

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEMPORALITY IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY TO TRANS-NARRATIVE FORM

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In his latest work on transsexual narratives (trans-narratives) and autobiographies, Jay Prosser observes the unavoidable split that occurs within the subject through the process of being one who is both at the same time enunciating and being enunciated about. The self-reporting subject must come to grapple with being a narrator of their first person experience as well as organize these thoughts as part of a detached, objective third person point of view that is spoken to another. To narrate as part of these two perspectives creates a split and contradictory subject position that undermines a trans person's claims to identity in the present. This is because transsexual subjectivity is expected to inhabit either a before or after transition position, never an open-ended prospect. Yet, communicating these narratives is necessary as "autobiography is transsexuality's proffered symptom," and the presence of gender dysphoria is not locatable biologically.¹ As the recounting of personal stories are heavily relied upon for diagnosis as well as access to hormone therapies and surgeries, their interpretation has grave consequences for some trans people who are often pressured into lying or manipulating accounts of their past to fit existing acceptable narrative schemas.

Prosser maintains that autobiographies, or "body narratives" (trans-narratives) help produce a representation of embod-

¹ Jay Prosser, *Second Skins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 104.

ied transsexual subjectivity through the interplay of body and narrative. One important aim of this method is to show that the material world and flesh that it supports have an impact on the way theory presents gender. This approach is largely in response to his criticism that gender studies inaugurated gender constitution as socially constructed and thus disembodied. Prosser also seeks to draw attention to the relationship between the psyche and gender identity, which is lacking in analyses that focus on how institutions reinforce gender norms.² The framing of narratives into autobiographical form, Prosser argues, joins the past and present within the trans person's psyche to form a coherent subject position and thus heals the split.³ By placing the onus on the way the narrative is framed to establish trans subjectivity, and by advancing what I argue is a somewhat narrow analysis of narrative temporality, Prosser seems to elide the relationship between how the body and subjectivity write and conduct each other. His prescient analysis, though politically and incredibly necessary for enriching the theory canon, could perhaps become an even stronger account with an expanded look at how the material world influences narrative form. This would make trans-narratives more embodied accounts because subjectivity becomes tied to materiality.

To tie materiality to narrative form one must consider that story genres like autobiography are imbued with literary elements that speak to dominant epistemes of the time said genre emerged. Different types of stories render or express temporality in different ways depending on the social situation of the time period that gave rise to such ideas. Thus language expresses more than just words and narrative form is more than an empty container to fill—it contains a history that influenced its making and also continues to influence an individual's thought. Autobiographical time, for Prosser, focuses instead on merely the form of narrative itself, not how narrative is influenced by the socio-historical context of its

2 Prosser's criticisms of gender theory can be found in *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* by Gayle Salamon, specifically pp. 38-41.

3 Ibid., 123.

making; the history of how the form emerged is fetishized and overpowered by the resultant external structure. As a response to this concern, this paper will outline a more embodied theory of the relationship between autobiographical time, subjectivity and language by taking into account Bakhtin's material theory of time and space in the concept of the "chronotope."

I. Trans-narratives and Autobiography

Trans autobiographies produce an inherent tension between two psyches. Firstly, a consciousness that has always historically been, is then suddenly replaced via the act of retroactivity by another who has presumably also always existed. The "moment" where the psyche splits between these two identities is assumed to be that pivotal rift where the trajectory of the transsexual aligns with a transitional experience in the narrative. For example, when Jan Morris looks at herself in the mirror to say goodbye to her old self, this is where she also becomes her new self through the decision to have sexual reassignment surgery (SRS)⁴. The creation of this "split" literary consciousness can become problematic for transsexuals telling their story who do not have a such a clear Joycean epiphany. This approach perhaps may also alienate transgender people who do not seek to fully become the other gender—do not have a definite split—but perhaps still wish to learn about and explore medicalized options with support. The split consciousness advanced by Prosser begets an expectation that not every trans person can match. His work in *Second Skins* focuses specifically on transsexuals not multiple types of transgender identities, but I argue his ideas are still productive on the whole when considering other trans subjectivities possibly caught up in the idea that they are inhabiting some sort of contested or split consciousness.

In order to make Prosser's body trans-narratives more productive for not just transsexual narrative theory but also for understanding other types of transgender narratives, the limitations of a split consciousness should be questioned. I maintain that the

4 Ibid., 99.

idea of a split is theoretically too smooth for understanding trans subjectivity because it lends itself to a stultifying conception of time. It cannot account for trans folk who have more complicated ideas surrounding their own identity that cannot fit into the before and after framing. Prosser's work focuses on the transsexual caught between the past and present identity marked by a desire to be another sex, but it is important not to forget about other trans identities who may be at various stages of transition or do not wish to fully transition at all. It is also important to note that the word desire is lacking for there is also a sense of deep embodied realization manifesting in the psyche that one does not desire to be, but already *is* the other sex. Yet, Gordon Olga Mackenzie raises an important concern: "If it were not for [especially binary] gender oppression, transsexuals would not be likely to seek SRS."⁵ This concern, however, must still be reconciled with members of trans communities who would still seek SRS due to a felt sense of gender. It is of especial necessity, moreover, to make sure that narrative temporalities do not minimize the potential for ever-evolving consciousness that may be felt or experienced by trans folk regardless of if they identify with a specific gender or not.

The Gender Movement challenges the assimilation of gender minority groups into the dominant culture, which insists upon contiguity between anatomy and lived gender.⁶ Such groups should have the same access to services even if their stories do not fit a typical trans-narrative schema. Robert, a trans man explains that such "hallway" dwellers do not wish to be one sex or the other and are quite comfortable in the state of "in-betweenness." Though many trans folk, including Prosser, do indeed identify with one gender, the institutionalized pressure to conform to a single gender may have the undesirable result of delegitimizing alternative gender orientations that ought to exist as viable subjectivities that engage with and perceive the world:

5 Patricia Elliot and Katrina Roen, "Transgenderism and the Question of Embodiment," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 240

6 Ibid.

These doors open and shut but at the end of the day you can only open a door into the male world on one side and the female world on the other side and you've joined society on either side. But if you stay in the hallway, which I believe is much more freeing because you're not bound by either side, it's infinitely harder because you're not bound by either side and you're not belonging to either side. The hallway I think is a wonderful place. Hallways can have windows and they can have wonderful views.⁷

These “hallway” subjectivities are not realized in Prosser's trans-narratives because they are not “split” between a past and a present identity—their very identity sits comfortably in transit. The limited scope of trans-narratives becomes problematic because it also leaves out the ability to make reference to other possible transgender identities.⁸ Trans-narratives are only amenable to transsexuals who see a before and after. Opening up the boundaries of trans-narratives to make space for other trans identities does not require a loss of the specificities of transsexual subjectivity; there is a unique transsexual experience Prosser offers us that cannot be lost. I merely contest that the account of embodiment in general within trans-narratives can become more robust if the idea of a “split” in subjectivity and temporality is questioned. And if this past/present temporality that gives rise to the split is weakened, this can make space for looking at other trans identities. Further it can help us think better in terms of how their autobiographies can be communicated in a theoretically strong way that maintains the integrity and accuracy of trans experience without it being oppressed by harmful literary elements.

The limitations of reading the typical “split” become clear, once the multitude of gender identities other than transsexuality emerge. Given the multiple identity alignments at stake, personal narratives should illuminate the multiplicity of possible identity trajectories that include staying somewhere in-between. This acceptance, however, can only be realized if the medical community

7 Sara Davidmann, “Border Trouble: photography, strategies and transsexual identities,” *Scan* 3, no. 3 (2006).

8 Ibid.

gives up the desire to treat trans folk as guilty until proven innocent. Trans folk are the only group forced to prove their identity, and this pressure no doubt obfuscates their ability to communicate an accurate autobiography. As Judith Butler and others argue, this pressure manifests through the power of the medical gaze on the trans object, which must conform to fit the appropriate role to gain legitimacy. This disciplinary mechanism is at work during self-reporting practices.⁹ The medical field, argues Butler, needs to take into account desires for stable identity that are crucial to realize a livable life that requires various degrees of stability.¹⁰ Yet, there is a double-standard for what the definition of stability requires for trans folk. It is acceptable for cisgender people to go through phases, make bad choices, have doubts and experiment with self-identity, but trans folk's choices are more rigidly interrogated simply on the basis of the fact that they were born into a sexed body that does not represent their felt gendered identity. I take it to be a systemic form of discrimination to treat trans folk differently and to institutionalize differing expectations of such individuals within the medical community simply based on how they wish to present themselves to the world. The root of this discrimination rests in the fact that gender dysphoria is the only condition in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that is dealt with not by finding a cure, but by working retroactively through it by proving it exists in the first place.¹¹ Yet, there is a myriad of problems with treating something that is not a disease, within the same epistemological framework that works to treat illness; People that are not broke, do not need fixing. Those without mental disorder diagnoses in the DSM are permitted to change behaviour inside and outside the medical system based on how they feel, but this privilege is not extended to trans folk even though they are technically also outside of the realm of mental disorder. Cosmetic surgery is of especial importance here when aesthetic restructuring results in a double-standard. If gender dysphoria is outside

9 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 67.

10 Ibid., 8.

11 Prosser, *Second Skins*, 107.

the scope of mental illness then responses to desires for aesthetic restructuring should be handled in a similar manner for both trans and cis-gender people.

II. Limitations of the Relationship Between Temporality and Embodiment in Trans-narratives

The clinical episodic narrative follows a linear progression that has a particular *telos* in mind at its outset—a voyage with a destination. Symbols and language reminiscent of travel and finding oneself on this journey are punctuated by accepted key moments of realization like the boy who is caught wearing his mom’s shoes and the girl who rejects Barbie Dolls. Prosser notes, “the ‘odyssey’ is as much the writing as the life, for it is the writing that allows this scripted navigation into life.”¹² In this autobiographical framework, the trans-narrator is aware of the end of the story, as it is still being lived. Prosser notices that this progression is not unidirectional, however, in that autobiography involves a “temporal double movement” in which the narrator reaches back into the past to propel this past through the present.¹³ This double movement is carefully illustrated through a vivid recounting of the see-saw personality of Dick and Renée. The past identity of Dick comes into conflict with and also at times attempts to write over the present identity of his female alter-ego Renée during a sexual encounter with a club owner who wants to see her as a gay man and not the transgender woman she is. Prosser argues that framing narrative through this temporal double movement thus has the ability to make embodied transsexual subjectivity possible in that it allows the transsexual to integrate the self, from within the body, after transition. The sex change was a deeply signifying moment for Renée, so much that even when past feelings of Dick tried to overwrite her subjectivity, she still *felt* she was now a woman.¹⁴ The split “body narrative” explains her emotions and lived experience now as a woman; Prosser

12 Ibid., 116.

13 Ibid., 117.

14 Ibid., 123.

believes this is how body and narrative construct each other and compose transsexual subjectivity.

The example of Dick and Renée works well to illustrate the body narrative in action, but my contention with Prosser's explanation is that it does not explain how self-awareness of one's subjectivity or consciousness is produced by the body's experience within the narrative. It explains how Jan Morris and Renée can trace their feelings as women back to a moment of self-acceptance that then changed the trajectory of their lives. His interpretation of time structured by the autobiographical return supposedly also structures the narrator's subjectivity, but he evades any real discussion of subjectivity proper other than to comment regarding the moment where the split is healed, and transsexual identity is made possible. Yet, the autobiographical framework is much more complex in its relation to the structuring of the consciousness that it frames. For Biddy Martin, bodies and psyches are never purely effects of discursive [or narratological] practices or of abstract power relations; invested with the historicity of lived experience, they also have the potential to "exert pressure" on the normalizing processes through which they are constructed.¹⁵ This line of thought presumes there is a material aspect to the development of subjectivity. It is not clear, however, in Prosser's work how the transsexual narrator is able to exert pressure on the world through the body and vice versa, especially given what he takes to be a position of embodied subjectivity. The body's influence on subjectivity is overdetermined by the narrative structure in which it is framed, thus abstracting conscious production from the material realm. A productive material explanation to find the connection between how one's subjectivity actually changes from being a body in the world, is Karl Marx's materialist conception of history. This theory contends that it is through one's actions or labour, from within a body situated in history and subject to historical contingencies, that consciousness changes. Marx maintains, "While man works on nature and changes it, he simultaneously changes his own na-

15 Patricia Elliot and Katrina Roen, "Transgenderism and the Question of Embodiment," 236.

ture. He develops the potencies slumbering in it, and subjects the play of its powers to his own sway.”¹⁶ Human labour or activity is the conscious exercise of our power over nature, and through this embodied position, we are affected by nature, just as much as we affect it ourselves.

III. Reading Trans-narratives through the Chronotope

The contributions of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin augment the forgoing Marxist arguments because his work focuses not just on the material world and consciousness, but how the connection between these two makes its way into expressions of thought such as language and literature. More specifically, he offers literary theory and philosophy a richer view of the connection between the material world, and time-space in various literary genres within which he worked. For him, time and space are not two distinct realms that can be studied in isolation. The chronotope marks the inseparability of time and space as it refers to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.” Bakhtin calls this spatio-temporal configuration of the individual within each genre the chronotope (time-space).¹⁷ The chronotope is constitutive of the specific ways time and space are rendered in each genre given the preoccupations of said genre. Each genre distinctively moulds its characters in a way according to the typical emotions, situations, and values of that narrative type. The connection between the specifics of each genre forms the identity of the subject. Thus the different stylings of time and space organize bodies, which create spaces for the development of certain types of literary consciousness. The chronotope gives the reader a way to read not just the events, but the way identity is made by the spatio-material world of the genre. The trans-narrative is conflicted in that it is stuck in a form of the

16 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1990), 283.

17 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist. (Austin: UTP, 1981), 85.

past of the epic where such identities are not malleable because the specifics of the form homogenize individual personality/identity, and yet is also reaching toward the dynamism of novel where characters are free to develop in a variety of ways.

It can be said that the problem with autobiography as a means to account for split subjectivity, is that the subject is not only split between two subjectivities, but between two narrative styles or literary genres, the “epic” and the “novel” which influence the construction of the subject in different ways depending on how each genre has organized time and space. The subjectivity of the character of the Epic, for example, is the hero who follows a specific plot trajectory. The character of the novel, however, as a more open-ended representation, is able to interrogate the consciousness-building and breaking of its characters in a dynamic way. The novel’s character development is redefined constantly as there is no overdetermined or generic plot for a novel to follow. Trans-narrative subjectivity, I argue, appears to be caught between assuming the role of the hero in the epic—dominated by the authority of the past—and the flexibility and transgressions of a character developing and interrogating its own thoughts within the novel.

The epic represents a character subjectivity that is trapped in the past, whereas the novel’s character is bound up in the present state of immediate self-consciousness, a voice reflecting upon the self and events. The epic is detached from all self-conscious experience because the form of the genre takes precedence, it is unchangeable and lacks dynamism. Further, this genre operates from a distance rather than an autobiographical or self-narration perspective; the form affirms an authority of the past over the present. History—“ancestors”, “memory”, “first” and “beginning”—is valued more than one’s present. Such valorization renders the epic a closed-off genre or finalized form. In addition, the epic marks the past as sacred and no present character is able to question this authority by enacting a double-voice that questions events as they unfold. The character’s feelings (consciousness) has no place in this genre. Bakhtin explains, “In ancient literature it is memory, and not knowledge, that serves as the source and power for the creative

impulse.”¹⁸ Trans folk are caught in the trappings of the epic’s pervasive influence on discourse as the pressure of the past, not the present, becomes the source of knowledge over and above present personal experience. Memory and personal history is interrogated and more value is put on proving their present identity based on the authority of the past to back up these present claims. Temporality in this sense is focused on past events. More than this, the temporality of the epic is the time-space of the world of the patriarchal social structures of “fathers” and is “thus separated from other classes by a distance that is almost epic.”¹⁹ The authority of the medical system to insist on the past as truth is one example why expanding analysis of narrative temporality is an important step towards smashing the hegemony of the patriarchy.

Bakhtin analyzes multiple types of novels and they all share a defining trait that continuously comes into conflict with the epic. The defining trait of the genre is that it forsakes the past as the source of knowledge and shifts emphasis back to the present. Bakhtin argues, “To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one’s contemporaries (and an event that is therefore based on personal experience and thought) is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of epic into the world of the novel.”²⁰ I believe the novel of “adventure-time” represents the closest style guide to how trans folk report their personal history. This style contains a more linear conception of time and comes into conflict with the demands of the epic whose sole authority is the past. In this form, the sequence of events becomes tied to the progression of the character’s journey. Put another way, events are able to change the character’s thoughts and feelings as the story progresses. Experience and knowledge become the driving force behind this genre, not the demands of the form such as tradition.

The autobiography as a whole contains a contest between

18 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist. (Austin: UTP, 1981), 15.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 14.

two competing genres and authorities over the individual. The pressure manifests in a lack of authenticity at times where the form of the epic takes over and minimizes the strength of the conviction of the present voice. The result is the pressure for trans folk to have to manipulate their stories to straddle both genres. Memory (epic) is given precedence as identity must be proved through the past, and this account is given more consideration than the trans folk's present account (novel) of the current thoughts and feelings surrounding their identity.

An important aspect to consider when analyzing the novel and narratives is that self-consciousness or the inner voice of the character, did not always exist. The ancient voice represented the state and tradition. It was public, oral and it is only later that the reflective, questioning inner monologue emerged, and then was transposed into literary form. The novel is able to make use of the turn in public to private discourse, yet there is always tension between the two because one's public voice is oriented toward the state and its institutions while the inner private voice is able to question and find their own truth. The novel voice is politically important because it gives a voice to question and potentially change the form. It gives the authority back to the character, which is important as trans people should have authority over their own narratives because they are the main character in their autobiography. That is to say that the emphasis in medical contexts should not be on trans people to prove their identity through the authority of the past, but to shift the value of narrative towards the present. Following from these observations, it becomes clear that there is not simply a doubling of time, as Prosser argues, but that time figures individuals differently within its scope depending on how the story is organized by the teller. The temporality of "split" consciousness that the transsexual experiences is perhaps a split that can be healed less by looking at not just narrative form, but by looking at the ways narrative form influences the authorship of self-expression.

IV. Conclusion

My hopes in drawing attention to the way narrative is framed and influenced by the chronotope is to show that the Epic mirrors the clinical gaze. The gaze and the drive for the trans person to become an authority of their own produces issues that could be remedied through more careful attention to what influences narrative style. The distance of the sterilized medicalized interpretation conflicts with and gravitates away from elements of the novel, which can account more for variegated interpretations of conscious development (think of the hyper-developed consciousness of the characters in classic novels like Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*). Hilary Malatino argues that trans-narratives [that mimic the epic and clinical gaze] may fall victim to the problems of the guest lecture in that they remain ignorant to epistemological concerns.²¹ It should be noted here that by trans-narratives she does not mean specifically Prosser's trans-narratives but a broader sense of self-reporting by various trans individuals. She explains:

I stay away from conventional (that is, triumphal) coming-out narratives that conclude with individualized banalities about the importance of being true to one's self and finding self-fulfillment, happiness, or some other dangling existential carrot. Instead, I utilize texts in which the autobiographical elements are interwoven with meditations on phenomena like institutional exclusion, the trouble with the medicalization of gender, the experience of being marked for social death, or the technoscientific developments that have shaped the contemporary terrain of gender transition.²²

Malatino seems to be describing ethnographical writings here, but the problem with these is perhaps that trans folk unaware of the influence of discourse on self-reporting would have no way of knowing that they ought to weave their story through such a critical framework. The coming-out tropes are reproduced because they

21 Hilary Malatino, "Pedagogies of Becoming," *TSQ Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (2015): 398.

22 Ibid.

are accepted and to question them, is to potentially lose access to therapy and/or treatment. While I agree with Malatino that traditional narratives are fraught with problematic elements, we should focus on why this is, and try to question narrative authority itself.

Another limitation of the ethnological approach is that it does not look deeply into how class affects linguistic choice or what is really behind the words people use. As hermeneutical tools, sociological methods such as ethnography are quite limited. Moreover, there is problem with assuming that ethnography and not literary theory can comprehend the value of what Bakhtin calls “speech-genres.” His theory of such genres sets in motion, “the internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific socio-political purposes of the day.”²³ Speech-genres thus represent the socio-cultural aspects of the chronotope and illuminate the way the specificities of language are worked reciprocally through narrative and the body organized within spatio-temporality. This is an important point to mark as “The separation of style and language from the question of genre has been largely responsible for a situation in which only individual and period-bound overtones of a text are the privileged subjects of study, while its basic social tone is ignored.”²⁴ Prosser arguably focuses more on the overtones of style in his analysis of the autobiographic style, thus re-inscribing elements of the medical gaze associated with the epic. The specific language, inaugurated through the chronotope, communicates the body’s spatio-temporal relationship with the social and the consciousnesses of the character is made by and makes the story because of this; the climate of the time each genre was instantiated, manifests itself throughout such respective elements of each genre.

23 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262-3.

24 Ibid., 269

Each narrative style is thus imbued with a social character that is fetishized, by Prosser in this case, by our focus on language as abstracted from the construction of literary subjectivity. To account for embodied subjectivity requires an analysis of language that recognizes the constraints associated with certain narrative tendencies. Speech-genres, and the chronotope to which they belong, account for such tendencies.

Preserving the narrative is important to Prosser, as he argues it can be read in a way that allows a space for trans subjectivity to emerge. His argument is largely a response in resistance to the overvaluation of technology or certain interpretations of performativity as establishing trans subjectivity.²⁵ His project is fascinating, but the subtext of his argument is problematic in that it assumes subjectivity can have an identity trajectory at the outset, and that this can then be traced through narrative. Even though transsexual subjectivity is certainly split, implementing a before and after temporality limits the narrative analysis. This position may also alienate trans people who do not yet know what their true identity is, and are still writing and want to keep writing their story. The problem is that the form limits the possibility for an open-ended sense of identity because it pre-emptively expects an “after.” I think the form should always reflect an openness, especially with trans people who are underexposed to trans culture, or have never met a trans person before, and so do not know how to navigate potential crises of identity and gender dysphoria; children especially run the risk of not understanding their feelings about their identity. Some trans folk only know something is “off,” try to figure it out, and this can include crossing, maintaining a variety of sexual orientations—things that can work against them or would have to be omitted if a typical trans-narrative were attempted that relies on a before/after schema. The unedited raw footage of the personal narrative often conflicts with literary tropes and needs to be inherently accepted as possibly chaotic, and full of mistakes. The internalized double-voice of self-conscious narrative opposed to the finalization of the epic, allows for continuous regeneration

25 Prosser, *Second Skins*, 133.

of meaning and becoming.²⁶ After all, it would be abnormal to assume people are born knowing exactly who they will be. Rather than trying to use narrative to heal a split, splits should be seen as integral to human experience, part of the dynamism of narrative form. Splits and breaks should form the basis for a possibly new trans-narrative form that seeks to push away from elements that are imbued with linear (heterosexual) conceptions of time that foreclose upon fluid conscious experience. The before and after trope is important to stress in trans-narratives because the juxtaposition ends up highlighting the realness of the present gender, the legitimacy of which must be taken seriously. I do not, however, think this stylistic element should form a crucial aspect of any narrative theory seeking to demolish patriarchal thought.

The re-reading of narratives would also speak more to the push for the change in diagnostic language from gender dysphoria to gender dissonance—a state of social and/or mental distress due to navigating one’s feelings about their identity. In this way gender is not seen as an individual’s internal—and pathological—struggle, but rather part of the greater social context from which gender is reinforced and how this oppresses non-cisgender folk. The idea of dissonance can relate to a disruptive narrative or struggle rather than the traditional narrative that seeks to fit the DSM model.²⁷ My hopes in this paper have been to not take away from Prosser’s critical analysis here, but to simply expand its potential by providing a roust literary critique of narratives in general as a means to bolster and support his work. A narrative form less constrained by the chronotope of the epic could become commensurate with a more open and accepting diagnostic language in medicalizing contexts and contribute to a positive turn in transgender care.

26 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 324.

27 Kelley Winters, “Gender Dissonance,” *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, no.3-4 (2008) 86.