will return to.

Rosa's lack of sexual reproduction is explored by another critic, Erica Pouffle Lazure, in her article "Rosa's Literary Motherhood." Lazure asserts that "Like Sutpen, Rosa exploits the conventions of Southern society to recast herself as a proper Southerner who kept alive her family line and legacy. Perhaps she achieves motherhood in the only way she can, which is a literary motherhood" (479). Rosa, in this sense, seduces Quentin into telling her story, in that way allowing her child (the narrative, and the story of Sutpen) to live on. Problematically, Lazure argues that Rosa gives birth to the story in order to become a "'complete' woman – a mother – before she dies" (483). Furthermore, she conflates Rosa with the animal until she has given rise to her story, it is only then that she becomes human. Lazure's article speaks to Rosa's lack – her lack of lineage, marriage, kinship – all things she wanted for herself at one time or another but could not successfully achieve.[11] Why?

This chapter will endeavour to argue that Rosa's refusal to accept Sutpen's proposal of marriage, and her resulting inability to reproduce are based on her fear of her own sexual difference. She is coded intersex, unable to claim her own reproductive potential, unable to view her body as the same as Judith's which is always awaiting Charles Bon. While Rosa too desires

[11] Jeanne Follansbee argues in her "Sweet Fascism in the Piney Woods: *Absalom, Absalom!* as fascist fable," that Rosa becomes the fascist mother to Sutpen's fascist father, both inflicting their design upon others.

Bon, and perhaps even Sutpen, she cannot move from desire to action. Her perception of her own body denies her this. Rosa's ambiguous body is problematic to eugenic notions of reproduction, barring her entrance to the nation (Sutpen's Hundred), yet it is not Sutpen who excludes her, but Rosa herself through the knowledge of her difference. Furthermore, as the Civil War erupts, and the men leave to fight, the women are left behind, their bodies meld into one – the triumvirate of Clytie, Judith, and Rosa, mixing together race, class, gender, and physical sex. The boundaries between bodies disappear, confusing even more the firm boundaries physicians attempting to place around corporeal fixity in the early twentieth century.

Before Rosa's self-imposed exclusion from Sutpen's Hundred can be fully explored, it is important to examine how Sutpen's nation is constructed, who is granted access and who is not. Most obviously, Sutpen's foil Wash Jones is not given access to the house of Sutpen. While he is permitted on the property to work, he is not allowed through the door. While this barring points to Sutpen's own trauma over being born into a lower class "Mountain White" class of Laughlin's distinction, he is unsympathetic to Wash's plight. Wash is described as "this gangling malaria-ridden white man whom he [Sutpen] had given permission fourteen years ago to squat in the abandoned fishing camp with the year-old grandchild" (*AA* 149). Wash Jones represents, according to John Rodden, the "white trash" and the white "riffraff" in the novel (23, 24) who is neither respected nor permitted acceptance into the space of the "nation" Sutpen attempts to create. Sutpen, prior to the Civil War, did not allow Wash into the house (226). Clytie maintains Wash's exclusion: "Clytie too, the one remaining servant, negro, the one who would forbid him to pass the kitchen door with what he brought," setting up a clear hierarchy. Clytie, having Sutpen blood, and being categorized a servant, is able to access the interior of the house; Wash cannot.

As has already been explored at the onset of this chapter, lower-class whites were seen as a degenerate drain on the economy and many, like Carrie Buck, were classified as feebleminded. Sutpen too, would have been part of this category of lower-class whites before his move to the West Indies and his accumulation of wealth. Sutpen, like Wash, is barred entrance to a white man's "big house" (185) and told to "go around the back" (188), setting up his feelings of trauma upon which he grows the anger to become the tyrannical leader of Sutpen's Hundred (Lazure 7). Peterson argues that "[the] disavowal of what Derrida has called 'hauntology' – understood as a interminable process of mourning that haunts one's self-presence from the start – is what conditions Thomas Sutpen's pursuit of immortality, his grand 'design.' Like [Abraham] Lincoln [in his famous house divided address] Sutpen essays to build a house, only to have it 'come down like it was built out of smoke, making no sound, creating no rush of displaced hair and not even leaving debris'" (240).

Jeanne Follansbee argues in her "Sweet Fascism in the Piney Woods: *Absalom, Absalom!* as Fascist Fable," for Sutpen as fascist father, which supports the notion that he is capable of admitting and excluding whom he wants from his nation. Moreover, he becomes a charismatic leader, one whom others seek to emulate and adore. Wash reveals allegiance to Sutpen and follows him much like a dog, ending at the moment of Sutpen's rejection of his granddaughter Milly. Sutpen says, at the sign of his newborn child in Milly's arms "'Well, Milly; too bad you're not a mare too [like his horse Penelope who foaled a colt that morning]. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable'" (229). Sutpen's disregard is the ultimate insult to Wash because not only does Sutpen deny the child that Wash has willingly condoned Sutpen to create with his granddaughter, but Sutpen denies his granddaughter status above a barn animal. He recognizes that Sutpen is a monster of sorts, and Sutpen's power over Wash is lost. Wash overthrows Sutpen

by cutting him down like a stock of cotton with the "rusty scythe" (139) which until that time had been left unused. Then, in order to expunge the shame Milly and the child would feel at having been thrown aside by Sutpen, Wash slits their throats. In their deaths they are safe from ridicule, and safe from the abjection they would feel at being kept out of Sutpen's Hundred. Through an act of what he perceives as mercy, Wash shuts off the potential for Sutpen the man, and the legacy of Sutpen, to inflict further pain upon his family.

And yet, despite Wash's love for his granddaughter, evidenced by his violence against Sutpen (a man whom he openly grovelled after) after her disgracing, his decision to kill both Milly and her daughter figures into Sutpen's design perfectly (illuminating a body, the great-granddaughter, thought to be unworthy because she is a girl) emphasizing the subconscious control the design had over those surrounding, and within Sutpen's Hundred. By destroying Milly and her daughter, Wash erases them from the Sutpen lineage. Sutpen mates with Milly (as he would have it called) in order to carry on the Sutpen lineage by breeding a white male heir. What drives Sutpen's action is his desire to breed a perfect bloodline, not just of his own but in his livestock (the breeding of his horses are easily compared, in his statement to Milly, to his own reproduction, conflating the two), as well as his slaves. Mr. Compson describes Sutpen's process of breeding: "the wild blood which he had brought into the country and tried to mix, blend, with the tame which was already there, with the same care and for the same purpose with which he blended that of the stallion and that of his own" (67). Of course, the notion of lineage and human breeding was heavily informed by eugenics, and eugenics in turn was influenced by the breeding of animal and plant life (Ordover 222), showing the connection between the breeding of "ideal" and "productive" animals and plants and the pressure placed on bodies to breed the same way in human communities like Sutpen's. However, in the case of Thomas

Sutpen, readers of *Absalom* are shown the violent outcomes of this kind of reproductive oppression and strategy. Sutpen serves as the leader of the Nation of Sutpen, a trope for the US Nation, the breeder of human, animal and plant bodies, and the police state, by barring entrance to any body he thinks unworthy, as well as manipulating women into reproduction with the aim of producing a male heir and a strong Sutpen lineage.

Sutpen's obsession with lineage sets up the novel as exploring the notion of the creation of ideal stock, and the distribution of such notions within the US nation. Bodies which could not reproduce, or were seen as not ideal for reproduction, were not admitted. What then, of a body that cannot reproduce, or at the very least perceives itself not to be able to, a body whose reproductive potential (as in *Orlando*) is unknown? Rosa, a quarter of the way through the novel, while attempting to describe her imagined position in the relationship between her niece Judith and Charles Bon, claims "I became all polymath love's androgynous advocate" (117). Of all the readings of this famous line alluding to Rosa's desperation for sexual companionship, her virginal understanding of sex, and her attempt to make love to Charles through Judith, all which may have merit and may indeed also be tied up in the statement, the use of the word "androgynous" have not yet been taken up by critics. Given the other hints at Rosa's sexed ambiguity during the progression of the narrative, a closer analysis of this word is vital to understanding her character and a novel as a whole.

The concept or discussion of the word androgyny, in scholarship, has mainly involved the coming together of two halves of a whole – one male and one female – thus strengthening the binary of male and female. In order for two parts to come together there must necessarily be two distinct halves. Exemplifying this kind of reading of the word androgyny is Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" in which she quotes Coleridge saying that a "great mind is androgynous."

She continues, "it is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all of its faculties […]the androgynous mind is resonant and porous, […] it transmits emotions without impediment […] it is naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided." She suggests that the writer's mind should be man-womanly or woman-manly ("Room" 128-129). At the 2012 International Virginia Woolf Conference, Pi-hua Ni gave a paper entitled "American Variations on Virginia Woolf: Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar* and Robin Lippincott's *Mr. Dalloway*" in which she read Woolf's notion of androgyny as an ideal site of creativity in both novels. However, after her talk a number of scholars debated the continued use of the term androgyny in scholarship particularly because of its dichotomous nature. Must one, we asked, be woman-manly or man-womanly? Why must these two genders be placed as polar opposites, to suggest that a coming together of the two is both ideal and unique? Instead, we need to accept a spectrum of possibilities between man/woman. In this chapter, the word androgynous is figured both in its historical context as well as in Rosa's casting of "androgyny" as a site of disturbance of the male/female dichotomy, pushing it instead into a spectrum of gendered and sexed possibilities.

But what does Rosa mean when she refers to herself as androgynous if we consider the time period in which Faulkner utters it through her? Scholars suggest that the word androgynous was used synonymously with the word hermaphrodite, homosexual, and cross-dresser in the early twentieth century. Alfred W. Herzog, a medical doctor who published Ralph Werther's controversial *Autobiography of an Androgyne* in 1874, states that an androgyny is a "class of homosexualists in whom homosexuality is not an acquired vice but in whom it is congenital" (8). *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* from 1922 defines androgynous as "1. Hermaphrodidic. 2. Having the characteristics, physical or mental, of both sexes" (48). Both of these definitions

point to an otherness, a distinctive rift between normative (heterosexual, a "normal" distinctive sex) and the androgynous bodies. Furthermore, these definitions suggest a conflation between sexuality and physical sex. Herzog continues his discussion of androgyny by defining homosexuality:

> This is my contention, that homosexuality is either an acquired vice, that is to say, a habit, or an acquired mental aberration, that is to say insanity, or congenital; and then it is that a human being is born with a body with sexual organs all those of the male, yet most likely with the body which shows certain earmarks of the female, but certainly entirely female in regard to the sex question. Such a person is a homosexualist, because he feels like a woman and to him all male persons belong to the opposite sex. He is not a roué [rake], who has developed homosexuality as a vice, but is born an androgyne, whom we can recognize in his manners and mannerisms; a male person with female ways. (11)

There is no clear distinction made in either of these definitions between what we understand in contemporary discourses as gender and physical sex. In Herzog and Stedman's definitions the androgyny will manifest physically either in "manners or mannerisms" or in "certain earmarks" of the opposite sex. Thus, if Rosa believes herself to be androgynous, then there must be some *embodiment* of ambiguity to which she is pointing, an "earmark" or a physical signifier of some kind. At the very least she would be a female person with male ways. However, given Rosa's obsession with being received as the white, female, Southern Belle, it would be hard to believe that she felt herself to be masculine. Instead, her androgyny is perhaps more of a physical manifestation of maleness, or a hidden desire for masculinity. The equation of Rosa with intersex bodies is a result of the hidden nature of her difference. Like Frank/Frances/John, Rosa's androgyny is buried within a secret that would have been perceived by physicians as a challenge

of discovery, requiring surgical exploration and correction. Faulkner, like Woolf, denies physicians access to the questionable body, leaving Rosa's ambiguity unchecked by their gaze, and uncut.

Judith, Rosa's niece, is presented in Rosa's narrated section as a woman who would be prized by proponents of eugenics, a woman who would be ripe for marriage and the reproduction of ideal children against whom Rosa positions herself:

> four years later than Judith's moment which only virgins know: when the entire delicate spirit's bent is one anonymous climaxless epicene and unravished nuptial – not that widowed and nightly violation by the inescapable and scornful dead which is the meed of twenty and thirty and forty, but a world filled with living marriage like the night air which she breathes. (116)

"Epicene," which refers to an androgyny, or both-gendered, again appears as a way that Rosa refers to herself. She is aware that her moment of puberty "which only virgins know," was a "climaxless epicene" meaning both that it was "flaccid" and "feeble" and "belonging to, or partaking in the characteristics, of both sexes" ("epicene"). That is to say that Rosa's puberty does not occur in the same way Judith's does, which creates a "world filled with living marriage like the night air which she breathes." Rosa's puberty is coded in ambiguity and a lack of pleasure: her body is not meant to reproduce. Judith's body, however, is haunted by the potential for marriage. Judith stands in for the eugenically desirable woman,[12] the woman who will perpetuate the nation, whereas Rosa's body cannot possibly engage in the narrative of nation-building (like Frank/Frances could not engage in reproduction, and both Rosa and Frank/Frances are incapable of "climax." Frank/Frances is incapable because of a removed clitoris/penis; Rosa

[12] The conceptualization of Judith here is filtered through Rosa, and her projection of her own preconceived notions of the ideal body onto Judith's.

is incapable because of the lack of romantic partner which is attributable to her androgyny). Yet, Rosa's narrative is the one that lives on, the one that gets told. Judith has no long narrative moment in the text. She is silent and silenced by Faulkner. If the idea behind eugenics was the promulgation of the race, then Judith fails. She does not bear any children. Lazure argues, the narrative itself is Rosa's child. Her sex ceases to matter, and her mouth becomes the orifice from which she births her immortality.

Rosa does, at first, agree to marry Sutpen, which disturbs the potential for her androgyny being self-acknowledged. However, Rosa's romanticization of sex and romantic coupling lead her to the acceptance of Sutpen's marriage proposal. Rosa retells of her desire to be Judith in the moments when Judith waits for Charles:

> Oh no I was not spying while I dreamed in the lurking harborage of my own shrub or vine as I believe she dreamed upon the nooky seat which held invisible imprint of absent thighs just as the obliterating sand, the million finger-nerves of frond and leaf the very sun and moony constellations which had looked down on him, the circumambient air, held somewhere yet his foot, his passing shape, his foot, his speaking voice, his name: Charles Bon, Charles Good, Charles Husband-soon-to-be." (119)

Rosa's romanticization of heterosexual love and companionship, presented to her through an imagined vision of Judith and Charles's relationship, prepares her to be whatever Sutpen wants her to be. However, she is embarrassed to tell Quentin about her initial acceptance of Sutpen's proposal, her "willingness to come to [him] 'like a whistled dog'" (Lazure 486). Additionally, in this passage we see Rosa's continued fixation on her genitals, her own "shrub or vine," vagina or penis, which her desire lurks within and is intricately tied to. She is uncertain whether she had a shrub or vine. She is always keeping hidden the ambiguity of her physical sex markers,

identifying them as male or female, never settling on one. For this reason her romantic inclinations must too be kept in secret for fear of such desires allowing for a moment of discovery.

There is no indication in the text that Rosa wishes to have children. Instead, she admits her fantasy to being taken care of as a wife, and to give up the "orphaning, the hardship, the bereave of love; the four hard barren years of scoriating loom, or axe and hoe and all the other tools decreed for men to use" (113). This passage speaks not only to her wish to be freed of manual labour, and to have companionship, but also her desire to be female and identified as such. The "barren" years using tools "decreed for men to use" suggests a feminine lack, an inability to claim a female embodiment without the copulation of heterosexual love. By becoming "wife," and in so doing have another being examine and explore her body, that which she perceives as potentially different, she is given the potential to claim a femininity.

Sutpen's insult, the thing from which Rosa is never able to recover, happens two months after his proposal, which in itself was not the romantic appeal to her heart she would have wished. As we are told by Mr. Compson:

> [Sutpen] came back home [from the war] and found his chances of descendants gone where his children had attended to that, and his plantation ruined, fields fallow except for a fine stand of weeds, and taxes and levies and penalties sowed by United States marshals and such and all his niggers gone where the Yankees had attended to that, and you would have thought he would have been satisfied: yet before his foot was out of the stirrup he not only set out to try to restore his plantation to what it used to be […] but chose for this purpose the last woman on earth he might have hoped to prevail on, this Aunt R – […]. (146)

Rosa's womb is sought after, but not her person or her companionship. Sutpen says only: "'You may think I made your sister Ellen no very good husband. You probably do think so. But even if you will not discount that fact that I am older now, I believe I can promise that I shall do no worse at least for you'" (132). "That was my courtship" Rosa explains, "I sat there and listened to his voice and told myself 'Why, he is mad. He will decree this marriage for tonight and perform his own ceremony, himself both groom and minister; pronounce his own wild benediction on it with the very bedward candle in his hand: and I mad too, for I will acquiesce, succumb; abet him and plunge down'" (133). In this passage she is aware that he will use her for sex and nothing else, the "bedward candle in his hand," "performing his own ceremony," and yet she is not prepared for what is to come, the outright acknowledgement that he wants her for nothing else other than a *dam* to his *sire*, "breeding like a couple of dogs together" (147). He knew "he was now past sixty and that possibly he would get but one more son, had at best but one more son in his loins, as the old cannon might know when it had just one more shot in its corporeality. So he suggested what he suggested to [Rosa], […] Hence the proposal, the outrage and unbelief; the tide, the blast of indignation and under upon which Miss Rosa vanished from Sutpen's Hundred" (224). What he suggested was that they "breed together for test and sample and if it was a boy they would marry" (144), an ideal of eugenic, breeding, practice. As Davenport writes in the passage which opens this chapter, for eugenicists, marriage is not about happiness, but about producing acceptable offspring – the only acceptable offspring for Sutpen were boys. Therefore, if Rosa could not provide him with a son, their marriage served no purpose.

Not being able to bear this "mortal affront" (144), Rosa "vanished from Sutpen's Hundred […] her bonnet (possibly one of Ellen's which she had prowled out of the attic) clapped

fast onto her head rigid and precarious with rage" (224). It is impossible to suggest that Rosa is aware that she does not have a womb in which to house an infant, but instead her admission of her androgyny, as well as the "climaxless epicene," forecloses the potential for heteronormative sex. Even if her genitals are all female, the androgyny she admits cannot allow a perfect male-female coupling. In addition, if her otherness is embodied and she can then be categorized as a hermaphrodite in kind with Frank/Frances, she too can be accused of hiding otherness beneath her skirts. Like Orlando, Rosa is aware of her own difference, and romanticizes a coupling which would allow for her to embrace her own sex and sexuality. But unlike Orlando, Rosa is not given a partner who understands, and perhaps even empathizes with her situation. Instead, she is forced to face her ambiguity alone, the "stubborn and amazed outrage" at Sutpen's treatment of her "which over a period of forty-three years has been companionship and bread and fire and all" (142).

Despite Rosa's inability to fully claim her femininity, she, and other narrators of the text, insist on qualifying her name with a female signifier, either Miss or Aunt. Quentin insists upon it during his discussions of the South with Shreve:

> "You mean that this old *gal*, this *Aunt* Rosa –"
>
> "*Miss* Rosa," Quentin said.
>
> "All right all right. – that this old *dame*, this *Aunt* Rosa –"
>
> "*Miss* Rosa, I tell you."
>
> "All right all right all right. – that this old – this *Aunt* R – All right all right all right all right." (emph. added) (143-144)

The naming and renaming of Rosa as either "Aunt" (which Shreve continues to call her despite Quentin's protests) and "Miss" refers, respectively, to her lack of child and her lack of marriage.

She is the Aunt of the children in the narrative, but never the mother. Moreover, she is the Miss, the unmarried. The narrators, through the use of "Miss," and the text as a whole, are obsessed with her virginity, the lack of/in her womb. By consistently drawing the reader's attention to Rosa's lack of reproduction through her name as "Miss" or "Aunt" preceding the Rosa – Rose as a symbol of the vagina and female sexuality – the reader is affirmed that the Rose of Rosa's reproductive potential is frozen or barren, as in "Cold" – "field."

In many cases of discovered hermaphroditism, the child or adult coming into the doctor's office would claim that they just "did not feel right," that they felt other than their biological sex. Take Frank/Frances for example, who returns to the physician's office twice. The first time, complaining of the inconvenience of the large clitoris, as well as engaging in frequent masturbation. The second time, saying that a female identity was not desirable, and that he wanted his name changed to John. Currently, we may place these instances of queer embodiment into a discourse of transgender. However, in a historical context, transgender in its contemporary formulations did not exist, despite the fact that the first autobiography of a transgender surgery was written in 1933 (Stone 224), and there had been whisperings of such surgeries, as well as "androgynes" and "cross-dressers," since long before that, evidenced in the aforementioned *Autobiography of an Androgyne* from 1874. Before the 1930s, biological sex was all important in defining one's gender identity. Physicians attributed physical sex according to gonadal tissue only, as was the case in last chapter's exploration of S.B. as well as in the case of Frank/Frances. However, later in the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, there was some consideration given to "secondary sex characteristics and psychological characteristics" (Reis 100-101). If a patient claimed that they felt like a boy, regardless of their physiology, the claims were given some heed.

Rosa similarly feels she is trapped within a body which is not her own: "That was the miscast summer of my barren youth which (for that short time, that short brief unreturning springtime of the female heart) I lived out not as a woman, a girl, but rather as the man which I perhaps should have been" (*AA* 116). In this passage Rosa admits to her desire to have been a man, or at least to her belief that her sexed determination should have been male. She states later that she wishes to be "weaponed and panpoplied as a man instead of a hollow woman" (117), suggesting her desire to live as a man, to have a phallus. Furthermore, it points to Rosa's contemplation of a change of sex – if her womb cannot bear a child, due to feminine lack, or lack of reproductive potential, she would rather live as a man. She does not simply wish to be masculine, which would suggest a gender performance, perhaps simply a change of clothing and mannerisms, but instead expresses a *transsexual* desire to be a man – equipped with a phallus.

It must be acknowledged that living as a woman in the South, post civil-war, would have been dangerous and intimidating, which may attribute to Rosa's wish to be "weaponed and panoplied as a man" in a literal sense, but if we delve into the metaphorical possibilities of this statement it can be read as Rosa's desire to be able to penetrate instead of being penetrated. The phallus is culturally coded active, able to penetrate, able to fight, whereas the womb is culturally constructed as a hollow cave, awaiting the fertilization of egg and sperm. Rosa wishes for the agency of masculinity, which may speak to her desire to have her own "design," to be able to create her own lineage, instead of oppressiveness of being a woman at that time. She must wait for a partner, wait to receive the man instead of assert her own desires. Even as a woman Rosa is not able to claim a fully female identity, placing her in a liminal space, a notman and a notwoman. She is not "taught to sew" (57), a traditionally female ability sought after by a husband, or to experience physical intimacy with a man as a wife. Instead, it is Judith who is

presented as the "vicarious bride" through whom she must live. Rosa cannot even envision female undergarments (61). The foreclosure of female practices perhaps lead Rosa to assume a more masculine identity, or, what seems more likely, she was disallowed domesticity because of ambiguity and androgyny. Her otherness does not allow Rosa to be easily placed into a category and be gendered as such. For that reason she is treated in childhood as neither boy nor girl, instead as a sexless shadow.

In the final moments of the novel, Rosa returns to Sutpen's Hundred with the belief that something, or someone, is hidden inside, as Shreve says:

> this old gal, this aunt Rosa, told you that someone was hiding out there and you said it was Clytie or Jim Bond and she said No and you said it would have to be because the demon was dead and Judith was dead and Bon was dead and Henry gone so far he hadn't even left a grave: and she said No and so you went out there, drove the twelve miles at night in a buggy and you found Clytie and Jim Bond both in it and you said "You see?" and she (the Aunt Rosa) still said No […]. (175)

She penetrates the house "conceal[ing] a hatchet"[13] (290) in her skirts which she intends to use to crash the boundaries of Sutpen's Hundred – "'the Domain. […] his land, his and Ellen's and Ellen's descendants. They have taken it all away from them since, I understand. But it still belongs to him, to Ellen and her descendants'" (290). She is obsessed with Sutpen's space, and while she repeats that it also belongs to Ellen and her descendants, she focuses on his ultimate ownership of it, by way of always prefacing it with it "belongs to him." She, out of her hatred for

[13] Lazure argues that during the moment of breaking in to Sutpen's Hundred Rosa "prepares to embrace her womanhood by transferring her masculine qualities to Quentin, offering him her phallic 'hatchet'" Further to this, she argues that the path that Quentin and Rosa walk the house presents a "birth canal" further emphasizing Rosa's motherhood (488). But Rosa's need to push Quentin to enter, negates this reading "'break it' […] 'It will be locked, nailed. *You have the hatchet*. Break it'" because through her assertion she not only wields the hatchet as metaphor for the phallic, but navigates Quentin's non-metaphoric phallus (emph. added) (293).

him, and his refusal to provide her with the companionship, respect, and love she wants for herself, forces entry into Sutpen's Hundred (the nation) with a phallic weapon, forcing her way into the space from which she has barred herself – a belief perpetuated by her reproductive lack, real or imagined, her ambiguity, and her desire for the phallus which she now, if only metaphorically, wields. She becomes, in this way, the male figure penetrating the female – Clytie's – space in order to assert herself as one who can penetrate. The boundaries, the walls, of the nation must be smashed in order to allow Rosa entrance with her differently sexed body; she cannot be let in the front door. Clytie, besides keeping a secret in the house, a secret which turns out to be Henry Sutpen, maintains Sutpen's vision and nation by maintaining his heir. Furthermore, Clytie has always asserted the walls and barricades of the house, policing who can enter the house. It is Clytie who stands firm, twice, at the stairs, keeping Rosa from further penetration, and inclusion, first when Rosa returns to the house after Charles's death: "'Wait,' she said 'Don't you go up there.' Still I [Rosa] did not stop […] 'Don't you go up there, Rosa' […] Then she touched me and then I did stop dead. Possibly even then my body did not stop, since I seemed to be aware of it thrusting blindly still against the solid yet imponderable weight […] of that will to bar me from the stairs" (111), and second, when she returns to break-in: "'Don't you go up there, Rosie' and Miss Coldfield struck the hand away and went on toward the stairs" (295). Rosa's forced inclusion into Supten's Hundred ends its tyranny, its ability to include or exclude: "the monstrous tinder-dry rotten shell seeping some through the warped cracks in the weather-boarding as if it were made of gauze wire," with Clytie, "the tragic gnome's face beneath the clean headrag, against a red background of fire, seen for a moment between two swirls of smoke, looking down at them" (300).

The significance of Rosa's androgyny is that it is never clearly articulated by Faulkner, by other characters in the text, or by Rosa herself, that she identifies as a hermaphrodite. Instead, the issue is skirted and hinted at. Because Rosa's otherness is not explicitly stated, we can assume that her ambiguity is unstable: it slips and slides and is never definable, never able to be pinned down. Her body cannot be categorized. She cannot be placed within a specific box of sexed identity, but she is coded no more monstrous than any other character in the text, nor is she coded as a freak. Instead, she is, like Orlando, a character out of bounds, out of time, a body who sees but is never truly seen. She excludes herself, like Orlando does in her country home, which is the epitome of eugenic, biopolitical control – Rosa who resigns herself to "impregnable solitude" for fourty-three years in the "dark airless rooms in the little grim house" (70). They are both forced into exile by their difference, by a complex system of linguistic and subconscious oppression – the eugenics that controls in the bedrooms, not in the streets. Both Orlando and Rosa decide to return from their seclusion, Orlando cross-dressing and crossing boundaries, identifying as either sex as he/she chooses while Rosa breaking back into society with a hatchet, her phallic symbol, acting out both her male and femaleness, her ambiguity.

This ambiguity not only exists in Rosa. As this chapter has already discussed Faulkner's text is embedded within ambiguities both in its construction and in its characters. Charles Bon has been read by many critics as having the most ambiguous body in *Absalom*, because he is both of mixed race, a devious lurking of mixed race which cannot be immediately identified, as well as being a hermaphrodidic character. David Walter quickly points to Bon's questionable sex in his article "Strange Attractions: Sibling Love Triangles in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Balzac's *La Fille Aux Yeux D'Or*": "A hermaphrodidic character, Bon is feminized by his father, even as he feminizes his brother, and this whole system of relative gender roles buttresses a

dramatization of the anxiety over discovering racial taint hidden at the core of the family" (489). While being "feminized" hardly constitutes a hermaphrodite position in the medicalized sense of the word (nor does it give credence to the embodiment of hermaphrodidism), Walter does accurately point to the mixed gendering of Charles Bon throughout the text. In recent criticism, Charles's homosexuality, and his and Henry's homosexual relationship has been much explored. Matthew R. Vaughn claims that "Bon […] affords Henry a means by which to live out his homosexual desires vicariously through a sister with whom he seems to share a 'single personality'" (521), while Betina Entziminger argues that "repressed desires and homosexual panic lead to hysteria and self-destruction in both Quentin and Henry" (90). Most interestingly, Peterson argues that Bon's miscegenation and homosexuality are linked, that the spectre of miscegenation is always already the haunting of homosexuality:

> The term "miscegenation," […] would correspond to any differential relation: from my self-relation to interracial reproduction: from heterosexual generation to homosexual relations. That we can only speak of spectres of miscegenation, then, means both that miscegenation is always different to itself, and that its future inheritances are always implied in its past and present manifestations. The spectres of homosexuality always haunt the politics of miscegenation insofar as the latter is invested in the reproduction of heterosexuality. (252)

While Bon's homosexuality, especially his homosexuality in relation to Henry's and its relation then to Judith, is not what renders his gender questionable and in flux. It is his miscegenation, his "differential relation," which makes him able to occupy both a feminine and masculine space, according to Peterson's configuration of miscegenation. In Mr. Compson's imaginings of Henry and Bon's meeting, he tells Quentin that Henry sees Bon "in the slightly Frenchified cloak and

hat which he wore, or perhaps (I like to think this) presented formally to the man reclining in a flowered, almost feminized gown, in a sunny window in his chambers – this man handsome elegant and even catlike" (76). Interesting that this description should be Mr. Compson's, something he "liked to think," suggesting that Bon's femininity was something that was already ingrained in Mr. Compson's mind to fantasize about. This conflation is continued in his description of New Orleans, the city from which Bon came, as "at once feminine and steel-hard" (86), and "femininely flamboyant."

Bon's classification as both male/female, as well as black/white is important to understanding his relation to other characters in the text. Rosa, for example, is in love with Bon despite her protestations: "I did not love him; how could I? I had never even heard his voice, had only Ellen's word for it that there was such a person" (117), and yet she later says "If it was love […] it was the way mothers love […]. But not as women love. Because I asked nothing of him, you see. And more than that; I gave him nothing, which is the sum of loving" (118). Bon, through his male/femaleness becomes a site of normalization for Rosa, her Shelmerdine who may have the potential to understand her male/female position. However, Rosa never sees Bon, and Bon never sees Rosa, foreclosing their ability to have a Shelmerdine/Orlando moment. What the reader's "seeing" of Bon provides is an opening, a realizing of difference, which translates into an undoing of eugenic ideals. Bon is loved by others in the novel; his presence promotes a feeling of acceptance and happiness for Rosa. She feels a kinship with him before they have ever met, as do Quentin and Shreve who, according to Peterson, create Bon out of their homosexual love (Peterson 247).

The male/female doubling which is present in Faulkner's depiction of Bon is also present in the construction of Judith/Henry who seem, at times, to exist as the same person. "They did

not need to talk. They were too much alike. They were as two people became now and then, who seem to know one another so well or are so much alike that the power, the need to communicate by speech atrophies from disuse and, comprehending without need of the medium of ear or intellect, they no longer understand one another's words" (97), "that single personality with two bodies" (73), a notion which makes the boundary between them less visible, more fluid. It is only through this fluidity that Henry imagines "he could become, metamorphose into the sister, the mistress, the bride" (77). Henry's imagined metamorphosis into a female body suggests the ability to by-pass bodily categories with ease, creating an opening for the undoing of such categories altogether.

Rosa suggests that there are times when the distinctions between race, gender, and even the corporeal can be blurred together, such as the time when Sutpen leaves Sutpen's Hundred to go to war, and the three women, Judith, Clytie, and Rosa are left to care for the plantation:

> So we waited for him. We led the busy eventless lives of three nuns in a barren and poverty-stricken convent. And amicably, not as two white women and a negress, not as three negroes or three whites, not even as three women, but merely as three creatures who still possessed the need to eat but took no pleasure in it, the need to sleep but from no joy in weariness or regeneration, and in *whom sex was some forgotten atrophy like the rudimentary gills we call the tonsils or the still-opposable thumbs for old climbing*. […] With no distinction among the three of us of age or color but just as two who could build this fire or stir this pot or weed this bed or carry this apron full of corn to the mill for a meal with least cost to the general good in time or expense of other duties. *It was as though we were one being, interchangeable and indiscriminate,* which kept that garden growing, spun thread and wove the cloth we wore […]. (emph. added) (124-125)

Together the three form the "triumvirate" (133), the one being made out of three. They feel indistinguishable from one another, making up one being, "interchangeable and indiscriminate." The corporeal boundaries are erased, and instead they move fluidly within and around each other. In this fluidity and oneness, physical sex no longer has something to which it can fix itself; it too gets thrown up into question – a "forgotten atrophy." Rosa no longer considers her womanliness or manliness anymore than she considers her whiteness, because the thing against which she compares herself, Clytie's black body, or Judith's sexually normalized body, become part of her identity as much as her identity becomes part of theirs. The lack of corporeal boundaries which this passage allows for, undoes the need for corporeal categories. It would be like trying to pin down water, or air, in order to define it.

As the triumvirate, Rosa, Clytie, and Judith are safe and self-sustaining. They can provide their own food, their own clothing and their own shelter. Rosa explains that "one of that triumvirate […] which we three, Judith Clytie and I, made" she feels that her life is "worth something" (131), but then she notices Sutpen looking at her. Without Sutpen to police and enforce boundaries, there are none. But, upon his return, these boundaries are re-enforced, destroying the triumvirate, and placing each body back in its place as black/white, man/woman. Because of Sutpen's desire to reproduce, his eugenic attempt to produce white, male heirs, he begins to see Rosa for her reproductive potential, placing emphasis on her reproductive organs. As she watches Sutpen look at her, and especially after his proposal which was previously discussed, she becomes an object – the white, female body into which he may plant his seed. Through this violent act of objectifying, Rosa is cut from the triumvirate, the meaning she has found in life through not being labelled and categorized is gone. Her eugenic potential becomes all encompassing for Sutpen, making Sutpen's Hundred a hostile environment for Rosa. Sutpen's

"compelling dream" of a line of Sutpens, the house/nation, his eugenic design, close the opening through which Rosa's ambiguity can be made livable. She returns to her house to live out her life, in attempt to live outside of the society that Sutpen represents. Faulkner imagines outsides or escapes from within the inside.

It is possible to create space and movement for bodies who do not fit within the categories set up for them by medicine or by a biopolitical discourse like eugenics. Faulkner, through *Asbalom,* pulls down the walls between white and black, and as this chapter has argued, between male and female, and between corporealities. *Orlando* and *Absalom* provide an opening for bodies to escape the discourse of normalization, or surgical intervention. What if, Faulkner is asking, we allow ourselves to see our relationships as a melding of corporealities? What if we allow space for difference? In a time when bodies were being denied basic agency in the name of the pseudo-science of eugenics, Faulkner gives his reader an example of a text which does not settle on definitions of bodies, of identities, of the previously held notions of narrative, of sentence structure. Faulkner shows his readers that we are all hermaphrodites; we are all miscegenated. His novel unravels Sutpen's "compelling dream," his oppressive, single-minded, vision of his Hundred/nation. The text suggests and promotes ambiguity; no body is purely one thing or another. No body is white. No body is ideal. Instead, there is always a continuum between black/white, gay/straight, and male/female. If there is always a continuum there can be no firm categories. Without firm categories there can be no eugenics. Without the language of eugenics there can be no superior race/sex.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

This thesis has discussed the ways in which Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* create spaces for sexually ambiguous bodies, in particular intersex bodies, to imagine a livable life in a time that was particularly hostile to bodies that were perceived as different or uncategorizable. Eugenic doctrine perpetuated firm belief in the defining of bodies according to physical sex. By destabilizing narrative form and genre, and by exploring characters whose genders are movable and always in question, Woolf is able to challenge the oppressive focus eugenics created on heteronormative reproduction. Similarly, Faulkner, through the use of narrations which repeatedly put into question what is true and what is false, what is knowable and what is not – as well as his representation of characters that blur corporal boundaries especially between white/black, male/female – is able to question the surgical correction, either through "corrective" surgeries on hermaphrodite bodies, or surgical sterilization of so-called "unfit" bodies in the early twentieth-century United States. What Faulkner and Woolf both attempt to show is how individual bodies cannot be so easily put into a specific sexed, racial, or sexual group. Every moment of narrative and generic confusion in both novels refuses the lines between bodily categories.

Faulkner and Woolf are certainly not the first authors to question new ideologies, but what makes their contribution so interesting is that they wrote these texts at a time when surgery, now a major part of our medical culture, was becoming increasingly popular, and putting people under the knife to cure them of whatever ailed them, or made them different, seemed like the right thing to do (Reis 90). The popularity of surgery coincided with increasing public discussion of who could be included within the nation, both in the US and in Britain, and who needed to be

kept out or sterilized to be kept from reproducing more people who would exhibit their defective qualities. While Britain's proposed sterilization laws were never passed, the United States passed sterilization laws in "two dozen American states, largely in the Middle Atlantic region, the Midwest, and in California" (Kevles, "Eugenics" 87).

Eugenics was questioned by many groups prior to World War II, especially Roman Catholics who believed that sterilization directly opposed Church doctrine. Furthermore, many people believed that individual rights should be upheld above scientific "perception of human needs" (Kevles, "Eugenics" 90). But, the largest nail in the eugenics coffin was Hitler's sterilization of two hundred and twenty five thousand people in a three-year period between 1 January 1934 and 1937, as well as the horror of the Nazi death camps. Many states which failed to enact sterilization laws did so out of a desire not to become "Hitlerized" (89). Yet, it is hard to say that eugenics simply faded away, a deep-dark secret of many countries which has, in many cases, been kept hidden. Eugenics seems to persist prejudice against gay marriage, and intensify national border controls.

If we consider the present moment, how far away are we really from the eugenic notions of the early twentieth century? Kevles comments: "The lure of biologically improving the human race, having tantalized brilliant scientists in the past, could equally seduce them in the future, even though the expression of the imperatives may differ in language and sophistication." He rightly wonders about the ability for parents to choose the genetic traits of their children, where we are already deciding to keep or abort fetuses according to physical sex. On 21 June 2012 CBC radio aired a segment of *Day 6*, which examines the practice of "sex selective abortion" of fetuses in Canada. CBC documents that some women, after finding out the sex of their baby is female, abort fetuses because they would prefer a male baby. While this practice is attempting to

be limited by the refusal to mothers of ultrasounds before twenty weeks, after which it is "very difficult to obtain an abortion," it still continues, potentially through other methods of sex identification such as through the testing of maternal blood. What the abortion of fetuses according to physical sex shows us is the prevalence of eugenic language in our society today, as well as violent categorical language that continues to type bodies into strict categories of male and female, allowing for one to be more desirable than the other. In addition, sex selection according to strict categories of male and female does not allow for an ambiguity of sex, leaving no room for intersex bodies within the discourse of sex.

Following the beginning of the twentieth century, the treatment of intersex bodies did not improve, in fact some may say that it got increasingly worse. Katrina Karkazis writes:

> By the middle of the twentieth century […] intersex births had come to be labelled a medical and social emergency. Raising a child with a gender-atypical anatomy (read as gender ambiguity) is almost universally seen as untenable in North America: anguished parents and physicians have considered it essential to assign the infant definitively as male or female and to minimize any discordance between somatic traits and gender assignment. (7)

John Money developed a plan for the treatment of intersex infants in the 1950s, drawing on the language of dichotomous sex and the pathology of intersex diagnosis. Money and his colleagues believed that gender was accumulated like a language and was malleable up to a point (7). It was John Money who was responsible for the well-documented treatment of "John/Joan," now recognized as David Reimer, a boy whose penis was severely burned with an unnecessary tool during a routine operation. Money told David's parents that it was recommended that David be raised a girl. Preliminary surgeries were performed, and David's parents began the process of

socializing him accordingly. Over time it became clear that David did not want to be a girl, but instead wished to be a boy. Eventually David was given hormonal treatments and a surgically constructed phallus by physician Milton Diamond. David's story is a tragedy which has clearly affected Butler, as a postscript to her chapter on David's case, which notes his suicide at the age of thirty-eight:

> It is difficult to know what, in the end, made his life unlivable or why this life was one he felt was time to end. It seems clear, however, that there was always a question posed for him and by him whether life in his gender would be survivable. It is unclear whether it was his gender that was the problem, or the "treatment" that brought about an enduring suffering for him. The norms governing what it is to be a worthy, recognizable, and sustainable human life clearly did not support his life in any continuous or solid way. Life for him was always a wager and a risk, a courageous and fragile accomplishment. (74)

David's case forces us to ask so many questions, but the most pressing of which is: why do we continue to focus on such violent, dichotomous definitions of bodies? The result of doing so renders no support or space for bodies that exist outside of proscribed norms. And yet, despite cases like David's which end so tragically in many cases, we are unable to relinquish our hard and fast categories.

David's case could be read in kind with sexological case studies of the early twentieth century, as was discussed in the introduction. Recently republished case studies from that time period include Ralph Werther's 1874 *Autobiography of an Androgyny* which was republished in 2008, and documents his experience as a member of the "third sex" in the New York underground, as well as Michel Foucault's well-known 1980 republication of Herculine Barbin's memoir, which catalogues the case of a hermaphrodite in France who takes his/her own life in

the face of what can only be described as a lack of a "worthy, recognizable, and sustainable human life." Foucault republished Barbin's memoir in an effort to show the restrictions placed on bodies, according a body a "true sex" that was thought to be knowable, seeable, and definable. He places specific emphasis on the unnecessary nature of such classifications, rightly pointing to the violence of classification and the unhappiness caused for Barbin and potentially many others who feel similarly oppressed and isolated as a result (vii).

It is important to recognize that such case studies, along with contemporary memoirs of intersex/trans/queer people engage in the normalization of these experiences, making those who can identify with the people who wrote/were discussed in these case studies feel less stigmatized and alone. In addition, they may provide insight to others about an experience that is not theirs, decreasing the potential for judgment and alienation of bodies perceived as different. However, the need for literary deconstructions of dichotomous treatment of sexed bodies are still as necessary as they were in the early twentieth century. The most well-known of contemporary literary texts that discuss intersex experience is Jeffery Eugenides's novel *Middlesex*, which tells the story of Calliope, who begins life as a girl, but because of a 5-alpha-reductace deficiency is read as male after puberty. Yet, Eugenides's representation of Calliope/Cal's body still includes the blaming narrative of previous treatments of intersex bodies; there must be something in his lineage which caused this different embodiment. In Calliope/Cal's case, this difference is accounted for with the incestuous acts of his grandmother, problematically fitting the narrative into a kind of eugenic blaming for "montr[osity]" (Andrew 11).[14]

[14] For a useful discussion of intersex in both Foucault's *Herculine Barbin* and Eugenides's *Middlesex* see Allison Renee Andrew's Masters Thesis "Intersex Intertext: A critique of limited gender identity in *Herculine Barbin* and *Middlesex.*"

It is the role of literary critics to uncover texts that deny categorical imperatives, as well as engage in the "question[ing] of power, the power of regulation, a power that determines, more or less, what we are, what we can be" (Butler 57). It is necessary to go back, to examine eugenics and other biopolitical systems that sought to deny livability to certain bodies, to explore the ways in which systems of power operate on bodies today and how the two are linked. It is imperative that we question what, in our Western society, constructs these categories of male and female as being definitive, and what steps can be taken to show the falsity of these constructions. Literature and narrative allow us a tool with which we can formulate a space of resistance to this language of exclusion, a space where bodies can be expressive instead of belonging to categories of male/female, gay/strait, black/white, where like Orlando, and like Rosa, like the novels through which both characters are constructed, we can be fluid, changing, and whole.

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