"A Curious Double Insight": *The Well of Loneliness* and Native American Alternative Gender Traditions

Tara Prince-Hughes
Pierce College

Published in 1928 to a stormy censorship trial, Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* portrays the life of Stephen Gordon, an "invert"[1] who longs to be part of her rural English community and to undertake the responsibilities of master of her family's estate. Initially condemned for addressing the plight of inverts in an unequivocally empathetic way, *The Well of Loneliness* has in recent decades fallen under disrepute among another group of readers: lesbian and feminist critics. Many of these critics see in Hall's portrayal of Stephen Gordon an implicit condemnation of homosexuality and a confirmation of heterosexual ideology: in its depiction of Stephen as masculine or of a third sex, the novel established an image of the "true" lesbian which had a deep prescriptive impact on its lesbian readers.

Lillian Faderman, in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, for example, holds Hall partially responsible for the development of rigid butch/femme roles and the consequent intolerance of gender flexibility in 1950s and 1960s lesbian communities (172-73). As she states elsewhere, "young women … learned through Hall's novel that if they were really lesbian they were not women but members of a third sex, and that they need not expect joy or fulfillment in this world" (qtd. in Whitlock 558). Linnea A. Stenson, like Faderman, decries Hall's influence and suggests that for many lesbians, the mannish woman became the only "real" lesbian identity (209). Stenson also finds Hall guilty of a second fatal mistake: an uncritical acceptance of sexologists' descriptions of female inverts as men trapped in women's bodies. Hall's pleas for acceptance for inverts, Stenson claims, "are colored by the pathological identity attributed to her characters" (213). Adam Parkes, in "Lesbianism, History, and Censorship," concurs, commenting on Hall's collusion with sexologist Havelock Ellis: "[i]n her eagerness for Ellis's endorsement [in a preface to the novel], Hall perpetuated an image of the mannish lesbian that functioned

intelligibly within early twentieth-century sexologist discourse" (441). Gillian Whitlock takes this line of criticism a step further by suggesting that the sexologist discourse Hall calls upon is "clearly heterosexist" (557) in reenforcing oppressive male and female gender roles.[2]

An underlying assumption among all these critics is that *The Well of Loneliness* is in fact a lesbian novel. Even Esther Newton, who defends Hall's novel, bases her defense on what she sees as Hall's depiction of a "New Woman's rebellion against the male order" and a "lesbian's desperate struggle to be and express her true self" (20). One problem with this approach, however, is that the term "lesbian" has come to mean something very different from the term "invert" as it is used by Hall: while "lesbian" defines only a woman's sexual orientation, "invert" indicates a woman's masculine gender orientation. Part of the frustration provoked by Hall's novel, in fact, results from a conceptual confusion in late 20th-century ideas about gender and sexuality: the conflation of sexual orientation, an expression of desire for people of a certain anatomical sex, with gender orientation, an expression of maleness or femaleness as they are interpreted in a particular cultural setting. Because of this conflation, women with "male" behaviors and appearances have been assumed to be homosexual in popular and critical imaginations; as a corollary, women who are homosexual have been expected to behave in mannish ways. While they frequently coexist, however, lesbian sexuality and masculine gender orientation are two distinct identity traits.[3] Based on this distinction, *The Well of Loneliness* is not centrally about homosexuality but rather about gender; Stephen Gordon is not primarily a lesbian but an alternatively gendered person. We can explore this point of view by stepping back and viewing Hall's novel through a cultural perspective that distinguishes between sexuality and gender: that of Native American two-spirit people, individuals who undertake alternative gender roles within many Native American cultures. My intention is not to suggest that Hall drew on two-spirit traditions in creating *The Well of Loneliness*, but rather to suggest that as an "invert," Stephen Gordon defines her own identity in terms that more closely resemble the two-spirit focus on gender than the contemporary lesbian focus on sexual desire. As a result, Stephen defines herself not on the basis of sexual orientation, but on her inclinations for certain gender roles and responsibilities.[4]

In many Native American cultures, two-spirit traditions have allowed individuals to express alternative gender inclinations by adopting the work, behavior, and dress of the other sex. The presence of two-spirits signifies the health and balance of their societies, for they are thought to combine powerful male and female forces harmoniously within one person. Because of this internal balance, two-spirit

people are assigned unique cultural roles based on their spiritual gifts and mediative skills: they are often artists, visionaries, healers, negotiators, and marriage counselors. Unlike Western homosexuals, two-spirits define themselves in terms of spirituality, work, and social roles: they usually show childhood proclivities for the play, toys, work, and dress of the other anatomical sex, proclivities that carry into adulthood. Although the self-expression of two-spirits varies, there is a fundamental social belief in the innateness of two-spirit identity, an identity created by spirit for a specific purpose that will benefit the community; once established, the naturalness and value of this identity is not challenged.[5]

The development of Stephen Gordon's character in *The Well of Loneliness* parallels to a remarkable extent that of two-spirit people in Native cultures. The primary differences, in fact, are the cultural definitions of gender traits and her society's reception of her as an alternative gender woman. Stephen manifests her gender identity in terms of early twentieth-century English requirements for aristocratic men: fine suits and short hair, hunting and horseback riding, education and good taste. Central to this identity is the role of benevolent estate master, a role personified in Stephen's father and one that Stephen, as her father's spiritual "son," is well suited to carry on. While she is clearly attracted to women, Stephen's tragedy is not her sexual frustration but rather society's rejection of her male gender identity and her forced isolation from the rural community of her birth.

Hall's own commitment to English gender roles supports the parallel between Stephen's identity as an invert and Native American two-spirits, for Hall phrased her own frustration as her inability to fulfill the responsibilities of a man in English culture:

> In the heart of every woman is the desire for protection. In the heart of every man is the desire to give protection to the woman he loves. The invert knows she will never enjoy this and because of her affliction will face ostracism. (qtd. in Parkes 441)

For Hall, expressing a masculine gender through culturally defined male symbols is natural; when challenged about her cross-dressing, for example, Hall "explained that dress was simply an expression of nature, which she could not change, one of the honest ways she faced her inversion" (Rule 52). Likewise, the young Stephen Gordon focuses on cultivating her own gender expression. Her growth from a young "boy" into a spiritually sensitive artist and finally a visionary and mediator follows a path similar to those reported by Native two-spirit people.

As a child, Stephen manifests alternative gender traits in terms of upper-class English masculinity. A skilled rider from an early age, she spends long hours grooming her horses and insists on "riding astride" rather than sidesaddle, a pref-

erence that shocks her mother, Anna (39). She is similarly proficient at fencing, inspiring her French governess to exclaim, "[S]he fence [sic] like a man, with such power and such grace" (58). During fox hunts with her father, Sir Philip, Stephen glories in her muscles, her feats of prowess, and her father's pride (40-43). Her other interests include gymnastics and "lifting weights with my stomach" (57).

In addition to her pursuit of activities usually reserved for boys, Stephen abhors female clothes to the point of experiencing humiliation and a loss of confidence when she wears dresses (79). She feels natural only in boys' clothes: "How she hated soft dresses and sashes, and ribbons, and small coral beads, and openwork stockings! Her legs felt so free and comfortable in breeches; she adored pockets too, and these were forbidden" (20). Her unsuitability for feminine attire is noted by her parents and their aquaintances; staring at a portrait of Stephen and her mother, Sir Philip ponders "that indefinable quality in Stephen that made her look wrong in the clothes she was wearing, as though she and they had no right to each other" (27). Not surprisingly, when she is old enough to make her own choices, Stephen cuts her hair short and wears men's suits, important steps in her expression of her maleness. Her response to her first haircut, which occurs after she moves to London, is one of liberation:

> In a mood of defiance she had suddenly walked off to the barber's one morning and had made him crop [her hair] close like a man's. And mightily did this fashion become her…. Released from the torment imposed upon it the thick auburn hair could breathe and wave freely, and Stephen had grown fond and proud of her hair…. Sir Philip also had been proud of his hair in the days of his youthful manhood. (210)

As with many two-spirit and invert women, Stephen's view of herself is as a boy. She is strong, athletic, and adventurous, and in many situations she is more successful at boyhood than anatomical boys. The young Roger Antrim, for example, resents Stephen as a rival:

> Stephen nonplussed him, her arms were so strong, he could never wrench Stephen's arms backwards like Violet's; he could never make her cry or show any emotion when he pinched her … and then Stephen would often beat him at games, a fact which he deeply resented. She could bowl a cricket much straighter than he could; she climbed trees with astonishing skill and prowess…. He grew to hate Stephen as a kind of rival, a kind of intruder into his especial province. (46)

Her imaginative play consists of the swashbuckling adventures she reads in storybooks. Her masquerades as "William Tell, or Nelson, or the whole Charge of Balaclava" include "much swaggering and noise, much strutting and posing, and

much staring into the mirror" (19). When her maid, during one of these displays of valor, comments on her maleness, Stephen replies earnestly, "Yes, of course I'm a boy. I'm young Nelson, and I'm saying: 'What is fear?' you know, Collins — I must be a boy, 'cause I feel exactly like one" (19-20). Her confidence in her gender orientation, despite the constant pressure she receives to be more girlish, suggests a compelling and innate impulse toward masculinity paralleling that felt by inverts and Native two-spirit people.

In addition to her masculine appearance and behavior, Stephen manifests an emotional and spiritual sensitivity directly attributable to her alternative gender status. Her sensitivity connects her to other humans, animals, and nature, gives her an uncanny ability to intuit the feelings of others, and inclines her toward visionary experiences. She is described as being "miserably telepathic" (414), and the narrator attributes Stephen's perception to her embodiment of male and female traits: "the intuition of those who stand midway between the sexes, is so ruthless, so poignant, so accurate, so deadly, as to be in the nature of an added scourge" (83). Her visionary capabilities develop early, and she has presentiments of her uncertain future even as a child. One Christmas, seated before a fire with her parents, Stephen sees "a dark shadow that stole in between" her and her father; "her vision was mercifully dim, otherwise she must surely have recognized the shadow" (90). After her father's death, she has a flash of vision that causes her to renounce the cruelties of fox hunting:

> With a sudden illumination of vision, she perceived that all life is only one life, that all joy and all sorrow are indeed only one, that all death is only one dying. And she knew that because she had seen a man die in great suffering, yet with courage and love that are deathless, she could never again inflict wanton destruction or pain upon any poor, hapless creature. (127)

Her empathy and reverence for life are expressed in her healing work and her strong desire to contribute to her society; she tends her dying father, saves her first lover's dog from a dogfight, and serves as an ambulance driver during World War I. As a young woman returning to Morton, aware of her growing isolation, she recalls the stillness of her child spirit and thinks, "'I shall never be one with great peace any more … wherever there is absolute stillness and peace in this world, I shall always stand just outside it.' And as though these thoughts were in some way prophetic, she inwardly shivered a little" (103). Her feelings sum up most of her adult experience in English society.

With her gifts of intuition and vision comes a burden: "Stephen learns that 'inverts' are often creative artists and that she bears a special gift and responsibility" (Zimmerman 40).[6] Like two-spirit people, and despite her society's rejection

of her, Stephen possesses an ability to see from both male and female perspectives and thus is in a position to understand both. Her creative work is fueled and enhance by this dual perspective. Puddle, her tutor and a closet invert, encourages her writing, voicing a view that is close to those of Native American cultures:

> Why, just because you are what you are, you may actually find that you've got an advantage. You may write with a curious double insight — write both men and women from a personal wledge. Nothing's completely misplaced or wasted, I'm sure of that — and we're all part of nature. (205)

Besides bringing her insight into human psychology and her own fate, Stephen's empathy and intuition help her forge powerful connections with animals, particularly her horse Raftery. For the young Stephen, as for many Native American people, humans and animals are interconnected with each other and with the earth over time. In awe of the oneness of nature, she walks in her garden with her friend Martin, sensing "this strange hush of communion, this oneness with something beyond their knowledge" (101). Her communications with Raftery are particularly touching, for with him she develops a level of unspoken communication that she cannot achieve with most people. When at seventeen Stephen comes to Raftery full of book learning, for instance, Raftery has "a strong feeling … that Stephen was missing the truth. But how could he make her understand the age-old wisdom of all the dumb creatures? The wisdom of plains and primeval forests, the wisdom come down from the youth of the world" (72).[7] As a child Stephen intuitively understands this oneness and wisdom; as her life becomes progressively more urbanized and restricted, she struggles to maintain her connection and vision.[8] Because her society allows her no avenues for expressing her alternative gender or her gifts, she must fight a growing sense of being incomplete.

After moving from Morton to London and then to Paris, Stephen finally meets other inverts who, like her, are immensely gifted and artistic but who lack any meaningful social roles within the larger culture. These people are "writers, painters, musicians and scholars, men and women who, set apart from their birth, had determined to hack out a niche in existence" (349). Jonathan Brockett, the playwright who serves as Stephen's advocate and literary critic, is the most prominent of these, and his behavior strongly resembles that of two-spirit men.[9] Although tall and broad shouldered, Brockett has hands "as white and soft as a woman's" (226). He cooks extravagantly; when he shows up at Stephen's with dinner, he declares, "I'll do the whole thing; you leave it to me. I adore other people's kitchens" (229). He also cross-dresses, amusing Stephen by donning a parlormaid's cap and apron while cooking (229), and is particular about his gloves. As an artist and critic, however, Brockett is serious. After he blasts one of her novels, Stephen re-

alizes "she had never seen this side of Brockett, the side of the man that belonged to his art, to all art — the one thing in life he respected" (231). As a mediator, Brockett's skills are equally impressive, for he has a knack for forging connections between people of disparate backgrounds. He also acts as a marriage counselor for Stephen and her partner Mary. His quick empathy with Stephen after the death of Raftery shows that he shares her emotional sensitivity, although he rarely demonstrates it. After Stephen tells him she shot her beloved horse, Brockett "suddenly took her hand and, still without speaking, pressed it. Glancing up, she was surprised by the look in his eyes, so sorrowful it was, and so understanding" (228). Stephen realizes that "it's my grief he's getting," as if he has a sixth sense that allows him to move under Stephen's stoic exterior to her deep feelings.

In a traditional Navajo or Lakota community, people like Stephen and Brockett would be recognized early in life as two-spirits and given the training and recognition necessary for their roles within their communities. Yet Stephen and Brockett are denied any sense of place or purpose. Although Paris provides a subculture in which gay and alternative gender people can work, create, and form friendships, most of Stephen's acquaintances are afflicted by poverty, emotional problems, alcoholism, illness, and despair. Stephen's friends Barbara and Jamie, for example, are hounded by "poverty, even hunger at times, the sense of being unwanted outcasts, the knowledge that the people to whom they belonged — good and honest people — both abhorred and despised them" (395). As a direct result of poverty and stress, Barbara dies of double pneumonia. During Barbara's illness, Jamie suffers the humiliation of being considered "just a friend" by the nurse (400); after Barbara's death, Jamie, unable to stand the loss, shoots herself. Upon discovering Jamie's body, Stephen reflects,

> And so Jamie who dared not go home to Beedles for fear of shaming the woman she loved, Jamie who dared not openly mourn lest Barbara's name be defiled through her mourning, Jamie had dared to go home to God — to trust herself to His more perfect mercy, even as Barbara had gone home before her. (403)

As the novel's title indicates, the failure of English culture to provide social acceptance, recognition, and responsibility for alternative gender people leaves inverts isolated, hopeless, and fundamentally alone.

Stephen's deepest desire is to be accepted by her rural English community; in particular, she wants to act as the master of her beloved estate, Morton. For Stephen, Sir Philip is the ideal model of aristocratic manhood, and her resemblance to and bond with her father make her desire to continue his role seem quite natural. Described as "part sportsman, part student," Sir Philip has acquired "one of the finest libraries in England" (26). He is magnanimous, seeming to Stephen to

"embody all kindness, all strength, and all understanding" (42); when he asks her to define the word honor, Stephen, without hesitation, replies "You are honour" (62). Watching with growing concern his daughter's unusual behavior, Sir Philip educates himself about inverts and treats Stephen like a son, allowing her to pursue her interests in sports, taking pride in her accomplishments, and encouraging her to develop her intellect. His one mistake is not telling Stephen, or her mother, about her alternative gender identity, a mistake that costs Stephen much hardship in her road to maturity.

Morton itself symbolizes for Stephen domestic harmony and oneness with nature, providing her with a sense of place. Although her parents are secretly conflicted, Stephen idealizes their love, seeing it as "the serene and beautiful spirit of Morton clothed in flesh" (83). Morton seems to speak to her, and it connects her to the long line of her ancestors (105). From an early age she realizes her bond to Morton's landscape:

> the spirit of Morton would be part of her then, and would always remain somewhere deep down within her, aloof and untouched by the years that must follow, by the stress and the ugliness of life. In those after-years certain scents would evoke it…. Then that part of Stephen that she still shared with Morton would know what it was to feel terribly lonely, like a soul that wakes up to find itself wandering, unwanted, between the spheres. (35)

When forced to move to London by her mother's antagonism, Stephen maintains her link to Morton through Raftery. Standing in the empty Morton stables after Raftery's death, she realizes that "this was the end, the end of her courage and patient endurance — that this was somehow the end of Morton. She must not see the place any more; she must, she would, go a long way away" (224). Her exile from Morton, her inability to care for it as her father did and live an honorable life as its master, deprives Stephen of the most fundament aspects of her identity. She experiences her loss as a terrible freedom: "Trees were free when they were uprooted by the winds; ships were free when they were torn from their moorings; men were free when they were cast out of their homes — free to starve, free to perish of cold and hunger" (235). In Stephen's case, the starvation is emotional and spiritual.

Stephen's loss of her ancestral role as estate master results in her inability to undertake a male role with the woman she loves. As described above by Hall, such a role in Edwardian England includes providing her partner with protection, which implies marriage, a home, a respectable family name, love, and financial security. In her relationship with Mary she chafes against her inability to marry and protect; she longs to bring Mary home as the mistress of her estate but is pre-

vented by her mother's animosity. Fearing for Mary's happiness, she warns her lover early in their relationship of how their life will be: "I cannot protect you, Mary, the world has deprived me of my right to protect; I am utterly helpless, I can only love you" (301). Her desire to care for Mary is expressed through her relentless dedication to her writing, a dedication that ironically drives her to neglect Mary:

> there were times when, serving two masters, her passion for this girl and her will to protect her, Stephen would be torn by conflicting desires, by opposing mental and physical emotions. She would want to save herself for work; she would want to give herself wholly to Mary. (343)

Because she cannot provide Mary with the protection and security of marriage and a respected social position, Stephen takes care of her lover in the best way she can think of: by driving Mary away and into the arms of Stephen's old friend Martin Hallam, who is also in love with her. Realizing that Martin can offer Mary the home, children, and security than she can't, Stephen concludes that "[o]nly one gift could she offer to love, to Mary, and that was the gift of Martin" (430). Despite the grief to them both, Stephen decides to spare Mary the loneliness that faces herself.

In her agony after Mary leaves, Stephen experiences a vision of such intensity that it establishes the goal and purpose of the rest of her life: "to give light to them that sit in darkness" (435). Blinded by her emotion, Stephen finds herself thronged by multitudes of inverts — "the quick, the dead, and the yet unborn" (436) — begging her to intervene for them with God:

> "Stephen, Stephen, speak with your God and ask Him why He has left us forsaken!" She could see their marred and reproachful faces with the haunted, melancholy eyes of the invert — eyes that had looked too long on a world that lacked all pity and all understanding. (436)

The vision is one of violence and desperation, with the spirits tormenting Stephen:

> In their madness to become articulate through her, they were tearing her to pieces, getting her under. They were everywhere now, cutting off her retreat; neither bolts nor bars would avail to save her…. They possessed her. Her barren womb became fruitful — it ached with its fearful and sterile burden. It ached with the fierce yet helpless children who would clamour in vain for their right to salvation. (437)

Finally, the voices of her vision become one with her own, forming a "terrifying voice" that "strangled her in its will to be uttered" (437). Deprived of the social status and recognition that would allow her to live a productive life as a member of the English gentry, Stephen is given a frightening but powerful alternative: provide a voice for inverts and advocate for them in a culture that would drive

them out of existence. Her violent vision gives her a spiritual purpose and a responsibility to represent inverts to God. Her famous closing appeal — "Give us also the right to our existence!" — indicates a first step toward fulfilling the demands of her vision.

Defining her identity in terms of her male gender orientation and the social responsibilities and privileges that maleness entails, Stephen Gordon expresses her desires in terms similar to those of two-spirit people: gendered clothing and behaviors, artistic abilities, mediative skills, and visionary capacities. Unlike two-spirits, who in traditional societies contributed their abilities to their communities, however, Stephen must work in exile, a prophetic voice in a great spiritual wilderness. While she feels deep love and commitment for Mary, Stephen's sexual orientation is part of the larger context of her maleness. In order to fully appreciate the novel, whether in terms of its symbolism, characterization, or plot, the primacy of Hall's gender focus must be recognized; dismissing the novel for its failure to conform to contemporary definitions of lesbianism risks ignoring diverse cultural perspectives on gender and sexuality. Reading *The Well of Loneliness* with a sensitivity to the novel's cultural context and its cross-cultural parallels allows us to engage Hall's work on its own terms. ❋

Notes

[1] As defined by early twentieth-century psychologists like Havelock Ellis, an invert described masculine women and feminine men who were trapped in the body of the wrong sex. Some considered inverts members of a third sex, distinct from men and women. While inverts usually were attracted to people of their anatomical sex, their own identities were developed primarily in terms of gender. See Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* for discussions with and about inverts.

[2] There are a few exceptions to this critical perspective. Inez Martinez and Jean Radford, for example, discuss the novel in relation to the paradigms of romance: both see Stephen as a romantic hero who, for the sake of honor, renounces the beloved, an interpretation which places gender roles, rather than sexuality per se, in the central interpretive position. Such an emphasis on gender is consistent with both Native two-spirit traditions and with Stephen Gordon's own preoccupations in *Well*.

[3] Although certain schools of queer theory, in particular psychoanalytic criticism and the performative school of thought inspired by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, tend to conflate gender with sexual desire, the distinction between gender and sexuality has been recognized by gay, lesbian, and transgendered writers and historians. These include Judith C. Brown, George Chauncey Jr., Martin Duberman, Leslie Feinberg, Judy Grahn, David F. Greenberg, David M. Halperin, Harry Hay, Jonathan Ned Katz, Joan Nestle, Will Roscoe, Mark Thompson, Martha Vicinus, and Walter Williams.

[4] Reading Hall's novel in the framework of two-spirit traditions is not, of course, to overlook the author's racism and stereotypes regarding American Indians. Ironically, when American Indians are invoked, it is as a metaphor for a cruel society; late in the novel, Pat, an invert whose lover has left her for a man, declares, "it's Custer's last ride, all the time…. No good talking, the whole damned world's out to scalp us!" (356). It's difficult not to speculate how the novel might have been different had Hall been aware of alternative cultural traditions.

[5] In an interview with Donna Perry, for example, Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko discusses a two-spirit person from her community: "When I was growing up there was a transvestite, a man who dressed like a woman, and nobody — nobody — jeered him, nobody beat him up. To this moment he's the coordinator for the community health outreach. He's a nurse, and he works with women mostly. Nobody doesn't want to have him because culturally that was always accepted" (qtd. in Perry 320). For discussions of past two-spirit traditions and the experiences of contemporary two-spirit people, see especially *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988), edited by Will Roscoe and compiled by Gay American Indians, and *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (1997), edited by Sue Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. See also Sabine Lang's *Men as Women, Women as Men* (1998).

[6] Bonnie Zimmerman notes that Stephen's feeling of difference and uniqueness parallels a common theme in lesbian "quest hero" novels, an association of lesbianism with "strength and intelligence, artistic sensibility, or, in particular, the reversal or rejection of traditional gender roles" (40). Zimmerman's observation strengthens the connections between inverts or masculine lesbians and Native two-spirit social roles: associations of alternative gender with unusual abilities crosses cultural boundaries. For person accounts of alternative gender development in women from a variety of backgrounds, see Joan Nestle's *A Persistent Desire*.

[7] Gillian Whitlock puzzles, "Why these anthropomorphized animals should carry such importance in the novel is curious" (570). While Western critics are likely to share Whitlock's confusion, someone with a Native American perspective might find Stephen's connections to animals quite sensible, especially given her spiritual propensities; for many Native people, as well as for tribal people in Europe and elsewhere, animals serve as spiritual guides and mentors. Thus is makes sense that Raftery, for example, would have conscious intelligence.

[8] Whitlock claims that Stephen's lesbianism prevents her from being at one with nature because she is unable to relate to nature from a feminine perspective, a claim which once again confuses gender identity and homosexuality (564). I would suggest, however, that Stephen's gender duality enables her to have an unusually rich relationship to nature, and that her later break from it occurs only after she must remove herself to the city; her growing feelings of freakishness, incurred by years of ridicule and rejection, replace her childhood feelings of health and naturalness.

[9] Jonathan's cross-dressing and mediative abilities, for instance, parallel those of Wallace Pfef in Louise Erdrich's *The Beet Queen* and Joseph in Beth Brant's short story "This Place."

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