

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: NEITHER WOMAN NOR MAN:
NEGOTIATIONS OF THE THIRD SEX IN
WESTERN VISUAL CULTURE, 1900-1930

Ashley Lynn Cope, Master of Arts, 2022

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As concepts that differ across history and between cultures—even diverging radically within a single time and place—sex, gender, and desire are most accurately understood when examined through a historically and culturally specific lens. This thesis directs that lens towards the intersection of sexology and art in early-twentieth-century France with a specific interest in representations of the third-sex subject in visual culture. Classified as neither women nor men by sexologists, members of the third sex at the turn of the twentieth century occupied a turbulent middle-ground between masculinity and femininity, and defied sexual and romantic social norms. Early sexology produced a plethora of images to serve as evidence of the innate nature of sexual desire and gender identity, and queer artists consuming sexologists' work responded in kind with artistic works that grappled with theories of gender and sexual identity. This study deepens art historical engagement with images that contributed to and were influenced by sexology discourse in the early-twentieth century; artists like Romaine Brooks, Berenice Abbott,

and Claude Cahun negotiated sexological theories about sex and gender in artworks that challenge binary conceptions of identity and make visible the third-sex subject.

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by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2022

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my advisor Assistant Professor Tess Korobkin of the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland. Professor Korobkin's support and enthusiasm for my research bolstered my passion for this subject. Her guidance was invaluable to this project; I was continuously grateful for her kindness and knowledge throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the faculty who served on the defense committee for this research project: Associate Professor Jordana Moore Saggese and Professor Joshua Shannon. Without their passionate participation and input, the validation survey could not have been successfully conducted. Working with and learning from both Professors Saggese and Shannon over the past two years has been an honor and a pleasure.

I also want to thank Maura Callahan and Gabrielle Tillenburg, the members of my cohort who defended their theses alongside me. This process would have been much harder without the mutual support and advice they shared.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents, Richard and Laura, and to my partner, Emily, for providing me with love, support, and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of writing this thesis. I must thank them for listening to my rants about interesting sources, for reading my many drafts, and for being a constant and caring presence in my life. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

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Introduction

Journalist Janet Flanner sits casually on the floor in Berenice Abbott's 1927 photograph (fig. 1), right knee bent to support her elbow as she lightly rests her fingers against her cheek. Flanner appears masculine in loose-fitting trousers, collared button-down, dark sport coat, and top hat—short-cropped hair serves to further the masculine association. Flanner stares back at the viewer, and though her expression is placid, the intensity of her gaze is exaggerated by two additional sets of eyes in the form of masks fastened to her top hat. The masks suggest the ability—or perhaps the necessity—to inhabit more than one role. Abbott and Flanner, both Americans who lived and worked in Paris in the 1920s, are typically classified in contemporary scholarship as homosexual women, or lesbians; their same-sex partnerships—often long-term—with other notable figures in the world of art and literature are well-known and cited in their respective biographies.¹ But in the early-twentieth century, figures like Abbott and Flanner were emmeshed in a complex debate over identity that challenged the binary distinctions between woman/man and homo/heterosexual, both dichotomies deployed in postmodern scholarship (and Western society at large) to categorize the gender and sexuality of contemporary and historical figures alike.

¹ See Terri Weissman on Abbott's relationship with Elizabeth McCausland in *The Realisms of Berenice Abbott: Documentary Photography and Political Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) and Brenda Wineapple on Flanner's relationship with Solita Solano in *Genêt: A Biography of Janet Flanner* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Such binary oppositions are subject to increasing skepticism and deconstruction in the twenty-first century. Queer theory and transgender studies emerging out of the 1990s challenged heteronormative definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality, and continue to deconstruct static, binary conceptions of identity. Historical reappraisals by transgender theorists such as Leslie Feinberg shed light on the long history of gender variance and the historically specific forms of transgender expression from antiquity to the present.^{2, 3} In the twenty-first century (particularly as we progress through the 2020s), non-binary expressions of gender and transgender identities that reject the narrative that assigned sex determines gender identity are increasingly visible and recognized in Western culture, but are still targeted by institutional and social discrimination and violence. Though there have been phenomenal strides towards social, medical, and legal support for queer and transgendered individuals over the past two decades—including legalization of same-sex marriage across multiple nations and an increasing recognition of pronouns beyond the binary terms *he* and *she*—violence and discrimination continue to threaten the happiness, well-being, and survival of queer and transgendered individuals globally. With such twenty-first-century concerns in mind, I turn my attention in this study towards queer/transgender history at the turn of the twentieth century, the moment from which modern definitions and connotations of heterosexuality and

² Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 61-65.

³ Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1994): 251, note 2. Stryker defines "transgender" as "an umbrella term that refers to all identities or practices that cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries. The term includes, but is not limited to, transsexuality, heterosexual transvestism, gay drag, butch lesbianism, and such non-European identities as the Native American berdache or the Indian Hijra. Like 'queer,' 'transgender' may also be used as a verb or an adjective."

homosexuality evolved. While early-twentieth-century understandings of gender and sexuality are temporally and culturally distinct from those of the present, the existence of sex, gender, and sexuality as facets of identity and the breaking of binary oppositions play an important role in both periods.

Though the contributions of queer theory and transgender studies are vast and interdisciplinary, dichotomous definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality tend to dominate the canonical literature in the history of art. Queer artists from antiquity to the present are gathered under the umbrella of “homosexuality” in surveys focused on non-normative sexuality in art; there is value in tracing the visual culture of queerness through history, but a great deal of temporal and cultural context is obfuscated in broad surveys that define gender and sexuality in strictly either/or terms—one is either a man or a woman, a homosexual or a heterosexual. However, Europe and the United States experienced a tremendous restructuring of the sex/gender system from the mid-nineteenth century onward that challenged the notion of two sexes/genders; the increasing tenacity of the women’s suffrage movement, the growing awareness of queer (especially male) subcultures, and the fluctuating gender structure of the economy destabilized the binary sex/gender system of Victorian society.⁴ Theories on the relationship between biological sex, gendered social roles, and sexual object choice proliferated around the turn of the century;⁵ attraction to the same sex moved

⁴ George Chauncey, “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance,” *Salmagundi*, no.58/59 (1982): 116. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40547567>.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, “Sexual Aberrations,” in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The 1905 Edition*, eds. Philippe van Haute and Herman Westerink (London: Verso, 2016), 20. Freud differentiated between sexual aim and sexual object choice, the former referring to the role taken in sexual encounters (either the passive or aggressive role), and the latter referring specifically to the object of desire (i.e., the subject of same-sex desire).

from immoral act, to pathological disease, to acquired condition, to, ultimately, a defining characteristic of human identity. These developments, however, were circuitous and divisive rather than linear and unanimous. From the turn of the century through the 1930s, competing theories from sexologists and medical professionals attempted to explain the causes and expressions of same-sex desire and gender non-conformity.

The debate about sex, gender, and desire as interdependent aspects of a fundamental identity continues to play out in images like Abbott's portrait of Flanner. While David C. Ward's interpretation in the catalogue for *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* poses the masks over Flanner's head as stand-ins for a variety of roles and personas—Flanner was a foreign correspondent who wrote under the pseudonym Genêt, for example⁶—Abbott's photograph can also function more specifically as a negotiation of the third sex, one of many theories that originated in mid-nineteenth-century German sexology and maintained an authoritative presence in Europe and the United States through the early decades of the twentieth century.

Classified as neither women nor men because of their divergence from the hegemonic sex/gender system, members of the third, or intermediate, sex in the early-twentieth century occupied a turbulent middle-ground between masculinity and femininity while defying sexual and romantic norms. Because a female could not express masculinity (in dress, behavior, or the direction of sexual desire) without

⁶ David C Ward, "New Geographies/New Identities," in *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2010), 104-105. The connection between Flanner's pseudonym and the masks is proposed in the catalogue text.

disrupting the stability of the role of woman—a role inseparable from femininity, passivity, and heterosexuality—sexology and medicine defended and reinforced the “natural” polarization of normal men and women by introducing an alternative category for aberrations. Those who threatened the stability of hegemonic binaries, including those whose sexual preference was directed towards members of the same sex, were cast outside the dyad of man and woman and into a third, intermediate sex/gender category. Thus, the third sex acts not as a singular, clearly defined role in an egalitarian triadic system, but as a catch-all for non-normative bodies, behaviors, and desires that unsettle the status quo.

Recognizing Flanner and Abbott’s temporal and cultural proximity to these significant changes within sexology discourse in the early-twentieth century gives Flanner’s portrait different meaning. Three sets of eyes—two sets belonging to the masks and the other belonging to Flanner—mirror the concept of three distinct gender categories. Man, woman, and the third sex are all present, as it were, in this image. However, only one of these categories is embodied in the flesh by Flanner; the two masks above remain uninhabited, yet ever present. Though the masks are otherwise similar in size and style, they are clearly differentiated from each other: the mask on top appears light gray whereas the bottom mask looks black. These contrasting masks, evoking the dualism of man and woman, loom over Flanner’s head without obscuring her own visage. Though neither mask covers Flanner’s face directly, both are significant components of her costume. While Flanner is neither strictly woman nor strictly man, both elements contribute to the production of a new, third type. As an artifact of a period in which competing theories about the nature of sex, gender,

and desire proliferated, Abbott's photograph of Flanner probes the boundaries of the hegemonic sex/gender system and attempts to visualize a human subject distinct from the polarized categories of woman and man. Abbott's portrait of Flanner asks: What does the third sex subject look like, and how can this subjectivity be effectively articulated despite the boundaries of a dominant binary system?

Focusing on the historically and culturally specific concept of the third sex, this thesis examines the entanglements of sexology and art in Europe during the early-twentieth century; though thought of primarily as a textual discipline, sexology as a visual discourse produced a plethora of pseudo-medical photographs and illustrations to serve as evidence of the innate nature of sexual desire and gender identity. Whether images of third-sex subjects published in sexology texts were created or gathered by queer specialists—as in the case of the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld—or consumed by queer artists such as Claude Cahun, the visual served as an important site of engagement for sexologists and the queer artists who responded to their theories. Some images were directly supplied to sexologists by queer individuals with a vested interest in the study of non-normative sexuality and gender. The French nineteenth-century painter Rosa Bonheur submitted a profile of herself as a “contrasexual,” a member of the third sex, to Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee in the years shortly before her passing;⁷ in 1900, one year after her death, Hirschfeld included a portrait of Bonheur—an print reproduction after a late-in-life photograph—in the frontmatter of his long-running sexology journal with the caption:

⁷ Emmanuel Cooper, Introduction to *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West* (London: Routledge, 1994), 49.

“Rosa Bonheur, famous French animal painter, deceased in May 1899, mentally and physically pronounced type of a sexual intermediate.”⁸ The suggestion that Bonheur’s appearance in the portrait divulges her status as a member of the third sex highlights the significant role that images played in early-twentieth-century negotiations of gender and sexual identity.

Though this thesis advocates for historically and culturally specific terminology (i.e., third sex, invert, Uranian), the goal of this study is not to simply replace terms like homosexual with a different series of labels, but to re-contextualize gendered image production in a period when conceptions of what it meant to be not just a man or a woman, but potentially something in between—and the terms that structured these conceptions—were continuously debated within sexology and medicine. Thus, this study brings to the fore images that contributed to and were influenced by sexology discourse and, specifically, the concept of the third sex, in the early-twentieth century. Beginning with a group of photographs curated by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, and then turning to paintings by Romaine Brooks, photographs by Berenice Abbott, and photomontages and photographic performances by Claude Cahun, I explore how pseudo-scientific and artistic images both reflected and shaped the discourse on gender and sexual identity in the early decades of the twentieth century. This study’s focus on the diverse attempts to reckon with and visualize the third-sex subject serves to sharpen transhistorical surveys in the study of

⁸ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 2 (1900). “Rosa Bonheur (nach der letzten Photographie), berühmte französische Tiermalerin, verstorben im Mai 1899, seelisch und körperlich ausgesprochener Typus einer sexuellen Zwischenstufe.” (author’s translation).

queer art by more closely considering a select group of images that engage with a temporally and culturally specific concept of gender and sexuality.

This investigation is informed by a wide variety of disciplines and methods including literary studies, anthropology, medical history, sociology, gender and sexuality studies, feminism, and queer theory. The field of literary studies plays a significant role in understanding how queer, early-twentieth-century individuals (or at least queer creatives of some means) actively negotiated different concepts of identity both collectively and personally. Many independently wealthy Americans in Paris and London as well as their European peers wrote novels, poems, and essays about their queer experiences, simultaneously reflecting and contributing to the growing awareness of a sexual identity as opposed to discrete acts.⁹

Texts such as Aimée Duc's short book *Are They Women? A Novel Concerning the Third Sex* (1901); Edward Carpenter's essay *The Intermediate Sex* (1908); Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1927); and Djuna Barnes' novel *Nightwood* (1936) all center on same-sex desire and non-normative expressions of gender as influential, even central, aspects of identity and lived reality. While some are more explicit in their references to sexology than others, these authors all display their knowledge of dominant theories and terminology in their writing. Though these are only a few examples among many that adopted and/or critiqued the concept of the third sex, these primary texts confirm the circulation of sexology discourse—especially within queer communities—in the early-twentieth century and highlight

⁹ Cooper, Introduction to *The Sexual Perspective*, xvi.

the persistent influence of theories like the third sex on negotiations of identity from the turn of the century into the 1930s.

Methodologically, this study draws on the feminist and queer theory contributions of Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, and Eve Sedgwick, all of whom have been instrumental in the deconstruction of binary conceptions of gender and sexuality, especially concerning visibility, performance, and the limits of language. In *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam outlines an approach to the study of queer history that prioritizes sensitivity to historical change *and* current theoretical concerns. Halberstam uses the term female masculinity to capture the porousness and evolution of gender across time; female masculinity is not in itself a stable or temporally fixed identity, but a flexible experience “that extends back beyond modern sexual and gender definitions.”¹⁰ Halberstam’s dual concern with historical context and contemporary theory serves as a particularly useful model for my twenty-first-century study of twentieth-century conceptions of sex and gender. Butler’s argument that gender is not substantive, but rather performative simultaneously 1) challenges the dominant conception in early-twentieth-century sexology that gender is biologically determined and 2) supports theoretical interpretations in this thesis that highlight performative aspects such as pose and costume.¹¹ In Sedgwick’s influential text, *Epistemology of the Closet*, she underscores the implications of the

¹⁰ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), xxi. In the preface to the Twentieth Anniversary Edition of Halberstam’s influential text, special attention is brought to the endemic violence of twenty-first-century toxic masculinity. Halberstam argues that female masculinity continues to challenge hegemonic gender structures in the present moment; at the same time, Halberstam pays attention to the evolution of female masculinity (and masculinity in general) over time to trace the various forms and effects of female masculinity through history.

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 34.

homo/heterosexual opposition for virtually every aspect of Western culture since the nineteenth century, even for “the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence.”¹² Sedgwick’s interrogation of the effects of binary conceptions of sexuality is useful in understanding how alternatives to the hegemonic sex/gender system have been conceived, executed, and received since the turn of the century.

Influential and ambitious art historical surveys by Christopher Reed, James Saslow, and Jonathan D. Katz recognize and celebrate queer artists both past and present.¹³ Each of these scholars acknowledge the third sex as a mid-nineteenth-century invention within the history of Western sexuality; however, their expansive art historical projects—often spanning upwards of one hundred years and engaging with multiple cultures and geographic locations—are not focused solely on the phenomenon of the third sex in turn-of-the-century Germany and France. Rather, their projects recognize the evolution of sexuality and gender across time and space with an overall interest in gathering artists under the consistent label of homosexuality in order to address common themes. This thesis aims to complement the longer history of homosexuality in art by pointing a magnifying glass at a portion of the historical thread and identifying the role of individual fibers. At the turn of the twentieth century, for example, a significant portion of Western society—informed by decades of increasingly granular and pathological categorizations of human behavior

¹² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-2. Sedgwick notes that the term “homosexuality” was coined in the last third of the nineteenth century (by Karl-Maria Kertbeny, though Sedgwick doesn’t name him here), prior even to the use of heterosexuality. The latter only later became prominent when announcing oneself as “not homosexual” became a compulsory practice.

¹³ Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); James M. Saslow, *Pictures and Passions* (New York: Viking, 1999); Jonathan D. Katz, *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, in association with the National Portrait Gallery, 2010), 10-61.

in science and medicine—classified anyone as “third sex” or “intermediate” who threatened the authority of binary systems. There was a correct and codified way to be a normal man or woman, and those who fell short of these criteria were classified as “other.” Pseudo-science and medicine in this period Visual representations of this “other” (third sex) in the early-twentieth century invite magnification.

In *Homosexuality and Art: A History of Ideas*, Reed acknowledges the potential anachronism of classifications like ‘homosexual’ to describe gender-transcendent/same-sex attracted individuals throughout history. Reed notes how emerging scholarship in transgender studies suggests that “subjects commonly classed as ‘homosexual’ would [potentially] be more accurately described as falling between or combining aspects of the sexes” in much the same way that early-twentieth-century members of the third sex were characterized by a mixing of masculine and feminine psychic and physical traits.¹⁴ Leslie Feinberg echoes Reed’s acknowledgement by problematizing the assertion that females who “passed” long-term as men throughout history only did so to avoid class struggles, misogyny, or homophobic oppression; rather, Feinberg argues that such individuals, those devoted to and capable of “passing,” belong to trans history more so than gay and lesbian history or women’s history.¹⁵

Reed’s study refers occasionally to mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century theories of sexual inversion and acknowledges the mixing of masculine and feminine costume—a mixture associated with the third sex in early sexology—in

¹⁴ Reed, *Art and Homosexuality*, 20.

¹⁵ Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*, 85.

artworks like Romaine Brooks' 1924 portrait of Una Troubridge (fig. 2).¹⁶In other surveys of homosexuality in art, Saslow, Katz, and Emmanuel Cooper identify the complicated relationship between gender and sexuality in art as far back as antiquity and highlight the themes of androgyny endemic to much homo-erotic imagery in the western tradition. Like Reed, these scholars acknowledge nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sexological theories, but do not necessarily unpack the relationship between queer art and the visual discourse of sexology and medicine. In the exhibition catalogue for *Hide/Seek*, Katz surveys artists from Thomas Eakins to Felix Gonzalez-Torres, tracing a century-long lineage of homoeroticism and homosexuality in American art. The exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery was a landmark in the history of art, bringing together works that illustrate the profound influence and significance of 'homosexual' artists in America. In covering artists over a period of at least one hundred years, however, some narratives were condensed or sacrificed to create an engaging and coherent narrative of homosexual art. Clearly, visual representations of what it meant to be a member of this third category at the turn of the century—belonging neither to the category of woman nor man—invite closer (i.e., historically and culturally specific) analysis in the history of art.

Visual culture scholar Tirza True Latimer's book, *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, is particularly useful in contemplating the location, period, and artists I take as subjects of interest in this thesis. In her introduction, Latimer problematizes the heteronormative and dichotomous systems of gender and sexuality and goes on to explain her use of the term 'lesbian' to classify her primary

¹⁶ Reed, *Art and Homosexuality*, 116.

subjects. Latimer clarifies her use of the term not as a transhistorical or transcultural sexual orientation, but as a term that signifies an alternative to women's normative social and sexual behavior. Her study of 1920s Parisian lesbians and their self-representation hinges on their boundary transgressions: Latimer's subjects, Brooks and Cahun included, do not constrain themselves within the boundaries of the femininity which haunts their sex, nor do they completely abandon femininity. In the mixture of masculine and feminine traits, they find the means of representing themselves as "lesbians" which, by the definition of many sexologists at the turn of the century, are not technically women in the traditional sense in this period. Unlike Latimer, I avoid use of the term lesbian to describe the subjects of my study because the overriding gendered connotation (that 'lesbian' equals 'woman') is unsuited to this study's interest in explicitly non-binary gender in the early-twentieth century.

Despite the proliferation of medical and sexological terms emerging around the turn of the century to describe various deviant sexualities, the terms man and woman were and continue to be used to categorize male and female members of the third sex from the period under consideration. This linguistic shortcoming related to gender and identity is noted in primary texts by Duc and Cahun; in Duc's *Are They Women?*, one character declares:

"...we must demonstrate that we are the representatives of a mixture, a human species that...is entitled to consideration. But we can only safeguard ourselves

insofar as we locate ourselves fearlessly beyond the spheres of actual men and women. We cannot hypocritically misidentify ourselves...”¹⁷

Cahun tackles the issues of gender and language similarly in the co-authored book *Aveux non avenues* (*Disavowals*),¹⁸ writing: “Shuffle the cards. Masculine? Feminine? But it depends. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me. If it existed in our language, one would not observe this fluctuation of my thought.”¹⁹ Both Duc and Cahun refer to the experience of female (in the normative anatomical sense) members of the third sex who are most often referred to and recognized as women. Despite rejections of binary gender categories, Duc’s characters and Cahun lack the terminology to sufficiently define themselves. It is precisely female members of the third sex—those classed in present-day scholarship as homosexual women or lesbians—with whom this thesis is primarily concerned.

Though a larger study would not be limited to this fraction of the population—“homosexual men” of the same period also fall within the third sex, and this sample group is limited to mostly independently wealthy, white Americans and Europeans who appear consistently in surveys of modern ‘homosexual’ art—for the purposes of this thesis, the focus on female members of the third sex is advantageous for two reasons: a narrower scope 1) provides greater representational continuity across various media and primary source materials (i.e. images and written accounts

¹⁷ Aimée Duc, *Are They Women?: A Novel Concerning the Third Sex*, ed. Breen Margaret Sönsner and Nisha Kommattam (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2020), 58.

¹⁸ Jennifer L. Shaw and Claude Cahun, *Exist Otherwise: The Life and Works of Claude Cahun* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 67. The translation of the book’s title is provided by Shaw.

¹⁹ Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, *Aveux non avenues* (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1930), 176. “Brouiller les cartes. Masculin? féminin? mais ça dépend des cas. Neutre est le seul genre qui me convienne toujours. S’il existait dans notre langue on n’observerait pas ce flottement de ma pensée.” (author’s translation).

related specifically to the female invert) and 2) disrupts the privileging of male homosexuality in nineteenth and twentieth-century sexology and in more recent scholarship both within and outside the history of art. By analyzing a group of figures arranged by Magnus Hirschfeld and published in the 1903 *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (*Yearbook for Intermediate Sexual Types*)—an influential sexology journal that ran from 1899 to 1923—and artworks by queer artists like Brooks, Abbott, and Cahun, I aim to highlight the wide range of visual representations of the third sex in early twentieth-century visual culture in Europe. My goal is to underscore the ways in which these images grappled with an array of competing explanations of sex, gender, desire, and identity; closer examination of the effects sexology discourse had on queer image production and vice versa is, I argue, an important move towards a more contextually specific interpretation of gender and sexuality in early-twentieth-century art.

Section one examines the origins of the third sex and the concept's evolution over the early decades of the twentieth century. Because sexology was instrumental in defining and circulating various theories about the nature of gender and sexual identity, including the concept of the third sex, it stands to reason that the images published alongside influential texts on the subject played a significant role in making the third sex visible. A group of images assembled by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld—illustrations of the male, female, and third body type—serves in this chapter as a case study for understanding how sex, gender, and desire were mapped onto the body at the turn of the century. Hirschfeld's selection of images—two photographs of human figures and one reproduction of a late-nineteenth century painting—pose

interesting questions about the way that different media and visual representations relay dominant cultural messages about biology, appearance, and the behaviors that are assumed to correlate. How Hirschfeld's selected images constitute the identity they purport to reflect will be further explored in this chapter.

Section two examines the painted portraits of Romaine Brooks, an American artist who lived and worked in Europe for much of her life. It asks: How did Brooks choose to represent queer individuals in a period when different theories about the relationship between sex, gender, and desire carried extremely different connotations about the nature of the human being? Several of Brooks' works, her self-portrait and the painting of Troubridge included, featured in the National Portrait Gallery's 2011 exhibition, *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, which focused exclusively on "the impact of gay and lesbian artists on the portrayal of personal identity."²⁰ The exhibition catalogue hails Brooks' paintings as "the most nuanced documents we have of lesbian and gay life before the Second World War."²¹ This chapter extends the significance of Brooks' paintings to consider them not only as representations of a proto-lesbian identity, but also as images that signal Brooks' interest in contemporary theories about the outward visibility of sexuality and her attempts to render the intermediate subject as defined by sexology.

Section three turns to Berenice Abbott and her photographic portraits from Paris where she, like Brooks, lived and worked in the 1920s. This chapter examines the representations of the third sex in the photographic realism of Abbott as well as

²⁰ Martin E. Sullivan, foreword to *Hide/Seek*, 9.

²¹ Ward, "New Geographies/New Identities," in *Hide/Seek*, 94-95.

the surrealism of the French artist Claude Cahun. Abbott and Cahun's different approaches to the medium of photography and their distinctive treatments of the human subject highlight the ways in which competing definitions of sex, gender, and desire were being conceptualized in the early 1900s and how artists attempted to visualize non-normative identities according to these debates. In this final chapter, the conflicting concepts of a 'real' versus a performed identity are discussed in relation to Abbott and Cahun's work.

Because terminology is both a challenge to and a central focus of this study, some key terms and their specific use in this thesis should be clarified. I use 'the third sex' as it was used circa 1864-1930 in reference to individuals who diverged from hegemonic binary structures by expressing gender contrary to their assigned sex, and whose sexual object choice was directed toward persons of the same sex. In this context, 'third sex' is interchangeable with 'Uranian' or 'invert,' both terms that are further developed in chapter one. 'Third sex' was, however, used in a variety of contexts at the turn of the century in Europe and the United States, and the term is still utilized in anthropology and applied to cultures—typically non-Western—that recognize more than two genders.²² 'Third sex' was also summoned in early feminist discourse at the turn of the century, though often by opponents who used the term to discredit the women's suffrage movement and castigate the independent 'New Woman' associated with the appropriation of masculine fashion and occupations; independent women of this period, regardless of their sexual preference, were often

²² Gilbert G. Herdt, *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 11-14.

equated in anti-feminist rhetoric with grotesque masculinity and perverse sexuality. Additionally, though ‘third sex’ was occasionally used in reference to intersex persons (referred to as physiological hermaphrodites in early sexology), this is not the primary application of the term in this study.

In reference to non-normative gender and sexuality more broadly, I avoid binary terms like ‘homosexual’ and opt instead to group non-normative gender and sexuality under the umbrella term ‘queer,’ which is more capacious and does not rely on binary opposition.²³ Because “[q]ueer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, [and] the dominant,” it serves as a particularly useful term to handle the mercurial concepts of identity circulating in the early-twentieth century.²⁴ The terms homosexual and heterosexual are only deployed in direct reference to the language used in previous scholarship and primary source material.

The terms ‘sex’ or ‘biological sex’ are used throughout this study from a purely anatomical perspective in which a body is assigned either male or female at birth based principally on the appearance of external genitalia: penis to signify the male body and vagina to signify the female. Though these normative definitions of biology are limiting and fail to account for the gradations of human biology even within the “same sex,” these are the standard terms of sexology in the early-twentieth century. Same-sex desire, then, refers to sexual and/or emotional attraction between

²³ For important texts on queer theory see: Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Cultural Studies of the Americas, Volume 2. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

²⁴ David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

individuals with comparable sexual anatomy. While same-sex desire is not necessarily visible on the physical body from a twenty-first-century perspective, most of the sexology's early theories about same-sex desire hinged on the idea that the soul was made visible in the flesh. In the era of phrenology and physiognomy, sexology grew to rely on images—both illustrations and photographs—that documented physical differences that appeared to prove one of early-sexology's most persistent theories: sexual preference is visible on the body, and same-sex desire produces a distinctly atypical appearance and anatomy.

Inventing the Third Sex: Defining and Depicting Difference in Early Sexology

Sexology played a significant role in altering societal conceptions of gender and sexuality from the late-nineteenth century onwards, though the primary sites of reception and debate prior to the turn of the century were medicine and psychology. Despite the initially insular impact of sexology, the discipline's texts (and the images within them) were disproportionately collected and studied by queer intellectuals such as American expatriate and European artists and authors, many of whom moved within the same social circles suggesting an early collective knowledge on shifting concepts of sex and gender in queer communities.²⁵ Hailed as the grandfather of the modern homosexual rights movement, the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was a prolific and vocal advocate for the decriminalization of same-sex love. First described in his 1864 publication, *Vindex*, members of the third sex, or *Urnings* to use Ulrichs' original terminology, are those born with the anatomy and appearance (body) of one sex and the mental and emotional capacity (soul) of the reverse.²⁶ Same-sex desire was inextricable from this inversion of body and soul: in Ulrichs' model, same-sex desiring females had a masculine soul, whereas same-sex desiring males possessed the reverse. While Ulrichs based his theory of the Urning on his own same-sex desire and lived experience, he also believed, like the later Hirschfeld, that a natural explanation for same-sex desire would remove, or at least alleviate, social

²⁵ Tirza True Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 15-18.

²⁶ John Lauritsen and Davis Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (New York: Times Change Press, 1974), 9.

stigma. If same-sex desire was given biological and moral support, then anti-sodomy laws, in Ulrichs' view, were more likely to be repealed. Ulrichs' concept of the third sex proved influential in the burgeoning field of sexology and was further developed and revised in the last quarter of the 1800s and into the twentieth century by influential sexologists such as the English Havelock Ellis and the German Magnus Hirschfeld.

Both sexologists, as well as many others across Europe and America, helped to popularize Ulrichs' concepts within scientific communities even as they offered their own theories and terminology related to same-sex desire, gender, and their relationship to each other. Rather than *Uranism* or *Urning*, Ellis preferred the terms 'sexual inversion' and 'invert.' "Sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality towards persons of the same sex" was the defining characteristic of the true invert in Ellis' model.²⁷ For Ellis, the congenital quality distinguished sexual inversion from "homosexual love," by which is meant same-sex attraction or acts in the absence of "natural objects of sexual attraction."²⁸ In this way, Ellis separates individual sexual acts from an innate sexual identity. Ellis theorized that congenital inversion—as opposed to inversion acquired via trauma, disease, insanity, or excessive masturbation²⁹—manifested as physically and psychically pronounced masculinity in inverted females and femininity in males. While Ellis is primarily

²⁷ Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion* (London: Wilson & McMillan, 1897), 1.

²⁸ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, 1.

²⁹ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, 33. Other sexologists, such as Iwan Bloch, argued that sexual inversion could be acquired by engaging in vice, such as masturbation. In his survey of sexology at the start of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis, like Bloch and other sexologists, sees vice as a possible influence on homosexuality, noting on page 32 that the psychologist Albert Moll may dismiss too quickly the relationship between vice and inversion.

concerned with white European and American inverts in his 1897 book *Sexual Inversion*, he explicitly compares congenital inversion to Two-Spirit identities of Indigenous Americans, such as the *boté*, or “not man, not woman,” in Crow culture.³⁰ In short, Ellis’ theory of sexual inversion is best understood as a product of what Gayle Rubin calls a sex/gender system: while Ellis and others subscribed to the belief that biology is destiny, Rubin’s sex/gender system emphasizes the human, cultural intervention that links so-called biological sex to compatible gender expression and appropriate sexual desire.³¹ Rubin’s concept connects sex, gender, and desire in a way that balances the biological-determinism of Ellis and his contemporaries with the postmodern view that such systems are socially constructed and culturally rehearsed. In this turn-of-the-century sex/gender system where sex, gender, and desire are intrinsically linked, Ellis’ congenital invert (a) desires persons of the same sex, (b) expresses gender traditionally contrary to their assigned sex, and (c) is categorized as neither fully woman nor fully man as a result of the combination of (a) and (b).

Ellis’ theory of sexual inversion and other concepts related to the third sex that developed in sexology, psychology, and within queer communities themselves in the early-twentieth century, are incongruous with contemporary conceptions of assigned sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The terms homosexual, gay, and lesbian, especially as they are used in the twenty-first century, do not propose an inversion of body and soul, nor do these terms necessarily prescribe certain

³⁰ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, 8; Harlen Pruden and Se-ah-dom Edmo, “Two-Spirit People: Sex, Gender & Sexuality in Historical and Contemporary Native America,” National Congress of American Indians, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/initiatives/Pruden-Edmo_TwoSpiritPeople.pdf.

³¹ Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women,” in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 34.

combinations of an individual's genitalia or gender expression in the same way as the third sex at the turn of the twentieth century. In early influential texts like Ellis' *Sexual Inversion*, 'homosexual' referred more commonly to same-sex acts rather than sexual identity. As concepts that differ across history and between cultures—even diverging radically within a single time and place—gender identity and sexual orientation cannot be effectively reduced to terms like homosexual and ubiquitously applied in all contexts.³²

Sexology texts from the early-twentieth century (and there are many) help to illustrate the prolific and conflicting nature of theories surrounding the nature of human sexuality. Magnus Hirschfeld, one of the best-known sexologists of the period, was himself more prolific than most. In 1897, Hirschfeld cofounded the “Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific Humanitarian Committee) as an instrument through which to organize politically against the criminalization of male homosexuality,” and in 1899 established the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (hereafter referred to as the *Yearbook*) which ran annually through the early 1920s and then sporadically into the 1930s.³³ The *Yearbook* was an interdisciplinary publication open to professionals and enthusiasts alike; articles were not limited to medicine, but included “literary and classical scholarship, history, and

³² Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 3.

³³ Katie Sutton, “Representing the ‘Third Sex’: Cultural Translations of the Sexological Encounter in Early Twentieth-Century Germany,” in *Sexology and Translation: Cultural and Scientific Encounters Across the Modern World*, edited by Heike Bauer (Temple University Press, 2015), 58.

ethnography.”³⁴ As a result of the journal’s range of interests, the *Yearbook* became a site of cross-national, cross-disciplinary, and multilingual dialogue.³⁵

In the first volume of the 1903 *Yearbook* is a fold-out triptych featuring one human figure per page (figs. 3, 4, 5). These images, intended as a group, are included as figures in Magnus Hirschfeld’s essay “Uraschen und Wesen des Uranismus,” or, “Causes and Essence of Uranism.”³⁶ Captions identify the central figure as the “urnischer Typus” (Urning type) and the figures on either side as the “männlicher Typus” (male type) and the “weiblicher Typus” (female type). Linking each of these types together is a line of text on the central panel: “Verhältnis des Schulter- zum Beckengürtel” (“Ratio between shoulder and hip width”).

These images claim to represent three distinct human types, two of which (male and female) are familiar in the dominant, binary system of sex. But the “Urning type” situated in between these two poles is not easily definable within that same hegemonic system. Why and how does Hirschfeld visualize the “urning type” as the central figure between hyper-idealized representations of the conventional male and female form? Has Hirschfeld curated a group of images that reflect the fundamental nature of human identity as one of three anatomically and visually distinct forms? Or, in juxtaposing these images and using individual figures to signify an array of biological and cultural norms, do Hirschfeld’s images merely reify the social constructs that, in the first place, informed his selection of certain images?

³⁴ Kate Fisher and Jana Funke, “British Sexual Science beyond the Medical Cross-Disciplinary, Cross-Historical, and Cross-Cultural Translations,” in *Sexology and Translation: Cultural and Scientific Encounters Across the Modern World*, 103.

³⁵ Fisher and Funke, “British Sexual Science,” 103.

³⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, “Ursachen und Wesen des Uranismus,” in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* 5, no. 1 (1903): 1-193.

Hirschfeld argues in the introduction of “Causes and Essence of Uranism” that “the essence of the Uranian is not exhausted with the direction of his sexual instinct.”³⁷ He continues, “As in man the masculine, in woman the feminine character is felt to be the main thing, so also in the Urning the urnic nature...[a] peculiar mixture of masculine and feminine qualities,” represents the myriad of physical and psychic traits belonging to the Urning.³⁸ Using Ulrichs’ terminology and posing the Urning as distinct from men and women, Hirschfeld deploys the concept of the third sex. He also notes that “The man who loves men, the woman who desires women, are not men and women in the common sense, but another, a separate, a third sex.”³⁹ It is within the category of the third sex where Hirschfeld identifies an external and internal mixture of masculine and feminine features, including but not limited to: the size of the skull; development of the breasts; style of writing; gait; thoughts; and desire.⁴⁰ While Hirschfeld recognizes the variability of primary and secondary sex characteristics, he conceives of sex, gender, and desire as interdependent categories that together determine one’s identity as either a man, a woman, or a member of the third sex. For him, each corresponds directly to a generally consistent arrangement of anatomy, character, and sexual instinct. In Hirschfeld’s and other sexologists’ opinions, sexual instinct mapped itself onto the body; thus, for the Urning, a “peculiar mixture of masculine and feminine qualities” was apparent not only in sexual desire,

³⁷ Hirschfeld, 5. “...das Wesen des Uraniers nicht mit der Richtung seines Geschlechtstriebes erschöpft ist.” (Author’s translation).

³⁸ Hirschfeld, 5. “Wie man beim Mann den männlichen, am Weibe den weiblichen Charakter als Hauptsache empfindet, so steht auch beim Urning die urnische Art...diese eigentümliche Mischung männlicher und weiblicher Eigenschaften...” (Author’s translation).

³⁹ Hirschfeld, 68. “der Mann, der Männer liebt, die Frau, welche Frauen begehrt, sind nicht Männer und Frauen im landläufigen Sinn, sondern ein anderes, ein eigenes, ein drittes Geschlecht.” (Author’s translation).

⁴⁰ Hirschfeld, 129.

career interests, gait, speech, and clothing, but also in the appearance and biology of the body itself.

The three images in the fold-out of the 1903 *Yearbook* attempt to illustrate Hirschfeld's theories about the third sex. While these figures may in part be seen as reflective of Hirschfeld's hypothesis, they are also loaded with cultural assumptions about the ideal male and female bodies, and the socially appropriate expressions of masculinity and femininity. Rather than curating three images of analogous style and medium (e.g., using strictly anatomical illustrations or medical photographs), Hirschfeld gathered three disparate images to demonstrate his point: a studio photograph of Estonian wrestler Georg Lurich represents the male type, a painting by Joseph Wencker represents the female type, and an awkwardly cropped photograph (perhaps taken by Hirschfeld himself, though this is not established in the caption or in the essay) represents the Urning type.⁴¹ Together they are an odd group, but incredibly revealing about both societal ideals for men and women at the turn of the century and Hirschfeld's theory that the "full man" and "full woman" are imagined constructs.

Wencker's 1894 work *Nymphe Chasseresse* (*Hunting Nymph*) which, unlike the other two images, is not a photograph of an individual, but a painting of an imagined, idealized female figure. The nymph props her elbow against the lichen-

⁴¹ The source materials for Figures 3, 4, and 5 are not properly captioned or cited in the *Yearbook*, however, Figure 3 can be identified as a photograph of Georg Lurich based on a photonegative from the same photoshoot: see "Maadleja Georg Lurich," Eesti Muuseumide Veebivärv, accessed February 15, 2022, https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/2074032. Similarly, Figure 5 is confirmed as Joseph Wencker's 1894 painting *Nymphe chasseresse* in the *Catalogue Illustré De Peinture Et Sculpture: Salon De 1894*, ed. Ludovic Baschet (Paris: Librairie d'Art, 1894), 168. Provenance for Figure 4 is unknown; however, the image appears to be original to the 1903 publication of the *Yearbook*.

speckled tree to her left and leans against it, crossing her left leg over the other in a relaxed contrapposto. She supports her stance further with two spears she holds vertically in her right hand. She stares into the middle distance of the idyllic landscape she finds herself in and smiles faintly. Her spears suggest her role as a huntress in Diana's retinue, though the goddess of the hunt herself is nowhere to be seen. Her complete nudity and her relaxation are similar to other paintings of Diana and her nymphs at rest after completing a hunt; however, in Wencker's image the nymph stands alone and trophyless.⁴² She is neither preparing for nor is she obviously resting directly after a hunt. She becomes not one among a group of capable hunters, but a singular, erotic object of desire. As such, she represents a Eurocentric ideal of feminine beauty that transcends time and place. She is the ideal: white and blemish-free with pert breasts and a gentle hourglass figure. She is both beautiful and vulgar, an object of aesthetic and erotic pleasure yet lacking any moralizing salve. Nude in the landscape in which she is depicted, she activates a familiar binary, playing nature to the male type's culture.

The muscular male type depicted by Lurich—who is nude but for the leaf over his genitals—is no doubt representative of the Western masculine ideal, and this representation is more civilized than that of the out-of-doors female and Urning types. The image of the male type in Hirschfeld's arrangement draws attention to modernity,

⁴² Diana (Artemis) and her nymphs are a recurring theme in Western art. In scenes where Diana and her nymphs are not actively hunting or consciously warding off the aggressive advances of satyrs, they can commonly be found resting fully or partially nude. In the latter type of scene, Diana and the nymphs are often surrounded by the bucks, boars, and other forest animals they have recently slain. The figures, generally depicted in these resting scenes unconscious and splayed out, are made the erotic objects of the viewer's gaze. A foreshadowing of sexual violence is also indicated by the satyrs who spy on the sleeping women from nearby vantage points.

progress, and the culture of man. Lurich stands on a marble floor before an impenetrable black backdrop in a photography studio. He leans his right elbow on an ornate pedestal reflective of the modern era and of refined interiors. Though nude, he is by no means primitive, but rather echoes the heroic ideals of antiquity; however, Lurich conceals his genitalia with a leaf in accordance with Victorian-era censorship and Christian modesty. The concealment of Lurich's genitalia with a fig leaf mirrors the practice in Victorian England by which the genitals of certain sculptures were veiled with a bronze or plaster cast of a fig leaf—a direct reference to the Fall of Mankind, humanity's inherited shame of nakedness and sexuality. A plaster leaf was famously applied to the reproduction of Michelangelo's *David* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London during Queen Victoria's reign in the nineteenth century.

The leaf is arguably more suggestive than modest, however. Lurich grasps the leaf by its long stem and, with his hand poised at his hip, directs the leaf at a downward angle to simultaneously cover and indicate his genitals. Despite the coverage provided, we see that he could easily reveal what the leaf covers with the flick of his wrist. The size of the leaf, too, is suggestive and invites the viewer to imagine the sight to which they are denied access. In this concealment of genitals is the tacit acknowledgement of the perceived dangers of male nudity; though Lurich is posed semi-nude under the pretense of showcasing admirable manliness, his nudity also provides space for the articulation of homosexuality.⁴³ Ostensibly licit photographs of figures like Lurich often served as feasts for the homoerotically

⁴³ Michael Hatt, "Thoughts and Things: Sculpture and the Victorian Nude," in *Exposed: The Victorian Nude* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2002), 48.

starved. The fig-leaf-mediated nudity of late-nineteenth-century muscle-man Eugen Sandow (fig. 6), for example, simultaneously fulfilled public demands for a return to masculine virility and served as a homoerotic beacon.⁴⁴ Sandow's same-sex preference was a "well-known public secret," yet he ironically became a model for manliness in the late-nineteenth century even as same-sex desire between men was becoming increasingly codified as antithetical to masculinity.⁴⁵

Between these idealized male and female types, however, remains the Urning type. In this photograph, the figure of the Urning type stands on rocky terrain against what appears to be a cliffside. Like the female type, the Urning figure is apparently situated in nature, but compared to the obvious signs of life in Wencker's painting—lichen on the tree-trunk, tendrils of grass around her feet, a body of water that extends back into the fertile forest—the surroundings of the Urning are dry and barren. Sexologists in the early twentieth century noted the failure of the third sex to procreate by way of their same-sex preference. Perhaps Hirschfeld's selection of this image as representative of the Urning type is reflective of sexology's focus on the sterility of same-sex desire.

The body of the Urning type standing before the craggy wall is in some ways only definable through the absences that become increasingly apparent in comparison with the other two figures in the group. The Urning figure lacks the defined breasts of the female type, yet there is no penis that we can see or that requires censorship as in the image of Lurich. The ambiguous figure's hips and shoulders are similar in width

⁴⁴ Fae Brauer, "Virilizing and Valorizing Homoeroticism: Eugen Sandow's Queering of Body Cultures Before and After the Wilde Trials," *Visual Culture in Britain* 18, no. 1 (2017): 38.

⁴⁵ Brauer, 38, 51.

as opposed to the male figure whose shoulders are much broader than his hips or the female figure, whose proportions are the inverse of the male's. The text on the central panel, "ratio between shoulder and hip width," is what ultimately ties these figures together for Hirschfeld, though the comparisons, as already observed, do not stop at the shoulders and hips.

Though the Urning type presents more pubic hair than the female type (who Wencker represents with none), there is yet an absence of the diamond-shaped arrangement of pubic hair that grows towards the navel, a trait Hirschfeld links to the male body.⁴⁶ Beyond this triangular patch of pubic hair, however, the figure's genitals remain unknowable. Whether the figure possesses external genitalia that has been temporarily concealed between clenched thighs, or whether internal genitalia is simply invisible in this image by nature of body-structure is unclear from this image. Other features typically used to differentiate between the male and female body are also obscured. The throat, where an Adam's apple may be pronounced in the male, is covered by a piece of fabric. The same fabric is also drawn over the subject's mouth and nose, denying access to facial features or hair growth that might be used to categorize the body as either male or female. The fabric, perhaps a scarf, also wraps partially around the top of the figure's head; while some short, dark curls extend above the forehead, the hair is similarly unhelpful in placing this individual in either category of a binary system.

⁴⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, trans. Michael A. Lombardi-Nash (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 415.

The central figure's pose, too, is notable. Several of the traits most associated with the Urning in sexology texts, such as feet and hands that are too small for 'normal' men, are also mostly obscured or completely cropped out of this photograph. If the model's hands rest on a surface on either side of their body, the cropping of the photo renders those supports invisible. Perhaps in Hirschfeld's view including the model's hands would move the needle too far in one direction or the other—towards male or female—for the viewer. Maybe anticipating this problem while the photograph was taken, the individual was asked to move their hands as far from their body as possible, thus explaining the unusual pose and the close cropping of the image. Though, one wonders whether the position of the arms also serves to stretch the chest taut, further minimizing the appearance of breasts. Regardless, it seems clear that a great deal of intentionality went into the presentation of this androgynous figure. Rather than a naturally and visibly distinct type, the Urning is a construction mediated by fabric, cropping, pose, and light.

The multiple interventions apparent in the production of the Urning type's photograph reveal the performative nature of the group. For the Urning type to appear completely distinct from the male and female type, certain aspects, such as the face, throat, and hands are obscured. The breasts and genitals may also be altered by the figure's stance, though these features—two of the most conspicuous signifiers of sex in the images of the male and female type—remain uncertain in the Urning type. Because the image of the Urning presents a perfectly ambiguous mix of male and female anatomy, the figure is distinguishable as neither male nor female, but as separate from both.

As my analysis above makes clear, these are images that go far beyond the description of biology, and should be recognized, primarily, for their reification of the expectations of appropriate gender expression based on cultural norms. Wencker's nymph is proportioned according to female beauty standards in the western pictorial tradition, and she lacks the pubic hair (or any index of its removal) typical to the adult body. The ideal female type, rather than a biological specimen, is constructed by Wencker in paint. Lurich is similarly constructing rather than reflecting the character of the ideal, masculine man. The ritualistic weightlifting, diet, and other habits required to build and maintain his muscular body are repeated acts of performance that constitute his identity as the virile male type. The Urning, too, is carefully constructed via pose, concealment, and cropping to present rather than represent the third sex. While the figures are meant to illustrate the biologically determined nature that binds sex, gender, and desire, the obvious labor that goes into the construction of the types presented undermines the essentialist view that dominated early sexology.⁴⁷

Texts like the *Yearbook* were responsible for dissemination and popularization of sexology's most influential theories. Latimer notes the importance of sexology texts—like those by Ellis, Hirschfeld, and others—on the circulation of sexology discourse within 'lesbian' communities in Paris; "although never the authors of such texts, [they] were motivated to read, discuss, circulate, translate, critique, and occasionally ridicule them."⁴⁸ The collective knowledge of sexology that accrued in

⁴⁷ Vernon A. Rosario, "Homosexual Bio-Histories: Genetic Nostalgias and the Quest for Paternity," *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 2, 12-13. Since the mid-nineteenth century, researchers have conducted studies to locate the biological source of homosexuality (i.e., the "gay gene"). Many homosexuals were invested in the biological explanation as well, as it would prove their desires to be natural rather than abnormal.

⁴⁸ Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 15.

such communities influenced the output of writers and artists. In Radclyffe Hall's book *The Well of Loneliness*, sexology texts play a central role. Midway through the book, the protagonist, Stephen, discovers books kept by her late father; readers know that Stephen's father searched in books for explanations about his daughter's apparently inherent masculinity and same-sex preference since childhood. Stephen finds a title by the nineteenth-century sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing amongst the books; upon reading Krafft-Ebing's text and her father's notes in the margins, Stephen cries out in frustration at her father's secrecy and withholding of such texts: "Oh, Father — and there are so many of us..."⁴⁹ Hall was well-read in contemporary sexology and deployed that knowledge in *The Well*. Similarly, Romaine Brooks—a friend of Hall's and of many queer Parisians in the early-twentieth century—deployed her familiarity with sexological theories in her portrait paintings of the 1920s. Where Hall utilized words to express the shared experience of non-normative gender and sexuality, Brooks used paint to mix masculine and feminine traits and visually represent the third sex.

⁴⁹ Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2014), 86.

“She’s My Kind of Woman”: Gender in the Paintings of Romaine Brooks

Tirza True Latimer opens her 2005 book, *Women Together/Women Apart*, by describing her first encounter as a young adult with Romaine Brooks’ 1923 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 7) at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.⁵⁰ Standing before the near-life-size painting and perceiving Brooks’ masculine attire and defiant stance as signals of lesbian identity, Latimer thought, “She’s my kind of woman.”⁵¹ The connection Latimer felt to Brooks was signaled visually through the artist’s top hat, collared shirt and jacket, cropped hair, confident posture, and unwavering gaze; Latimer needed no additional context to recognize Brooks’ gender-nonconformity as a symbol of her sexual identity. For Latimer, the portrait suggests a queer identity that in some ways supersedes historical and cultural gaps in knowledge, at least for those who possess the awareness required to read the signs. However, due to our temporal and cultural distance from the contexts in which Brooks painted her self-portrait, we risk misinterpreting these signs or applying false equivalencies to past phenomena that only appear to resemble our contemporary concepts of identity.

In her introduction, Latimer addresses the challenges that scholars of queer history face in organizing their subjects together despite gaps in cultural and temporal similarity; part of the problem, Latimer notes, is that “[uniting] same-sex

⁵⁰ Latimer, 1.

⁵¹ Latimer, 1.

relationships and cultures...under a single rubric [creates] an illusion of coherence and uniformity where inconsistency and diversity are indicated.”⁵² To circumvent this issue in her book, Latimer clarifies her choice of the term ‘lesbian’ to group “female subjects of homoerotic desire” under one umbrella.⁵³ Latimer consciously uses the term lesbian not to describe a “singular, historically or culturally transcendent... [sexual] orientation but the various alternatives to normative (patriarchal) relational and social models imagined by women” in Paris during the inter-war years.⁵⁴ Latimer also highlights the proliferation and rapid spread of queer terminology in the early decades of the twentieth century, claiming that terms like “invert,” “Uranian,” “homosexual,” and “lesbian” became increasingly interchangeable as the century progressed.⁵⁵ In Latimer’s model, the signifier ‘lesbian’ implies that the signified will always be a woman who loves women.

Alternatively, feminist theorist Monique Wittig stated in 1978 that lesbians are not women, as they do not engage in the heteronormative and patriarchal structures which define and uphold womanhood.⁵⁶ But what *is* a lesbian if not a woman? Wittig’s separation of lesbians from women is comparable to the view upheld by medical scientists and sexologists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

⁵² Latimer, 3.

⁵³ Latimer, 3.

⁵⁴ Latimer, 3.

⁵⁵ Chauncey, “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality,” 124-25. While some terminological slippage is evident in primary source materials of the period, there was a limit to the interchangeability of such terms. Chauncey problematizes the treatment of ‘sexual inversion’ and ‘homosexuality’ as interchangeable terms in the late-nineteenth century and explains that sexual inversion and homosexuality denoted two different phenomena. Where sexual inversion denoted the gendered inversion of a range of attributes including psychic interior, appearance, social behavior, and/or sexual desire, homosexuality referred narrowly to same-sex sexual object choice *al a* Freud’s 1905 essay on ‘sexual aberrations.’

⁵⁶ Jacob Hale, “Are Lesbians Women?” *Hypatia* 11, no. 2 (1996): 94.

centuries that only heterosexuals were legitimate men and women, whereas “sodomites” and “sapphists” constituted intermediate, or illegitimate, genders.⁵⁷ Indeed, Magnus Hirschfeld made a similar statement in his 1903 essay in the *Yearbook* when he argued that a “woman who desires women [is not a woman] in the common sense, but another, a separate, a third sex.”⁵⁸ If the lesbian is not a woman or a man, then surely the lesbian is a member of that separate, third sex. If Halberstam focuses on masculinity without men in *Female Masculinity*, I append a focus on femininity without women in the following interpretations of Brooks’ painted portraits as visual representations of the third sex. In other words, both masculinity and femininity become legible in Brooks’ self-portrait and in *Una, Lady Troubridge* because both the categories of man and woman are abandoned in pursuit of visualizing a third-sex identity.

By considering the accumulation, rather than the replacement, of theories and terms born from sexology at the turn of the century, I explore what it meant for Brooks—who was active in queer social circles in Paris that were well-read in (though not always in agreement with) the prolific theories of sexology—to paint the

⁵⁷Randolph Trumbach, “London’s Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture,” in *Third Sex, Third Gender*, 111-12.

⁵⁸ Hirschfeld, “Ursachen und Wesen des Uranismus,” 68. Hirschfeld revised his own theories considerably over the early decades of the twentieth century; he gradually appended various types to the category of sexual intermediates and challenged the idea he subscribed to in 1903 that same-sex desiring males were necessarily effeminate and females necessarily masculine. New theories about the nature of sex, gender, and desire were constantly proposed, many explicitly contradictory to prevailing concepts; as a result of this rapid and prolific postulation, hypotheses from the previous century were dismissed by many sexologists in the 1910s and 1920s. However, by Hirschfeld’s own admission in a text from 1913, outdated theories such as those posited in Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s 1886 text *Psychopathia Sexualis* were still prominent in various scientific circles nearly thirty years later. Likewise, competing theories advanced by medical professionals and sexologists in the early-twentieth century retained some level of authority in the biological and social sciences, and within queer communities that were specially invested in the theories that sought to define their existence.

self-portrait in which Latimer sees a lesbian woman. Brooks, who was acquainted with self-defined ‘inverts’ Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge and painted the latter, was no stranger to the theory of sexual inversion posited by Havelock Ellis and in many ways exhibited the traits of masculinity associated with his concept of the congenital female invert. Brooks’ long-term lover Natalie Barney—another American expatriate—opposed the sexual inversion theories espoused by sexologists like Ellis and “objected to modes of lesbian behavior that seemed to confirm [their] scientific theories.”⁵⁹ Barney hosted a literary salon at her home on rue Jacob in Paris, ushering authors and artists through her parlor over a period of sixty years.⁶⁰ While she invited a wide array of figures into her home regardless of gender or sexual identity—Hall and Troubridge were good friends and regular guests at the salon despite their alignment with Ellis’ inversion model, for example—Barney personally rejected “any form of dress or behavior that suggested homosexual women were really men trapped in women’s bodies.”⁶¹ This rejection evidently did not hinder Barney’s affection for the artist, however, as Brooks dressed and comported herself more masculinely than Barney, but their relationship lasted on and off for decades.

Though scholarship surrounding Brooks generally acknowledges the fluctuating hypotheses of sexology at the turn of the century, few studies consider Brooks outside the confines of “woman.” Though Brooks and Barney are both identified in Latimer’s text as lesbians, their conceptions of sexual identity and how it should or should not engage with the inversion model of sexuality clearly differed.

⁵⁹ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 11.

⁶⁰ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 9-10.

⁶¹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 11.

While Brooks and Barney share (presumably) similar biology and preference for members of the same-sex, their outward expressions of gender diverged quite drastically: Barney opted towards the “new vision of femininity that [emphasized] the lesbian’s relationship to pictorial traditions” whereas Brooks “[destabilized] the gendered categories of masculine and feminine” by combining them.⁶² Despite the proliferation of medical and literary terms used to categorize sexual identity, language alone could not provide a visible model for the lesbian/intermediate. In *The Sexual Perspective*, Cooper argues that “[w]hen artists who are homosexual are denied the means to express their sexuality, their art itself may become that means.”⁶³ Visual mediums, like Brooks’ portraits, allowed these debates to play out beyond the constraints of conflicting and inaccessible terminology.

Brooks’ 1923 self-portrait, with its Whistlerian color palette of muted greys, blacks, and blues, is characteristic of the artist’s portraits in the 1920s.⁶⁴ Red cheeks, painted lips, and a vibrant stitch on the lapel of Brooks’ jacket supply the only warmth in an otherwise cool and overcast scene. In front of a bleak cityscape, Brooks stands alone on a non-descript balcony. We see the uninviting world behind her, but she is separated from it by a short, gray wall. Leather gloves, sport coat, and riding cap on, she appears to be dressed for equine sport, though any true intention to ride is undisclosed. Beneath her hat, Brooks’ dark, short-cropped hair is just visible on either side of her face; short locks frame her cheekbones but do not extend below her ears. The hat’s brim cuts across Brooks’ brow and casts a deep shadow that veils her eyes.

⁶² Whitney Chadwick and Joe Lucchesi, *Amazons in the Drawing Room: The Art of Romaine Brooks* (Chesterfield, MA: Chameleon Books, 2000), 30.

⁶³ Cooper, Introduction to *The Sexual Perspective*, xx.

⁶⁴ Saslow, *Pictures and Passions*, 209.

Brooks' gaze is one-way: despite efforts to return her intense stare, the shadow cast across her eyes thwarts all attempts to match her dominance.

Brooks' self-portrait became her most reproduced and recognizable work. She displayed the work prominently in her home, occasionally guiding visitors' attention toward her portrait and stating, "Ça, c'est moi."⁶⁵ Knowing that the work is a self-portrait, we are not surprised by Brooks' assertion, "That's me." Likewise, her visitors probably had no trouble recognizing the physical similarities between the artist and the figure in the work. But it is Brooks' other description of the painting as a "portrait psychologique" that perhaps complicates the first statement, "That's me."⁶⁶ How does Brooks render her psychic interior visible in her painting? What, in Brooks' view, constitutes the "moi" in her self-portrait?

Perhaps in agreement with theories of sexual inversion, Brooks views her psychic interior to be inherently masculine and, in agreement with Ellis, understands her masculine psyche to be externally visible.⁶⁷ If, as Halberstam argues, masculinity only becomes legible when it leaves the white, male, middle class body,⁶⁸ then masculinity makes itself legible in Brooks' self-portrait since, despite her white body and independent wealth, Brooks is not male; yet the clothes with which Brooks adorns her female body in the self-portrait are recognizably masculine. But to assume that Brooks does not also "put on" femininity in a manner similar to her donning of masculine attire in this self-portrait is to conceive of Brooks as a fundamentally

⁶⁵ Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 43.

⁶⁶ Latimer, 3, 44.

⁶⁷ Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality," 131.

⁶⁸ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 2.

feminine subject.⁶⁹ Can there be a feminine subject, a feminine gender identity, that precedes Brooks' expression of femininity in the portrait? In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that one only becomes a gendered subject through the active expressions of gender; gender in turn is assumed to be the cause of those expressions.⁷⁰ In Brooks' self-portrait, she not only puts on the accoutrements of masculinity, but also the signs of femininity such as lipstick and a light application of rouge. There is no essential subject that precedes her intentional application of both masculine and feminine signs.⁷¹ As defined by Ulrichs, Ellis, and Hirschfeld, the Uranian/invert/third sex is neither woman nor man, but some psychic and physical mixture of both; Brooks' self-portrait serves as a space where the non-normative, ambiguous identity of the third sex is negotiated, and where that identity can be conceived in visual terms.

If interpreting Brooks' self-portrait as an experiment in visualizing the third sex—a disused and outmoded concept of identity by most present-day standards—seems overly speculative, I would counter that there are certain narratives that are not wholly retrievable through traditional evidence and analysis. Personal negotiations of non-normative gender and sexuality, often subject to social and/or legal ramifications within hegemonic binary systems if discovered, are not consistently or clearly established in the archives. Even when detailed records exist, an individuals' documented use of a particular term, such as 'lesbian,' does not foreclose their potential agreement with other theories born of sexology discourse at the turn of the

⁶⁹ Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 51. Latimer identifies Brooks self-portrait as representative of the "modern feminine subject."

⁷⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 34.

⁷¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 2014), 230.

century, nor can an individual label necessarily reflect all possible fluctuations of identity over time. Brooks was undoubtedly affected by and engaged in the discourse that claimed authoritative knowledge of the causes, effects, and manifestations of same-sex desire. Though she was close to Natalie Barney—a staunch opposer of the sexual inversion model—Brooks represented a combination of masculine and feminine features in her self-portrait that seem to agree with, or at least contend with, sexual inversion.

Brooks' painting of Una Troubridge is, like the self-portrait, often described as reflective of lesbian identity. Troubridge and her partner, Radclyffe Hall, subscribed to Ellis' theory of sexual inversion and both actively employed the term 'invert' to describe themselves.⁷² Ellis' concept of the congenital invert—the same-sex desiring individual who cross-dressed and showed obvious psychic traits of the opposite sex—was counter-balanced by the pseudo invert who, unlike the former, was less distinguishable from 'normal' women and men in appearance or attitude, and whose same-sex desire was not necessarily sexual.⁷³ In Hall and Troubridge's relationship, Hall fulfilled the role of congenital invert whereas Troubridge occupied the more traditionally feminine role of the pseudo, or 'passive,' invert. In her analysis of Hall and Troubridge's manner of dress, Katrina Rolley astutely points out that in Ellis' inversion model, there must always be a masculine and a feminine party in female same-sex relationships; this assertion separates same-sex desiring females—

⁷² Katrina Rolley, "Cutting a Dash: The Dress of Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge," *Feminist Review* 35, no. 35 (1990): 54.

⁷³ Havelock Ellis, "Same sex desire in women," *Alienist and Neurologist* 16 (1895): 147-48.

particularly the masculine party—from “real women” and attempts to recreate heteronormative structures in same-sex relationships.⁷⁴

Though Troubridge typically dressed femininely to fulfill the role of the more passive, pseudo invert to Hall’s congenital invert, Brooks’ portrait depicts the independent Troubridge in uncharacteristically masculine attire: the tailored suit; high, stiff collar; pin-stripe bottoms (pants or skirt?); and monocle highlight Troubridge’s wealth, certainly, but also her blurring of binary gender boundaries. As in Brooks’ self-portrait from the year before, Troubridge is depicted with red-painted lips and dusted pink cheeks; her Dutch boy haircut, too, was a popular cut for women that outlasted the popularity of the more masculine Eton crop typically sported by Hall. Rolley argues that Troubridge’s more masculine appearance in the portrait was necessary to make her sexual inversion legible in Hall’s absence.⁷⁵ After Hall’s death, Rolley notes, Troubridge wore her deceased partner’s clothes, perhaps in mourning, but also perhaps as a way of assuming the role of the ‘congenital invert’ to which she had always been the feminine foil during Hall’s life.⁷⁶

What the 1923 self-portrait and the painting of Troubridge represent are Brooks’ attempts to visualize an identity that rejects binary classifications of man and woman; she does so precisely by mixing masculine and feminine signs to create a hybrid. Brooks’ 1923 self-portrait and *Una, Lady Troubridge* not only function as symbols of a proto-lesbian identity, but also make visible the perceived relationship between psychic interior and physical body, a tension that colored sexology discourse

⁷⁴ Rolley, “Cutting a Dash,” 54-55.

⁷⁵ Rolley, 63-64.

⁷⁶ Rolley, 64.

not only in the scientific community, but also within queer communities, as evidenced by Barney's rejection of inversion models of sexuality.

(Sur)realism: Berenice Abbott and Claude Cahun's Photographs of Intermediate Types

Whether sexuality and its orientation are essential or socially constructed, inborn or chosen, is an ongoing debate, but not a new one.⁷⁷ Both positions have been taken up sporadically by advocates and condemners of same-sex desire since at least the mid-nineteenth century; though Hirschfeld argued for the biological basis of the third sex in part to naturalize and destigmatize same-sex desire, Nazis later took up a similar biological argument to justify their eradication of perceived degeneracy.⁷⁸ While biology and sociology argue essentialist and social-constructionist points primarily through text and statistics, visual culture played an equally important role in early-twentieth-century negotiations of nature versus culture, or, the substantive versus the performative identity.

Hirschfeld's arrangement of figures, though intended to highlight difference in the inborn nature and physical manifestations of sex, underscored the performativity not only of masculinity and femininity in the male and female types, but also of the Urning type, whose legibility (or, rather, ambiguity) as neither man nor woman required intervention at multiple stages of the image's construction. For Brooks, the 1923 self-portrait and the painting of Troubridge both actively depict traditionally

⁷⁷ John D. DeLamater and Janet Shibley Hyde, "Essentialism vs Social Constructionism in the Study of Human Sexuality," *The Journal of Sex Research* 35, no 1 (1998): 10-18; For more examples see: Michael Hannon, "Against heterosexuality," *First Things*, March 2014, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/03/against-heterosexuality>; "Large-Scale GWAS Reveals Insights into the Genetic Architecture of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior." *Science* 365, no. 6456 (2019): 1-8.

⁷⁸ Lauritsen and Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement*, 9.

masculine signs (dress, pose) and feminine ones (makeup, hair). In Brooks' works, the elements that are 'put on' do the work of visually expressing a mixture of masculinity and femininity and in this way might be seen as performing and constituting a masculine/feminine, or intentionally intermediate, identity. However, Brooks' comments about her self-portrait—"That's me," or, the painting is a "psychological portrait"—speak to the essential psychic interior that Brooks seeks to express in her painting. Likewise, Troubridge actively subscribed to the concept of sexual inversion which defined sexual identity as innate and correlate with physical exterior and psychic interior.

Though Butler's argument that gender expression constitutes and reifies the very identity it purports to reflect is taken in much feminist discourse of the twenty-first century as a sound theory, the concept is not a truth accepted universally or trans-historically. As noted, the very real tension between the biological or 'put-on' nature of sex, gender, and sexuality appears in Hirschfeld's group of figures and Brooks' portraits; this tension is similarly revealed in comparisons between Berenice Abbott's realist photography and Claude Cahun's surrealist and theatrical oeuvre.

Abbott's portraits of notably queer figures in Paris during the 1920s offer a complicated view of the self as both socially produced and fundamental. In Terri Weissman's 2011 book, *The Realisms of Berenice Abbott*, Flanner's 1927 portrait is the center of much analysis regarding Abbott's depiction of the 'unique individual.'⁷⁹ Weissman compares Abbott's portraits from 1920s Paris to Duchamp's photographs of Rose Selavy, the artist's gender-bent alter ego; Weismann homes in on the

⁷⁹ Weissman, *The Realisms of Berenice Abbott*, 67-69.

“fictitious and constitutive nature of” Rose who was not a subject in her own right, but a completely invented persona.⁸⁰ Invoking Butler’s theory of gender as performance, Weissman locates the difference between Duchamp’s fabrication of Rose and Abbott’s treatment of her subjects like Flanner. Weissman suggests that the trunk in Flanner’s portrait signals the separation between Flanner, the ‘subject,’ and the costume in which she is dressed, the pieces of which presumably belong to the trunk in question.⁸¹ Where in Duchamp’s invented persona of Rose “there is no ‘one’ that precedes her,” in Abbott’s portrait of Flanner, the latter is presented as “the ‘one’ who precedes the self’s, and gender’s, performance.”⁸² In Abbott’s quest to locate the unique individual, there is a certain endorsement of fundamental identity; Flanner is Flanner before the signs of gender have been applied and will be Flanner when the hat, jacket, and pants are returned to the trunk.

Flanner stated this much herself: Weissman notes Flanner’s handwritten text on the back of a proof from the series in which her portrait was taken.⁸³ Flanner makes clear in this text that the hat and general ensemble she wears in the photograph are not meant to parody Uncle Sam or serve as a “disguise;” she is “not dressed up, not posing,” but rather acting for the camera as she would in daily life.⁸⁴ While the masks Flanner appended to her hat “allude to surrealism’s concern with the double,” they more accurately represent an “outward sign of the self’s inner complexity.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Weissman, 68.

⁸¹ Weissman, 68.

⁸² Weissman, 68.

⁸³ Weissman, 53-55. Weissman includes Flanner’s written text: “Photo by Berenice Abbott.... It is NOT an Uncle Sam take off.... It was Nancy Cunard’s father’s ascot topper, which I ornamented with a cerise and a black mask for fancy dress in public....[while] dressed as a concierge....No disguise at all.”

⁸⁴ Weissman, 55.

⁸⁵ Weissman, 55.

What Abbott's realist practice resembles, then, is sexology's interest in the soul made visible in the flesh. While Abbott is interested in the relational and social production of identity in her portraits—that is, the self as something that becomes legible only in relation and exchange with others—there remains a sense of an essential self that through exchange is ultimately less produced than it is uncovered.⁸⁶ Abbott recognized photography's ability to capture only an isolated moment in an otherwise dynamic history, but her corporeal, undisguised, and frank subjects suggest a self that is unique and explicitly observable.

Contrary to the reflection of the unique individual in Abbott's realist photograph of Flanner, Cahun and her partner, Marcel Moore, focused on the theatre of identity and, more specifically, on the performance of gender and sexual identity. Circa 1914, Cahun wrote an unpublished manuscript, *Les jeux uraniens* (*Uranian Games*), which includes numerous allusions to and quotations from noted (or assumed) 'homosexual' figures like William Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, and Oscar Wilde.⁸⁷ Cahun's utilization of the term *uraniens* finds roots in Ulrichs' *Urning* of the 1860s, a sign of Cahun's familiarity with the foundations of sexology and interest in the concept of the theories of sexuality. Cahun translated Havelock "Ellis' 'Woman in Society' ...from English to French to be published in 1929."⁸⁸ Ellis was also (at least in some capacity) a member of Cahun's social circle, as he appears in Cahun's

⁸⁶ Weissman, 69.

⁸⁷ Tirza True Latimer, "Entre Nous: Between Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006): 202.

⁸⁸ Shaw and Cahun, *Exist Otherwise*, 67.

address book alongside Natalie Barney and Sylvia Beach,⁸⁹ whom Abbott photographed in 1926.

Cahun, and ostensibly Moore, blurred the lines of gender not only in their surrealist photography, but also in writing. Cahun often expressed in her poetry and literary projects a feeling of belonging somewhere between the prescribed definitions of man and woman; she oscillated between masculinity and femininity but felt that only “neuter” was unconditionally suitable.⁹⁰ Claude, a name specifically chosen by the artist because of its gender-neutrality in French, appears in newspapers of the 1920s prefaced by both the French abbreviations for *mademoiselle* (miss) and *monsieur* (mister).⁹¹ An avid writer, a player in the theatre company Le Plateau, and a colleague of Breton and the surrealists, Cahun was prolific and well-connected.⁹² Cahun and Moore used photography theatrically to explore the performativity and fluidity of gender. In home-made photographs, likely shot by Moore, Cahun adorned herself in various gendered costumes, often combining feminine and masculine types into one figure. In many ways Cahun participated in what we might call drag, the playful exaggeration of stereotypical traits attributed to either men or women.⁹³ Cahun

⁸⁹ Shaw and Cahun, 56.

⁹⁰ Cahun and Moore, *Aveux non avenus*, 176.

⁹¹ Albert Gavy-Bélédin, “revue mensuelle: arts, sciences, littérature, philosophie, commerce, industrie,” *La Gerbe* (Nantes), Feb. 1921; “Avant l’inauguration du ‘Plateau’,” *L’Intransigeant* (Paris), Mar. 19, 1929. In 1929, Cahun starred in *Barbe-Bleue* in the main female role; when newspapers listed the cast members, Cahun’s name was prefaced with the feminine title Mlle. In other publications, including a January 1921 issue of *La Gerbe*, Cahun’s name was prefaced either by the masculine title M., or MM. when Cahun was listed amongst several men.

⁹² Miranda Welby-Everand, “Imaging the Actor: The Theatre of Claude Cahun,” *Oxford Art Journal* 29 (2006): 4.

⁹³ For more on drag see: Judith Butler, “Subversive Bodily Acts,” in *Gender Trouble*, 107-203.

and Moore utilized photographs of Cahun taken throughout the pair's time in Paris to make photomontages for their surrealist book, *Avuex non avenus*, published in 1930.⁹⁴

In one photomontage, we see bits and pieces of Cahun's now well-known images of the late 1920s. An image from the series of photographs known as "I AM IN TRAINING DON'T KISS ME"—based on the text on Cahun's chest—is visible in the lower right corner (fig. 8). In another photo from the same series, Cahun holds a large dumbbell above her head, bending at the waist underneath the implied weight she holds aloft with one hand (fig. 9). Cahun's baggy shorts resemble those of a male athlete—the skin-tight, white top she wears looks like bare flesh and the dark, strategically placed circles on her chest complete the illusion that Cahun is shirtless. Due to the harsh lighting in this photograph, the text on Cahun's chest which reads "I AM IN TRAINING DON'T KISS ME" is not clearly visible. In other images in this series, we not only see the text, but also a pair of lips below and in the center of Cahun's torso. The lips serve a dual purpose: they allude to the text above, but in combination with the nipple-like circles on the chest, the lips and "eyes" form a face.

Cahun and Moore's playful, multi-faceted images like "I AM IN TRAINING" illuminate their experimentations with gender as a product of dress-up and performance. The photographs of Cahun lifting a massive dumbbell overhead mimic photographs of Eugen Sandow (fig. 10). Hailed as a "physically perfect" specimen of masculinity,⁹⁵ Sandow's image circulated widely at the end of the nineteenth century via *carte de visites*, cabinet cards, newspapers, fitness magazines, and even Edison's

⁹⁴ Shaw and Cahun, *Exist Otherwise*, 67-68.

⁹⁵ "Program from the week of March 12, 1894," Bial's Music Hall, New York.

Kinetoscope.⁹⁶ The image of Lurich used in Hirschfeld's group of figures in the 1903 *Yearbook* is similarly imitative of the photographs in which Sandow strikes a variety of poses that accentuate his muscularity and evoke classical sculpture. The phenomenon of the living statue that emerged from physical culture coincided with a shift in sculpture away from abstract mass and towards sensuous surfaces.⁹⁷ In the middle of the nineteenth century, the sculpted body became increasingly naturalistic rather than idealized, corporeal rather than abstract. The sculpted body came to life, and the living body resembled sculpture. The legitimate sculptural nude, however, was easily repurposed as a homoerotic, sensual experience in much the same way that Sandow's photographs, under the auspices of imperial physical culture and masculine virility, became homoerotic emblems in the right hands.⁹⁸

Though Cahun references manly bodybuilders like Sandow in this image through her pose and costume—and perhaps teasingly alludes to the homoerotic appeal attached to such images of Sandow—the blown-up, heart-shaped beauty marks and the stylish Eton crop hairstyle cite fashionable women of the 1920s, particularly the iconic vamps, flappers, and burlesque entertainers of the period. Female burlesque entertainers' semi-nude performances and the legacy of male physical culture icons like Sandow—who resembled the heroic nude sculpture of antiquity and embodied manliness—emphasize the sexual dimorphic qualities that define the relationship between the ideal man and woman in western thought. In the context of the early-

⁹⁶ W. K.-L. Dickson, photographer, *The souvenir strip of Edison Kinetoscope Eugene i.e. Eugen Sandow, the modern Hercules // taken and copyrighted by W.K.L. Dickson*, 1894, photograph, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013645430/>.

⁹⁷ Hatt, "Thoughts and Things," 44.

⁹⁸ Hatt, 48-49. Hatt specifically names John Addington Symonds, who received a photograph of Sandow by way of his friend, Edmund Gosse.

twentieth century, as living, semi-nude bodies of the ideal (if hyper-sexualized) male and female body became increasingly visible, Cahun's chest in "I AM IN TRAINING" serves as the no man's land between Cahun's performance of athletic masculinity and allusions to feminine style. The faux nipples might be those of an extremely masculine man or a feminine woman, thus confusing the viewers' perception of Cahun's body. Just as the chest of the Urning type in Hirschfeld's arrangement leaves viewers questioning the subject's sex, Cahun adopts both popular displays of masculinity and femininity that leave the chest, a site where sex identification frequently takes place, ambiguous. The artist's name gives nothing away in terms of gender identity, and viewers are left to puzzle over the line on which Cahun stands between man and woman.

In Cahun and Moore's oeuvre—photography, performance, and writing—gender is theatrically experimented with through the lens of different 'types.' Cahun's photographs like those in the "I AM IN TRAINING" series are, therefore, less portraits of Cahun and more playful exaggerations of masculine and feminine types—the manly bodybuilder and the modern (though still feminine) flapper. Cahun takes both male and female stereotypes and combines them into something new, something both masculine and feminine and yet neither at the same time. In the combination of masculinity and femininity, Cahun plays out the concept of the third sex, a concept of which she was certainly familiar. And yet, Cahun presents the combination of masculine and feminine features as overtly performative, not as natural expressions of innate qualities. Not only does she literally 'put on' the accoutrements that make her legible as masculine and feminine icons, but she also stages a scene in which she is

performing the act of weightlifting which, for Sandow and other musclemen, was an ongoing performance and production of masculinity. In much the same way, makeup functions as a ritualistic application of femininity that renders rather than reflects a feminine gender identity.

Cahun and Moore, though working in the same atmosphere of sexology discourse and mercurial definitions of identity as Brooks and Abbott, anticipate Butler's theory of gender performance as constitutive of identity more than they seem to concur with the essentializing theories of contemporary sexology. By mixing masculine and feminine signs, Cahun and Moore engage with theories of the third, or intermediate, sex, but they challenge the concept's biological foundations through their highly satirical and theatrical performances of pronounced gendered types. Rather than a stable self who precedes the performance of gender, Cahun's figure in "I AM IN TRAINING" emphasizes the recital of gendered acts that ultimately constitute rather than reflect identity. True to surrealism's interest in the fractured subject, "I AM IN TRAINING," and the photomontages in *Aveux non avenus* more broadly, present Cahun as an unstable, multiplied figure. Where Abbott reveals a combination of the preconstructed and socially constructed self in her photographic portraits, Cahun and Moore reflect more exclusively on the latter. Whereas Flanner wears no disguise, Cahun's masks are innumerable.

Conclusion

This thesis broadens the scope of inquiry in early-twentieth-century portrayals of gendered bodies to acknowledge the tension between temporally and culturally distinct conceptions of gender and sexual identity—such as the third sex at the turn of the twentieth century—and the sweeping, binary conceptions that continue to guide Western thought and that dominate many studies of Western art—that is, the binary oppositions of man/woman, male/female, and homo/heterosexuality. Without suggesting that all artists of the early-twentieth century who are now referred to as ‘homosexual’ should be recategorized, I argue that visual works produced by Hirschfeld, Brooks, Abbott, and Cahun both navigate and produce complex conceptions of gender and sexual identity that eschew a transhistorical, binary framework of difference. By illuminating the entanglements of sexology and artistic image production in the early-twentieth century, we can see how visual culture served as an important site for the construction—by sexologists and artists alike—of gender-nonconforming subjectivity.

This thesis represents a first step towards the larger project of revisiting queer histories of art and situating them within their specific cultural and historical frameworks with special attention to the nuanced and interdisciplinary discourse about the nature of human identity as it relates to the body, behavior, and desire. This thesis focuses narrowly on a small group of early-twentieth-century artists identified as women and lesbians in most art historical scholarship not because they are the only

or most important artists creating images of gender-nonconformity around the turn of the century, but because they are broadly representative of a type of queer individual—financially independent, female, white, Paris-based—responding to the theoretical and visual discourse of sexology by producing artistic works about third-sex subjectivity. A more extensive future project might: engage a more diverse spectrum of subjects (i.e., artists who are non-white, non-wealthy and/or identified in scholarship as homosexual men); examine a longer history; and move beyond the borders of continental Europe. Additionally, the concept of “thirdness” seems especially open to further study, not only in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality, but as a socially constructed space for anything (or anyone) that deviates from binary ideals.

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