Trapped in the Wrong Body? Forced Sex Change and Reembodiment in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Mygale*

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**Abstract**  
This article studies two novels of involuntary sex change in order to critique the trope of bodily entrapment. In Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and Thierry Jonquet’s *Mygale* (1984), the protagonists are forced to become female, but they do not remain men trapped in women’s bodies. By highlighting the trans, female, and narrative reembodiments in these two novels, I argue that the two texts unsettle the notion of sex/gender dimorphism embedded in the discourse of being trapped in the “wrong body.” Together, the specific reembodiments in the two novels suggest a paradigm shift from genital, binary, and identitarian concepts of sex and gender to open-ended, contingent, but not necessarily post-binary concepts of sex and gender.

**Keywords**  
body modification, involuntary sex change, reembodiment, sex/gender dimorphism, wrong body

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In the early discourse of transsexuality, “being in the wrong body” was a key trait in identifying true transsexuals. In *Conundrum*, for example, Jan Morris begins her male-to-female (MTF) transsexual autobiography with this statement: “I was three or perhaps four years old when I realized that I had been born into the wrong body, and should really be a girl” (3). Although Morris acted masculine in her childhood and later married a woman and had children, she traveled to Casablanca in 1972 to modify her “wrong body.” In validating her gender transition, Morris feels elated about her postoperative body: “Now when I looked down at myself I no longer seemed a hybrid or chimera: I was all of a piece, as proportioned once again, though in a different kind. . . . I was made, by my own lights, normal” (141).² Similarly, the postoperative MTF transsexual Christine Jorgensen claims in a family letter that “Nature made a mistake, which [she has] had corrected” (115). In such autobiographies, transsexuals often “forge the narrative with a scene of gender transition that mimics the apparent ease, naturalness, and finality of sex as it is usually given at birth” (Salamon 178-79). In *Second Skins*, Jay Prosser hence concludes, “If the goal of transsexual transition is to align the feeling of gendered embodiment with material body,” the image of bodily entrapment “suggests how body image is radically split off from the material body in the first place, how body image can feel sufficiently substantial as to persuade the transsexual to alter his or her body to conform to it” (69).

The idea of bodily entrapment, however, is based on a dimorphic, predominantly genital view of sex and gender. In this framing, transsexuals see themselves, or are seen, as suffering from a body-mind misalignment (the body is of one sex, and the mind is of the “opposite” sex), and the concept of gender dysphoria considers the preoperative body so uninhabitable a space that it requires medical interventions for a body-mind realignment. Such a framing has profound ramifications. First, the immaterial mind dictates the material body, and the “placing [of] gender in an inaccessible interior shores up the myth that gender is both given and unchangeable” (Crawford 99). Second, prospective transsexuals often had to exaggerate or lie about their discomfort with their assigned sex and gender. As Sandy Stone points out, “‘Wringing the turkey’s neck,’ the ritual of penile masturbation just

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² “Gender transition,” “sex change,” and “surgery” are not always synonymous. A butch woman may undergo top (breast) surgery but still identify as a woman, while a trans man could transition by adopting the male pronoun “he” without undergoing any body modification. Sex change is largely defined by bottom (genital) surgery, though this is a contested concept. As Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah point out, sex change initially “referred specifically to reproductive capacity and function, and it was imagined in purely negative and subtractive terms. A person’s ‘sex’ was ‘changed’ when they could no longer contribute to procreation” (161).
before [a trans woman’s] surgery, was the most secret of secret traditions. To acknowledge so natural a desire would be to risk ‘crash landing’; that is, ‘role inappropriateness’ leading to disqualification” (161). Third, transsexuals would tend to, or be told to, regard any body modification less than genital surgery as inadequate. If prospective MTF transsexuals could relieve their gender dysphoria by donning female clothes, they were not seen as really trapped in the wrong body.²

By critiquing “wrong body” discourse, I do not intend to discredit transsexuals’ feeling of gender dysphoria or their desire for surgery. Although transsexual women do not menstruate, they are women. Although transsexual men do not produce sperm, they are men. The point is to open up definitions of “man” and “woman.” Recently, trans critics have complicated the genital view of sex and gender or proposed alternatives. Kate Bornstein, for example, explores the diversity of chromosomal karyotypes, hormonal levels, and other “fickle definitions of gender” in sex determination (57). To define sex by a dimorphic concept of genital anatomies (a man has a penis; a woman has a vagina) fundamentally overlooks the complexity of sex. Similarly, Jacob Hale parses thirteen nonintegrated characteristics (primary and secondary sex characteristics, reproductive organs, gender identity, and so on) of the category “woman” (107-13). Instead of reaching an agreed-upon definition of “man” and “woman,” recent trans critics emphasize the contingency of sex/gender categories. While some people privilege the genital definition of sex and gender, others honor self-determination. And the recent reconfiguration of facial feminization surgery (FFS) as the key to “transform[ing] patients’ bodily sex” even advocates a social model of sex and gender: “if the goal of trans- surgical intervention was to help [trans women] realize their identity as women, the most effective site of that intervention was not focused on the generally concealed shape of their genitals but on the visible characteristics of their face” (Plemons 2).³ For trans women who undergo FFS, the issue is not that they inhabit the wrong body, but that they want “to be recognized and treated as a woman in the course of everyday life” (Plemons 2).

In addition to the nongenital, contingent, social, and self-determined views of

² For current views of trans surgery, see Plemons and Straayer. For more discussions about the assumptions and pitfalls of “wrong body” discourse, see Bettcher; J. Carter; Engdahl; Halberstam 141-73; Hayward 73; Salamon 74-75; Smith 101-02; Spade 321.

³ In contrast, some people want medical transition (gender-affirming surgery) without social transition (sex change in legal documents, gender role change, and so on). According to Katherine Rachlin, people tend to assume that surgery is more invasive and more advanced than social transition, but “[c]laiming a transgender identity and undergoing a social gender change in the world of family and work is also a huge and irreversible undertaking that may result in loss of friends, family, and career” (239).
sex and gender, other critics explore transgender capacity. According to David J. Getsy, “Transgender capacity is the ability or the potential for making visible, bringing into experience, or knowing genders as mutable, successive, and multiple” (47). Theorizing transsexuals’ gender transition along with the starfish’s bodily regeneration, Eva Hayward argues that both transsexuals and starfish are capable of “reshaping and reworking bodily boundaries” after some bodily cuts (76). Similarly, Jules Gill-Peterson sees sex reassignment surgery and all other desired surgeries not as conforming to or achieving sex/gender or corporeal normativity but as “participati[ng] in the body’s open-ended technical capacities” (407). And Lucas Crawford argues that Virginia Woolf’s 1928 novel Orlando: A Biography “defines transgender as a high capacity for feeling empathy” (88). That is, gender transition is not about dysphoria or entrapment, but about “the empathy required to move the human subject away from itself—to project or feel it ‘into’ something else that does not yet exist” (Crawford 92). Overall, these diverse views of sex and gender suggest that “wrong body” discourse crudely sanctifies a genital-based enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism. Since early MTF transsexuals could not transition unless they felt trapped in their male bodies and longed for genital surgery, “wrong body” discourse made no room for trans subjects who identified as nonbinary, who pursued nongenital transition, or who conceptualized sex and gender in genital yet nonconformist fashions (for example, eunuch-identified individuals).

With these diverse views of sex and gender in view, this paper explores two novels of involuntary sex change in order to critique “wrong body” discourse from the perspective of sex/gender reembodiment. If the early discourse of transsexuality claimed to cure transsexuals of their bodily entrapment by genital surgery, it seems that involuntary sex change makes people who were previously at ease with their male-, female-, or intersex-born bodies become trapped in their new bodies. In Angela Carter’s 1977 novel The Passion of New Eve (hereafter abbreviated as Passion) and Thierry Jonquet’s 1984 novel Mygale, however, entrapment is shown to be too limited a view to fully understand the protagonists. In these two novels, both male-born protagonists are forced to become women for abusing women: in Passion, plastic surgeon Mother turns the British womanizer Evelyn into Eve; in Mygale, French surgeon Richard Lafargue turns Vincent Moreau into another Eve because Vincent and his friend Alex Barny gang-rape Richard’s daughter, Viviane. Yet, the postoperative experiences of the two Eves suggest the complexity of sex/gender reembodiments rather than the plight of bodily entrapment. In Passion, Eve is better described as Eve/lyn, for neither Eve’s current female anatomy nor Evelyn’s previous male gender identity prevails. Anatomically female and potentially fertile, Eve/lyn
calls themself “the Tiresias of Southern California” (68), entertains fitful thoughts and memories of Evelyn, and develops a hermaphroditic reembodiment after their consummation with Tristessa de St. Ange—a female Hollywood star who turns out to be anatomically male.\textsuperscript{4} To reduce Eve/lyn’s reembodiments to a sheer state of bodily entrapment overlooks Eve/lyn’s ongoing negotiation with the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism. In \textit{Mygale}, Richard eases Vincent’s transition by domesticating Vincent through art and culture and by reinforcing Vincent’s dependence on him. As a result, Eve becomes a transfeminine, ghostly being who counters Richard’s surgery by painting him as a transvestite whore. At the same time, a second-person narrator—apart from the third-person narrator who recounts Richard’s life with Eve and Alex’s life on the lam—emerges to describe Vincent’s transition to Eve.\textsuperscript{5} This disembodied being evades the dimorphic, genital definition of sex and gender. Together, the trans, female, and narrative reembodiments in these two novels produce new knowledge about sex, gender, and sexuality.

Although Eve/lyn and Eve do not wish to regain their male bodies, involuntary sex change is not to be sanctioned. Even though Mother and Richard seek retribution for abused women, it is atrocious to change others’ sex against their will.\textsuperscript{6} At the

\textsuperscript{4} Carter uses the male pronoun “he” for the preoperative Evelyn and the postrevelatory Tristessa (that is, after the revelation of Tristessa’s male genitalia), and she uses the female pronoun “she” for the postoperative Eve and the prerevelatory Tristessa. Such usages either privilege a genital definition of sex and gender or assume the existence of Tristessa’s female genitalia because of Tristessa’s feminine looks and mien. In contrast, I use the nonbinary singular pronoun “they” for Eve/lyn and Tristessa because they are at odds with the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism. The new usage of the nonbinary “they” has been in practice in academic journals and online dictionaries, such as \textit{TSQ} and \textit{Merriam-Webster}. In \textit{Passion}, Eve/lyn involuntarily undergoes genital modification and strongly feels that they pass as a woman instead of simply being a woman. Tristessa, though male-born, wants to become a woman. While it seems appropriate to apply the female pronoun “she” to Tristessa, I use “they” not to trivialize Tristessa’s female identification or to police the she-they borders, but to draw attention to Tristessa’s androcentric concepts of womanhood.

\textsuperscript{5} In contrast to \textit{Passion}, there is a clearer break between the preoperative Vincent and the postoperative Eve in \textit{Mygale}. To reflect such a break, I use the male pronoun “he” for Vincent, as opposed to the female pronoun “she” for Eve. However, the Vincent/Eve division is crude; the binary pronouns cannot name the being transitioning from Vincent to Eve. I also use the nonbinary “they” for the disembodied second-person narrator.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Passion} and \textit{Mygale} also raise the ethical question of whether Eve/lyn and Eve feel sorry for abusing women before their sex change. When the lout Zero rapes Eve/lyn, Eve/lyn recalls Evelyn’s former role as an abuser: “I felt myself to be, not myself but he [Zero]; and the experience of this crucial lack of self, which always brought with it a shock of introspection, forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation” (98). In contrast, Jonquet deliberately evades the issue of Eve’s remorse: Eve hides Alex’s identity to avenge herself for Richard’s abuse (124). Critics and journalists have also discussed various real-life cases of
same time, though Eve/lyn and Eve do not feel trapped in their new bodies, the genital view of sex and gender is still at play. My point is to see how ideas of sex and gender are contextually contingent, not to generalize about sex/gender fixity or fluidity. Too often the privileging of a genital or self-determined view of sex and gender forecloses the intermeshing, ongoing, and sometimes jarring negotiation among different concepts of sex and gender. Sex and gender could be anatomical, hormonal, gonadal, chromosomal, surgical, psychological, legal, linguistic, sartorial, performative, phenomenological, aesthetic, prosthetic, social, and transhuman, among other valences or realms. These valences or realms do not always reconcile, and the tensions or incongruities among them are not always to be frowned upon. Sex and gender are also often racialized or transmuted across borders; though self-determination matters, representations of sex and gender are not solely up to the subjects themselves. In what follows, I address how the specific reembodiments in *Passion* and *Mygale* suggest a paradigm shift from genital, binary, and identitarian concepts of sex and gender to open-ended, contingent, but not necessarily post-binary concepts of sex and gender.

To study *Passion* and *Mygale* in terms of reembodiment is also to attend to other characters’ negotiation with multiple ideas of sex and gender. Male-born, Tristessa longs for surgical body modification. Although Mother rejects their request, to call Tristessa male on account of their male genitalia ignores their female identification and female embodiment through clothes and mannerisms. Yet to simply see Tristessa as a woman eludes their problematic view of womanhood. At the same time, Mother, Mother’s daughter Lilith, and Mother’s priestesses of Cybele also unsettle the anatomical definition of “woman.” Lilith, who first appears as a black model and performer called Leilah, becomes pregnant with Evelyn’s child and allegedly loses her womb after a botched abortion. By the end of *Passion*, she—like Mother’s priestesses—has also removed one breast for Mother as a “many-breasted Artemis” (74). To describe Mother’s circle of women as becoming more or less feminine in accordance with their proliferation or ablation of female attributes (breasts, womb) is to reinforce the connection between womanhood and certain sex characteristics

involuntary body modification. On intersex newborns or children who undergo genital correction surgery, see Dreger, “History”; Chase. On David Reimer, who was forced to become a girl because of a botched circumcision during his infancy, see Butler, *Undoing Gender* 57-74; Colapinto; Diamond and Sigmundson; Fausto-Sterling 66-71; Kessler 6-7; Rosario 274-76. On Indian girls turned into boys because their parents cannot afford high marriage costs and dowries in the future, see Nelson. On white gay conscripts who were forced to change sex in apartheid South Africa, see Swarr 16. On sex offenders who are physically or chemically castrated, see Cochrane; Najmabadi 22.
without considering the fine line between abundance and grotesquery, the dilemma where devotion requires self-mutilation, and the possibility of transgender capacity. Unsettling dimorphic sex/gender categories without completely abolishing them, Tristessa, Mother, Mother’s priestesses, and Lilith are more than cross-dressed men or deviant women.

**Trans, Tiresian, and Hermaphroditic Reembodiments in The Passion of New Eve**

As first glance, Eve/lyn and Tristessa seem trapped in their material bodies: one is forced to become a woman at odds with Evelyn’s male identity; the other is forced to remain a man despite their wish to become a woman. But the sex change from Evelyn to Eve actually creates Eve/lyn, a trans subject among other female and trans reembodiments in the novel. When Eve/lyn marries Tristessa, they raise further questions about what “man” and “woman” are. Although their marriage looks like a union between Eve as an MTF transsexual and Tristessa as a female impersonator, such a reading is too mired in the genital definition of sex and gender to register their trans, Tiresian, and hermaphroditic reembodiments.

Before I expound on Eve/lyn’s and Tristessa’s reembodiments, it is crucial to assess the genital definition of sex and gender. Many critics have read Eve/lyn as a transsexual woman as opposed to Tristessa as a transvested man. Catrin Gersdorf, for example, sees Eve/lyn as an involuntary MTF transsexual who “embodies the disparity between physiological sex and psychological gender” (50). Roberta Rubenstein sees Eve/lyn as “violently transformed into the female object of [Evelyn’s] own male fantasies of the feminine” (105). And Merja Makinen sees Tristessa as “a male cross-dresser who has no experience whatsoever of being a real woman” (157). Privileging the genitals in discussions of sex and gender, these critics reduce Eve/lyn’s postoperative body to a state of undesirable contradiction, dismiss Tristessa’s wish for sex reassignment surgery, and overlook Evelyn’s boyhood fascination with Tristessa as a Hollywood female star when Zero pairs Eve/lyn up with Tristessa as a man in female attire. Instead, a reading through the lens of trans reembodiment might ask: What if Tristessa sleeps with Eve/lyn as an Evelyn who realizes his “heterosexual” sexual fantasy with “[t]he most beautiful woman in the world” (A. Carter 2), or as an Eve who engages in “homosexual” activity with another trans woman? And what if Eve/lyn sleeps with Tristessa as a trans woman with a penis? Eve/lyn and Tristessa are not trapped in their material bodies, after all.

In contrast to genital-based interpretations, Rachel Carroll develops a more
complicated yet still problematic reading. According to Carroll, Tristessa is “a non-operative male-to-female transsexual passing as a woman” (243). Acknowledging Tristessa’s wish to be a woman, Carroll suggests that a trans woman does not have to undergo hormonal and surgical body modification to identify as a (trans) woman. But the phrase “passing as a woman” implies that Tristessa is not a woman after all. If a non-operative trans woman is a woman, she does not have to pass; she just is.

More questions arise when Carroll discusses whether Eve/lyn and Tristessa are authentic women. According to Carroll, Eve/lyn’s probable pregnancy at the end of the novel suggests the emergence of Eve “as an ‘authentic’ woman against whom the inauthenticity of the elective transsexual, Tristessa, is contrasted” (244). For Carroll, “Eve’s inferred pregnancy promises to authenticate her status as a biological woman, problematically reviving motherhood as the final sanction of ‘true’ femininity” (252). Although Carroll takes issue with the heteronormative correlation between femininity and motherhood, she validates Eve/lyn’s womanhood by their pregnancy. Yet, to define women by reproduction would render the allegedly wombless Lilith not a woman anymore. Carroll also argues that Tristessa’s probable impregnation of Eve/lyn “acts to affirm Tristessa’s maleness—and, by implication, her heterosexuality—and in doing so invalidates her transgendered identity” (252). In fact, a trans woman could also be a father, as Lola (Toni Cantó) does in Pedro Almodóvar’s 1999 film *All About My Mother*. Tristessa could be a woman and lesbian with a penis, as they feel strongly about their female identity and sleep with the female-bodied Eve/lyn. If Tristessa is male and heterosexual for potentially impregnating Eve/lyn, the barren misogynist Zero is not a man. Although Carroll tries to move beyond a genital view of sex and gender, to discuss Eve/lyn and Tristessa in terms of authenticity fails to consider trans subjects’ various degrees of body modification and various forms of relationships. When Lilith speculates on Eve/lyn’s potential pregnancy with Tristessa’s child, she claims, “Your baby will have two fathers and two mothers” (183). For Lilith, Eve/lyn’s current female anatomy does not override their male past as Evelyn, and Tristessa is both the father and mother because of their male anatomy and female gender identity.

Instead of reaching an integrated gender and sexual identity, Eve/lyn highlights the multivalence and porosity of sex/gender dimorphism. Initially, there is a split between Eve/lyn’s female body (Eve) and male subjectivity (Evelyn): “when I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines” (71).

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7 According to Alison Lee, in the mirror scene “Evelyn is the narrator-focalizer, and Eve, the
Eve, Eve/lyn even feels aroused despite the absence of a penis: “I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And—how can I put it—the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself” (71). But soon Eve emerges as “an amnesiac” with “nothing to remember” (74). Faced with Zero’s gender policing, Eve/lyn has to pass as a woman. Their feminization hence attests to “[Simone] de Beauvoir’s statement that ‘[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’” (Trevenna 271). When Eve/lyn behaves “too much like a woman,” Zero ironically starts to wonder whether Eve/lyn feigns femininity as a “tribade” (98; emphasis in original). (Earlier, Zero called Tristessa “a dyke” for a similar reason [88].) Here, Zero’s suspicion evokes Joan Riviere’s “Womanliness as a Masquerade.” Building on Sándor Ferenczi’s claim that homosexual men might exaggerate their heterosexuality as a ruse, Riviere argues that “women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and retribution feared from men” (91). For Zero, Eve/lyn and Tristessa act inordinately feminine to overcompensate for their butch lesbianism. In fact, Eve/lyn is an MTF transsexual who experiences multiple reembodiments, and Tristessa, a man who wants to be a woman.

Feeling like passing as a woman, Eve/lyn sometimes relapses into a male subject position without reclaiming their male identity. If the earlier cock in Eve/lyn’s head registers a phantom penis in Eve/lyn’s current female body, the fitful returns of Evelyn’s boyhood memory now also throw Eve/lyn off. When Eve/lyn catches Zero’s wedding ring like a cricketer, the act animates Evelyn’s boyhood memory in prep school. Yet, Eve/lyn does not use such a memory to retrieve a male subjectivity; instead, they feel like “remembering a film” performed by someone else (89). Overall, Eve/lyn’s sex/gender positions are situational and contingent; they do not stay or crystalize into a firm subject position. In the beginning, Eve/lyn still thinks like Evelyn despite the absence of the penis. Later, Eve/lyn has to pass as a woman in order to survive Zero’s despotism. And the unexpected return of Evelyn’s boyhood memory also makes it impossible for Eve/lyn to be Eve, who is supposed to be a woman through and through. Recognizing that “[m]asculine and feminine are correlatives,” Eve/lyn nevertheless wonders whether these qualities “have anything to do with Tristessa’s so long neglected apparatus or [their] own factory fresh incision and engine-turned breasts” (146). Although their behavioral feminization seems to meet a normative woman’s body-mind alignment, Eve/lyn denaturalizes anatomical

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focalized object,” but “the retrospective narrator, Eve, is [also] narrating while Evelyn focalizes on Eve” (242, 243). I would distinguish the nonbinary retrospective narrator Eve/lyn from the male focalizer Evelyn and the female focalized object Eve here. The narrator is irreducible to the Eve under Evelyn’s male gaze.
concepts of sex and gender: they act feminine because of Zero’s surveillance and tyranny, not because they are biologically female now.  

With anatomical determinism unraveled, the novel still shows how “[a] change in the appearance will restructure the essence” (65). At first, Eve/lyn—speaking from Evelyn’s male perspective—feels “amputated” and “castrated” by the sex change (66, 67). Although Mother engineers female body parts for them, Eve/lyn pays attention to their excised penis and testicles. But they soon rename the procedure “the Dies Sanguinis [Latin: Day of Blood], the day of voluntary castration in honour of Cybele” (67). Channeling Attis’s self-castration, Eve/lyn starts to see themselves as an “artificial changeling, the Tiresias of Southern California” (68). When Zero has the female-bodied Eve/lyn put on an evening suit and marry Tristessa in female attire, Eve/lyn describes themselves as being in “double drag”: “Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a girl and now disguised as a boy again, like Rosalind in Elizabethan Arden” (129). The similarity between the Elizabethan boy actor and Eve/lyn is limited. In As You Like It, a boy actor plays the heroine Rosalind, who then puts on a male persona, Ganymede, to teach Orlando how to court Rosalind, but the male persona inadvertently attracts the shepherdess Phebe.  

In Passion, however, Eve/lyn cannot just take off their double drag to reveal who they really are: in an evening suit “I only mimicked what I had been; I did not become it” (129). For Eve/lyn, they and Tristessa are now “doubly masked” and “unknown even to [themselves]” (132). They cannot retrieve their original or preferred gender identities: Evelyn as a man, Tristessa as a woman. Living in a reembodied form, Eve/lyn ultimately dismisses the idea of gender reversal surgery. When Lilith gives Eve/lyn “the set of genitals which had once belonged to Evelyn” (183), Eve/lyn shrugs off the suggestion of detransition. 

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8 In denaturalizing femininity, both cis and trans women could also see their femininity as impersonation. While Ramona Curry calls Hollywood star Mae West “a female female impersonator” due to her excessive femininity being a kind of drag (111), Jodie Taylor highlights the existence of bio queens—that is, “biological females or female-identified individuals who consciously perform hyper-femininity and can crudely be described as female drag queens” (98).  

9 Critics have explored the multiple erotic valences in As You Like It. Valerie Traub argues that “the boy actor works, in specific Shakespearean comedies, as the basis upon which homoeroticism can be safely explored—working for both actors and audiences as an expression of non-hegemonic desire within the confines of conventional, comedic restraints” (118). Marjorie Garber sees Phebe’s infatuation with Rosalind in the guise of Ganymede as some figuration of “female/female homoeroticism” (76). And Stephen Orgel emphasizes the woman-boy equation when Rosalind plays Ganymede: “here the idea of the boy displacing the woman appears in its most potentially threatening form, the catamite for whom Jove himself abandons his marriage bed” (57).
To understand Eve/lyn’s double drag and other reembodiments, Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity is of help. According to Butler, “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender identity itself—as well as its contingency” (Gender Trouble 175; emphasis in original). Using drag to explain gender performativity is not to say that one may act masculine or feminine at will or that female impersonators are equivalent to women. Instead, it is to denaturalize the association between men and masculinity, on the one hand, and, on the other, between women and femininity. For Butler, “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Gender Trouble 179; emphasis in original). In double drag, Eve/lyn comes to a similar conclusion about the citationality of gender: Eve/lyn and Tristessa are “beings composed of echoes” (A. Carter 132). Immaterial as it sounds, the idea of echo does not negate the anatomy. Instead, it opens ideas of sex and gender to nongenital complications of (re)embodiment. If Eve/lyn denaturalizes the anatomical definition of sex and gender by passing as a woman and recalling Evelyn’s memories, Tristessa embodies femininity to such an extent that they invent memories of being a female acrobat and constantly play roles of suffering women in films without undergoing sex reassignment surgery. Their reembodiments not only provincialize the genital definition of sex and gender but also debunk the concept of bodily entrapment: Eve/lyn is not a man trapped in a woman’s body, nor is Tristessa a woman trapped in a man’s body.

At different points Eve/lyn refers to themself and Tristessa as Tiresias, but they depart from the mythological prototype. In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Tiresias transforms into a woman for striking a pair of copulating snakes with his staff. After seven years, Tiresias strikes the same pair again and becomes male again. Having “experienced love from both angles” (3.323), he is then asked to settle a dispute between Jupiter and Juno about whether men or women enjoy more pleasure in bed.10 According to Linda Williams, Tiresias’s verdict as a man who is once a woman suggests “a phallic perspective”: a man “can journey to the unknown other and return, satiated with knowledge and pleasure, to the security of the ‘self’” (279). In Passion, however, Eve/lyn first calls themself “the Tiresias of Southern California” after their

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10 According to Luc Brisson, there are three distinct versions of Tiresian transformation, one of which comprises thirteen variants (116). I stick to Ovid’s variant because Eve/lyn explicitly mentions “the copulating snakes, the crime of Tiresias” (A. Carter 70). Ovid’s Latin variant is similar to earlier Greek variants, but Ovid, Brisson argues, draws a different conclusion from the myth: “If women derive more pleasure than men, since the latter’s reciprocal pleasure is more intense it is to their advantage to make the most of the situation and to seek out girls (puellae) in preference to boys (pueri), and to satisfy their female lovers’ desires as fully as possible” (119).
sex change. After fleeing Zero, Eve/lyn—with Tristessa aside—proclaims, “I know who we are; we are Tiresias” (143). Finally, when Eve/lyn tries to see Mother again in a womblike cave and fails, the narrative reads, “Speleological apotheosis of Tiresias—Mother, having borne her, now abandons her daughter forever” (182). In contrast to Ovid’s Tiresias, Eve/lyn does not return to their male anatomy, and Tristessa never becomes female anatomically. Yet, the creation of Eve/lyn engenders a somatechnological kinship: Mother even consolidates her maternal bond with Eve/lyn by suckling. In assuming a Tiresian reembodiment, Tristessa also validates their sartorial and other nonsurgical gender transformations. Together, Eve/lyn’s and Tristessa’s Tiresian reembodiments are not about the criteria of authentic womanhood or two exclusive forms of trans womanhood (MTF transsexuality and female identification). Instead, they are about the porous categories of “man” and “woman” and multiple forms of trans embodiment.

Earlier, in the desert, Eve/lyn’s sexual union with Tristessa also creates “the great Platonic hermaphrodite” (145). In Plato’s _Symposium_, the hermaphrodite, according to Aristophanes, is cut into a male and a female half, and these two broken tallies—now figured as a class of “adulter[ous]” men and “promiscuous” women (62)—are set to search for each other in order to feel whole again. Now Eve/lyn and Tristessa are two trans beings: one expresses their trans reembodiment through the complication of a past male subjectivity and a present female anatomy, through the experience of passing as a woman, and through the feeling of being in double drag when they put on a man’s suit again; the other through the complication of a male anatomy and female identification, through the history of playing suffering women in Hollywood films, and through the feeling of being in double drag when they put on a bride’s dress after the exposure of their male genitals. In this new hermaphroditic configuration, Eve/lyn and Tristessa complement each other not because they are a pairing of bisected, heterosexual man and woman, but because they illustrate different, open-ended sex/gender embodiments.

The hermaphroditic fusion of Eve/lyn and Tristessa needs to be distinguished from the bodily fusion of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in Greek mythology, the hermetic hermaphrodite in early modern alchemy, the mental or psychical hermaphroditism in sexology at the turn of the twentieth century, and the intersex people in contemporary medical and nonmedical discourses. In Ovid’s _Metamorphoses_, Hermaphroditus is the son of Hermes (Mercury) and Aphrodite (Venus). The naiad Salmacis is so attracted to the boy that she clings to him in a pool and prays to the gods to let their bodies be “merged and melded in one” (4.374). In early modern alchemy, “the doubly-gendered hermaphrodite is a symbol both of
dissolution and of divine power; it is also the monster depicted in popular pamphlets of the time” (Long 6). Early in Passion, Evelyn’s neighbor in New York, Baroslav, shows him a seventeenth-century print of “a hermaphrodite carrying a golden egg . . . , the dual form with its breasts and its cock, its calm, comprehensive face” (9). Among Baroslav’s tomes on alchemy is Michael Maier’s 1617 emblem book Atalanta Fugiens, which includes a picture of the hermaphroditic Rebis being sacrificed for transcendence. Although these two alchemical images seem to herald Evelyn’s transformation into Eve/lyn, Eve/lyn is neither intersex nor elevated to a nobler realm. In fin-de-siècle sexology, a doctor might apply the “relatively new term ‘psychical hermaphroditism,’ or ‘mental hermaphroditism,’ to describe men who believed they were meant to be women” (Reis 65). Such hermaphrodites do not necessarily have ambiguous genitalia; instead, they are marked by an incongruity between their male bodies and female minds. Here, the body-mind incongruity is correlated with homosexuality, for it explains male same-sex attraction by depicting the man as mentally female. Finally, contemporary medical and nonmedical discourses use the term “intersex” for “a variety of congenital conditions in which a person has neither the standard male nor the standard female anatomy” (Dreger, “History” 5). Significantly, not all intersex people have ambiguous genitalia. Some intersex people “have typical external genitals but the internal anatomy of the other sex,” and they might not realize their condition until the teenage years—“when their bodies do not go through puberty in the usual manner” (Reis xi).

Although all these hermaphrodites are marked either by a mixture of male and female sex characteristics or by a gender incongruity between body and mind, they have distinct implications. In Greek mythology, the creation of the “androgyne” Hermaphroditus registers a woman’s voracious sexuality and deprives a boy of the chance to grow into a man (Ovid 4.388). In early modern alchemy, “[t]he monstrous hermaphrodite was sacrificed, and reborn as divine” in a way that a baser metal was transmuted into a nobler one (Long 109). In fin-de-siècle sexology, “‘psychosexual,’ ‘mental,’ or ‘psychical’ hermaphroditism were all terms doctors used to describe patients who admitted to same-sex desire” (Reis 66). And in contemporary intersex discourse, there are various congenital conditions, “including (but not limited to) hypospadias, Turner syndrome, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, androgen insensitivity syndrome, 5alpha-reductase deficiency, and sex chromosome mosaicism”

11 In the late nineteenth century, medical and scientific experts also developed a gonadal definition of sex to determine true and false hermaphrodites: “If you had ovaries—no matter what else—you would be a woman; testicles, a man; only if both, a ‘true’ hermaphrodite” (Dreger, Hermaphrodites 11). Since it was unheard of for a person to possess both ovarian and testicular gonads, “the only true hermaphrodite was a dead hermaphrodite” (Dreger, “History” 9).
To call the fusion of Eve/lyn and Tristessa a hermaphrodite is not to codify a particular male-female or body-mind amalgamation, but to stress the complexity of sex/gender embodiments.

Ultimately, *Passion* calls into question the anatomical idea of “woman.” In addition to Eve/lyn’s and Tristessa’s reembodiments, many other characters also reconfigure their bodies. When she first shows up, Mother sports “a false beard of crisp, black curls like the false beard Queen Hatshepsut of the Two Kingdoms had worn” (56). Grafting breasts from her priestesses, Mother also “mimic[s] in her own body the refulgent form of many-breasted Artemis, another sterile goddess of fertility” (74). Although she seems simultaneously hypermasculine and hyperfeminine, Mother is better placed in the context of trans and female reembodiments than in a masculinity-femininity continuum. The masculinity-femininity continuum implements the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism, and such an implementation registers Mother as an undue contradiction. The open concept of trans and female reembodiments, however, recognizes Mother’s disruption and resignification of sex/gender dimorphism. The point is not to see whether Mother fits the category of “man” or “woman,” but to observe her interventions in the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism. As one of Mother’s priestesses, Sophia is without her left breast. While Evelyn first interprets this condition as a mastectomy to treat her breast cancer, he later realizes that Sophia has donated her breast to Mother. In other words, Sophia’s missing breast does not diminish her femininity or indicate her “disability” (54); it materializes her commitment to Mother and other women in Beulah. Here, the idea of “woman” is not premised on the anatomy of two breasts. Finally, Lilith appears to have lost her womb because of a botched abortion. But when Eve/lyn sees her again, she claims, “All my wounds will magically heal. Rape only refreshes my virginity” (170). It seems that Lilith cannot be deflowered or mutilated, and she might not lose her womb after all. Yet, her breast donation to Mother also challenges the anatomical definition of “woman.” Overall, Mother establishes a contentious matriarchy and creates various forms of trans women (Sophia, Lilith, Eve, and herself). Although Mother seems to “[resort] to androcentric images of maternity and femininity to ‘program’ Eve with a new feminine, maternal subjectivity” (Rubinson 727), she also propels Eve/lyn to realize Evelyn’s misconceptions of women and to take various reembodiments that denaturalize dimorphic ideas of sex and gender.

At the same time, the idea of female masochism comes undone. Over the course of the novel, Eve/lyn emphasizes how Zero’s sexual abuse turns them into “a savage woman,” how their consummation with Tristessa has their “womanhood . . . ratified,” and how they are “a woman and therefore insatiable” (104, 134, 146). Although
Eve/lyn makes these claims after their sex change, these seemingly biological claims about womanhood are probably influenced by Eve/lyn’s past experience of being the sexist Evelyn and their recent experience of passing as a woman under Zero’s watchful eye. When Evelyn first doubts the ability of sex reassignment surgery to change him, Sophia answers, “A change in the appearance will restructure the essence. . . . Psycho-surgery, Mother calls it” (65). For Sophia and Mother, the mind does not always dictate the body; the body could also affect the mind. Having survived Zero’s rapes, Eve/lyn starts to debunk the myth that women enjoy suffering: they become “a savage woman” because Zero brutalizes them, not because they revel in masochism. But when Eve/lyn ratifies womanhood by consummation and naturalizes the idea of female insatiability, such statements seem to endorse female masochism from an androcentric perspective. They square a little bit too well with Evelyn’s previous sexist descriptions of Lilith (Leilah then) as “a siren,” “a mermaid,” and “a born victim” (16, 18, 24). In fact, Lilith asserts her sexual agency, but Evelyn transforms her into fantastic creatures and a pervert who enjoys degradation to satisfy his desire. Only later does Eve/lyn realize that “[Lilith] can never have objectively existed, all the time mostly the projection of the lusts and greed and self-loathing of a young man called Evelyn, who does not exist, either” (171). Since Evelyn used to project masochism on women, Eve/lyn might now internalize masochism as a transsexual woman. The point, however, is not necessarily to repudiate transsexual women’s views of womanhood and validate only genetic women’s. To privilege Lilith’s view simply because she is genetically female overlooks how other genetic women in Zero’s harem are subjugated and empowered by the discourse of masochism. These harem women are victims to Zero’s despotism, but they also become his sadist accomplices. With these different women’s historically contingent experiences of womanhood in view, it is crucial to recognize how female masochism is interwoven with issues of androcentrism and sexual agency simultaneously. Genetic and transsexual women may both practice female masochism, but it is simplistic to either reject the discourse of female masochism by claiming that no women in their right mind would enjoy masochism or to naturalize it by claiming that even a transsexual woman becomes a masochist.

Similarly, Tristessa believes in female masochism by playing suffering women in films. It is probably because of such a problematic representation of women that

12 Although Evelyn exoticizes/eroticizes Lilith, considers her passive, and finally dismisses her as “doubly degraded, through her [black] race and through her [female] sex” (A. Carter 33), Lilith’s submission is not necessarily complicit in male violence. Studying consensual BDSM practice, Ariane Cruz notices that race play could become “a kind of critical negotiation for the abject black body—a way of working not through the past, but perhaps in and through the present” (73).
Mother refuses Tristessa’s request for sex reassignment surgery: “when she subjected him to the first tests, she was struck by what seemed to her the awfully ineradicable quality of his maleness” (169). The “ineradicable quality of his maleness” does not refer to Tristessa’s male genitalia (as Mother could easily replace them with female genitalia), but to their masochistic view of women. Despite their fervid female identification, Tristessa cannot see women as other than born or willful victims. Although Tristessa might take masochistic pleasure in being a suffering woman, only genetically male characters like Evelyn and Zero agree with Tristessa’s sexist take on female masochism. Female-born women, when they seem to take masochistic pleasure, are often pretending in front of men (Zero’s harem women) or actually asserting their sexual agency (Lilith). By calling Tristessa’s sexist take on female masochism “the awfully ineradicable quality of his maleness,” Mother does not necessarily essentialize such sexism as a ubiquitously male quality. Instead, she critiques Tristessa for their androcentric, victimizing view of women. Genetic women may take pleasure in masochism, but they do not necessarily like to victimize themselves. If some men want to become women because they want to physically experience masochism in “real” women’s bodies, they fall for an anatomical, sexist concept of masochism.

Transfeminine and Narrative Reembodiments in Mygale

In Mygale, another involuntary MTF transsexual is born. Almost four years before, the then twenty-year-old Frenchman Vincent and his friend Alex gang-raped the then sixteen-year-old Viviane, who was subsequently institutionalized. To avenge his daughter, Richard captured Vincent, had him undergo hormonal and surgical body modification, and named the postoperative trans woman “Eve.” Richard also forced Eve to have sex with strangers in public parks like the Bois de Vincennes and the Bois de Boulogne. Then, for fear of getting arrested by the police, he started pimping her out in a studio apartment. Now whenever Viviane has a crisis in the mental hospital, Richard finds violent clients to abuse Eve and takes solace in watching Eve suffer behind a one-way mirror.

Putting Mygale in the context of French crime fiction, David Platten argues that Eve, Richard, and Alex are all trapped: “Eve in her new female identity; Lafargue by the unbearable psychological breakdown of his daughter, which he is powerless to remedy; and Alex by the fact of his having killed a policeman” (162). To be sure,
Entrapment is a crucial theme in the novel. Richard not only imprisons Vincent in his cellar but also turns him into a woman against his will. During his early captivity, Vincent compares himself to “an insect captured by a bloated spider and kept on hand for an eventual meal” (Jonquet 39-40). This is why the book title is *Mygale* (French: tarantula). And if Vincent had been feeling at home with his male body, he should feel trapped in his new female body. But to see the postoperative Eve as a man trapped in a woman’s body is to assume that Vincent has a static core gender identity and subscribes to the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism.

In fact, *Mygale* is about transfeminine and narrative reembodiments, not about bodily entrapment. By “transfeminine,” I do not mean male-born individuals who align with femininity but do not necessarily identify as trans women. Instead of addressing self-determined trans people, I refer to male-born trans people whose bodies register various expressions of femininity that may or may not be of the subject’s doing. In “wrong body” discourse, MTF transsexual subjects are depicted as wanting a female body to accord with their female-identified mind. In *Mygale*, however, Richard’s meticulous transformation of Vincent from a youth with a “beautiful girlish face” to a trans woman with feminine looks and mien (95; emphasis in original), Vincent’s bodily susceptibility to feminization, and Eve’s manipulation of femininity marginalize the issue of what Vincent’s mind wants. As a result, the involuntary sex change leads to a break between preoperative Vincent and postoperative Eve; it does not shape a transsexual subject with a coherent life story to tell about his or her sex and gender. It is also because of the break that the story of Vincent and Eve produces a narrative reembodiment: a second-person narrator in place of the usual first-person narrator in transsexual autobiographies.

Although Richard performs an unsolicited sex change on Vincent, he does not conduct it in a hasty fashion. Instead, he eases the whole process of gender transition by first domesticating Vincent with luxury items and fine arts and by gradually getting Vincent used to a series of body feminization procedures.\(^\text{14}\) Just as the Harry

\(^{14}\) In contrast to the elaborate process of gender transition in *Mygale*, Robert Ledgard (Antonio Banderas) and his hoodwinked colleagues simply perform vaginoplasty on Vicente (Jan Cornet) right after the suicide of Robert’s daughter, Norma (Blanca Suárez) in Pedro Almodóvar’s 2011 film adaptation, *The Skin I Live In*. Vicente does not start with hormone therapy or top surgery. As a result, many critics argue that Vicente remains Vicente despite his bodily transformation into Vera Cruz (Elena Anaya) (Aldana Reyes 831; Waldron and Murray 60; Zurián 268). Pretending to be a voluntary MTF transsexual in front of Robert’s blackmailer to gain Robert’s trust, Vicente finally kills Robert to gain his freedom. Yet, one may also see Vicente as becoming trans because of the trans artworks he creates. As Cath Davies points out, by studying and recreating Louise Bourgeois’s work, Vicente/Vera embarks on “a cathartic emotional quest upon the refashioning of embodiment” (72). Inspired by Bourgeois, Vicente/Vera produces or reproduces artworks that defy neat categories
Benjamin Standards of Care recommend that prospective transsexuals undergo twelve continuous months of hormone therapy without any medical contraindication and live for twelve continuous months in their desired gender role without any ambivalence before undergoing genital surgery (Teich 57), so too does Richard cultivate Vincent’s new tastes and feminize his body progressively. Immersed in music and literature, Vincent gradually loses his sense of personal history: “Your distant past returned in violent and chaotic waves; images from your long-forgotten childhood would reemerge unannounced in startling clarity, only to dissipate in their turn into a vague mist” (Jonquet 52; emphasis in original). Richard also showers Vincent with feminine accessories and expensive gifts before he starts injecting hormones into Vincent’s body. At this moment, Vincent has become too distracted by art to resist Richard: “You were completely taken up by your drawing and your piano; the intense creative activity sated you” (70; emphasis in original). When Vincent finally notices his loss of sexual libido, he holds on to Richard’s promise to release him.

Although Vincent does not verbally consent to a sex change, he has depended so entirely on Richard and put so much trust in him that he seems to develop Stockholm syndrome, feeling more attached to his captor than to his male body. Over time, Vincent starts to see himself not as another man like Richard but as a woman in contrast to Richard: “at the beginning of your imprisonment, you used to relive yourself in front of him. But now, you would hide your breasts from him” (92; emphasis in original). Instead of developing gender dysphoria, Vincent gives way to Eve: “As earlier with the chains, the cellar, or the injections, you gradually got used to your new body; in the end, it felt perfectly familiar” (93; emphasis in original). When Eve later reflects on the process, she blames Vincent for his bodily susceptibility to feminization: “Unwittingly, you had helped him [Richard] transform you, for your beard had never developed. . . . [Y]ou hated yourself for corresponding so well to his intent, with your beautiful girlish face, as Alex used to say once upon a time. . . .” (95; emphasis in original; 2nd ellipsis in original). Despite Eve’s indignation at Richard’s unsolicited sex change, Vincent’s body becomes transfeminine, and his mind becomes eager to cooperate with Richard. On the whole, the original Vincent has changed so tremendously that he seems to be replaced by

of “man” and “woman.” Take the wall drawing of a child figure between two profiles facing in opposite directions, for example. It is a replica of Bourgeois’s 1940 untitled drawing. In contrast to the dimorphic profiles, the child does not have any distinct primary sex characteristics. Vicente/Vera also manipulates Lycra—the same fabric as his skin suit—to construct new faces and surfaces for his sculptures. Such a creative energy counters Robert’s technology of plastic surgery, transgenic skin, and skin suit in constructing Vera. On Vicente/Vera’s use of art, see also Laine.
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Yet, Eve is not a passive transsexual subject. She is transfeminine in the sense that she uses her feminine body to taunt and seduce Richard. She often sings or plays “The Man I Love” to trigger Richard’s harrowing memory of Viviane’s rape (Richard heard the song the evening Viviane was raped) and to mock her current relationship with Richard. She exposes herself in front of Richard, “her thighs apart, her fists on her knees, in an attitude of obscene defiance” (33). And she proposes letting Richard peep on her having sex with a waiter in the bushes, transforming Richard’s punitive thrill in seeing Eve mounted into her masochistic kink: she wants Richard “to think she gets pleasure from degrading herself” (37). If Richard has meant to punish Vincent by turning him into a female prostitute against his will, Eve flaunts her female body and professes masochism in order to get under Richard’s skin. Overall, Eve’s transfemininity is not an untrammeled expression of her gender identification but a strategic mechanism in response to Richard’s imposition of cultural transformation and medical feminization.

In addition to transfeminine reembodiments, a second-person narrator also emerges as Vincent transforms into Eve. In the italic portion of the novel, a narrator addresses Vincent or Eve at various points “like the spectator of some meaningless game” (111; emphasis in original). But the narrator is Vincent and Eve. Between Vincent’s and Eve’s sex/gender embodiments, on the one hand, and the second-person narrator’s material disembodiment on the other, the italic portion of the novel forms a unique MTF transsexual (auto)biography. This MTF transsexual (auto)biography is marked not by a forged female past in attaining the sex/gender congruity of a typical woman, but by the break between a Vincent who lives up to age twenty-two as a man and an Eve who begins her life at age twenty-two as a woman. Recalling how Richard abducts Vincent and gradually transforms him into Eve without revealing their identities right away, the second-person narrator highlights Alex’s kidnapping of Eve. Here, Eve believes that Richard is finally ready to kill her: “Just as well to die, anyway. You never had the courage to kill yourself. He has eradicated every vestige of revolt in you. Vincent has become his creature. Eve has become his creature. You are nothing, nothing at all” (91; emphasis in original). Self-negating, this “nothing” is actually at once an entity who distinguishes themself from Vincent and Eve, an agent that sutures and disrupts the transition from Vincent to Eve, and a commentator who reports on Richard’s interactions with Vincent and Eve. Eluding the question of sex and gender in binary third-person singular pronouns (“he” and “she”), the second-person speaker nevertheless retains identity continuity in contrast to Vincent’s sex change to Eve. When Eve’s life is in
danger, the second-person narrator brings up Vincent’s symbolic death: “It’s not fair, to die at twenty-four. Die? You’ve been dead for two years already! Vincent died two years ago. What does it matter about the ghost he left behind?” (94; emphasis in original). By pronouncing Vincent dead, the narrator lets Eve assert a break with the past only to qualify her existence as a ghost. In this sense, Mygale is not about a man trapped in a woman’s body, but about a man becoming a woman through various transfeminine reembodiments. Eve’s womanhood is not the emergence of a woman who has been trapped in a man’s body since childhood, but that of a posthumous being in the wake of the male-bodied Vincent. Although Eve secures a transfeminine body, she does not have a girlhood.

With these transfeminine and narrative reembodiments in view, it is reductive to see the whole gender transition from Vincent to Eve as Eve’s objectification. According to Darren Waldron and Ros Murray,

> The revelation that Vincent is becoming a woman in Mygale is telling (and poses a translation problem in English): “tu es devenu sa chose! Tu es devenue sa chose! Tu n’es plus rien!” (“you have become [masculine] his thing! You have become [feminine] his thing! You are no longer anything!”). Thus, although the novel’s depiction of transgender subjectivity implies a degree of personal choice, it nonetheless suggests that to become a woman is to become a “thing” or an “object,” and to become “nothing.” (62; brackets in original)

For Waldron and Murray, the third “tu” resumes the second feminine “tu” (both referring to Eve), and the three sentences together illustrate the process of becoming an objectified woman. In Donald Nicholson-Smith’s English translation, however, the first two “tu’s” become Vincent and Eve respectively (“Vincent has become his creature. Eve has become his creature”), followed by the third “tu” as the second-person singular pronoun “you.” Since the verb in the third sentence is ungendered, one may read the third “tu” as the second-person narrator. In other words, the three sentences now illustrate a narratively reembodied “tu” (you) distinct from the preoperative masculine “tu” (Vincent) and the postoperative feminine “tu” (Eve). For Waldron and Murray, Eve is a victim with little agency. But Eve actually uses her transfeminine reembodiment to engage with Richard. At the same time, the second-person narrator asserts themself paradoxically through a disembodied voice—through self-oblitration (“You are nothing, nothing at all”).

Although Richard seems to create and possess Eve, they are yoked together to
form a dynamic dyad. Moments after Eve reckons with the impossibility for her mother and friends to recognize her postoperative self, the second-person narrator claims, “Mygale has succeeded: he has bound you to him forever” (92; emphasis in original). Despite his hatred of Eve, Richard also often has to resort to violence to resist his attraction to her. Yet, Alex’s kidnapping of Eve (without knowing that she used to be Vincent) pushes Richard to express his avid concern for her. After killing Alex, Richard resigns himself to Eve’s disposal. Given the chance to seek judicial justice, Eve nevertheless chooses to stay with Richard. Although the ending seems to suggest their reconciliation, Eve takes control now. In contrast to his earlier image of a vicious tarantula, Richard has yielded his domination. In the end, Eve contemplates her “vile portrait of Richard as a transvestite, the wine-ravaged face, the wrinkled skin: Richard as a ruined whore” (128-29). Earlier, Eve has painted Richard as a transvestite prostitute, performing a pictorial sex change on him in retaliation for her involuntary sex change. Now that Richard seems to depend on and fall for her, Eve could exact her queerest revenge or redeem herself by becoming Richard’s keeper. Caring for the trans woman who had raped his daughter, Richard has loosened his hold on Viviane’s trauma and probably become Eve’s prey. Now he has to live with the consequences of turning Vincent into Eve.

Conclusion

In “Embracing Transition, or Dancing in the Folds of Time,” Julian Carter argues that the “wrong body” trope not only renders the flesh “inconvenient matter” in limiting the inner soul but also “tends to impose a linear temporality on transition” (130, 141). If early MTF transsexuals often had to feel trapped in their preoperative male body to justify their transition, they were also often trapped by their envisioned ideas of a postoperative female body. Due to “wrong body” discourse, early MTF transsexuals could hardly acknowledge deriving sexual pleasure from their preoperative male body, for such acknowledgements would suggest that their “wrong” body had not been so “wrong” after all. At the same time, early MTF transsexuals might want to get so close to the “right” female body that they jeopardize their lives. They did not necessarily seek the “right” body for themselves; they tried to acquire what norms considered the “right” female body. In contrast, Carter reconsiders transition in terms of spatiotemporal folds, “so that developmental sequences, backward turns, and futural impulses coexist and intertwine” (131). For Carter, transsexual subjects do not have to aim to be a normative or normal-looking man or woman, nor do they have to erase or forge their preoperative pasts in accordance with
their current sex/gender identity. Whereas “wrong body” discourse dismisses any sex/gender incongruity before and after transition as failure or negligence, Carter argues that a gay-identified transsexual man could join other gay men despite his past experience as a girl and his current absence of male genitalia. Here, the development from a genetic woman to a transsexual man does not depend on the transsexual man’s erasure of his past girlhood or on his determination to undergo future phalloplasty or metoidioplasty.

In Passion and Mygale, Eve/lyn and Eve are not voluntary trans women who develop more incongruity-friendly idioms in order to negotiate the enterprise of sex/gender dimorphism. But their forced sex changes produce diverse reembodiments. In Passion, Eve/lyn’s passing as a woman is as much a survival tactic in the face of the loutish Zero as the genetic women’s professed femininity. Without naturalizing their femininity, Eve/lyn also develops a Tiresian reembodiment without subscribing to a phallic perspective and, together with Tristessa, creates a hermaphroditic reembodiment without conforming to reproductive heteronormativity. In Mygale, Eve assumes a ghostly, transfeminine reembodiment and counters Richard’s sex reassignment surgery by turning him into a transvestite prostitute. At the same time, a second-person narrator emerges, creating the effect of suturing and disrupting Vincent’s transformation into Eve. In these two novels of involuntary sex change, the various trans, female, and narrative embodiments unsettle the notion of sex/gender dimorphism embedded in “wrong body” discourse.

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