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Binary Resistance: The capitalist construction of gender and  
how Gender Dysphoria can become the catalyst for  
redefining social constructs.

Student Name: Jade Kirby

Student ID: 2207486

Module: Independent project ADAA6000

Supervisor: Dr Estefani Bouza Arnoso

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## Abstract

This thesis explores how the construction of gender within capitalist and societal frameworks effects transgender psychology within society and how gender dysphoria can act as a catalyst for redefining social norms. Through an auto ethnographical approach and the analysis of non-binary visual artists work (Puberty ,2022) by Laurence Philomene, alongside queer theory from key theorists Judith Butler and Paul B. Preciado. The research aims to demonstrate visual dialogue, medical gender transition, and a personal narrative challenge for binary understandings of gender. Revealing the limits of reinforced gender constructs. By examining historical and contemporary examples, including Christine Jorgenson whose Gender transition marked a defining moment for positive transgender visibility and addressing rising gender violence through Neives Minguezias multimedia approach, raising awareness of violence towards women. The thesis examines how gender ideology functions as a binary framework that regulates bodies and reinforces inequality. The findings of the research suggest that dysphoria, rather than being a psychological state of mind, can continue to be understood as a site of resistance against capitalist society. This work continues to build upon queer and trans theory by theorising how lived experience, transgender visual dialogue, and how that exposes binary structure, so it continues to produce alternative understandings of gender that disrupt normative binaries.

## **Introduction**

Binary Resistance: The Capitalist Construction of gender and how Gender Dysphoria can become the catalyst for redefining social constructs. This essay, through an autoethnographic approach, will address how queer artists such as Laurance Philomene are successfully building upon gender fluidity through visual dialogue, which suggests a resistance to binary norms in society. “a set of beliefs about the proper order of society in terms of the roles women and men should fill.” (Daphna and Tagar and Tamar ,2021). These set of beliefs through categorisation can have violent impacts on society, such as political stances on transgender people being currently being segregated into a category, as seen with gendered toilet paradoxical debate. “This prejudiced discourse is predominantly in relation to trans women as they are seen as a threat to cis women’s safety when using public toilets” (Gender GP ,2024) for this argument to work, deep categorization of gender has manifested into discrimination as the threat that trans women are presumed to be is that they are men however ,transgender women have rejected the idea that they are men in their gender awakening.

The consequences of category in gender are “that when the term 'woman' is used in the Equality Act it means a biological woman, and 'sex' means biological sex.” (Holt ,2025) this marginalizes a group of people, and this concept will be expanded as key in understanding the issues that forms through categorising gender. To understand this paradoxical issue, that is causing contemporary debate is Trans Theory and Queer Theory from Paul B. Preciado and Judith Butler will provide key theoretical understanding for how Gender Dysphoria may be the awakening to a new system of identity that can redefine capitalist structure. Therefore, gender outside the binary is currently uncertain; therefore, to have a gender awakening is to be subject to the system that violently opposes the current structures.

Therefore, my experience of gender dysphoria forms the foundation of theoretical thinking as I navigate society through the changing of names and the effects of gender expression through fashion to ideology and a sense of conforming to a gender. This creates a sense of urgency for society to fight for transgender rights in a world of increasing violence towards women and gender minorities that are being recorded throughout England and Wales. Through my art practice, we will explore and evaluate the psychological effects of gender absolutes and how they interfere with gender differences.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction to Trans struggles what is Trans**

The transgender rights movement arguably found prominence in Western culture when a former male veteran called George William Jorgensen Jr became a cultural phenomenon for “becoming the first American to become widely known for medically transitioning male biology to female.” (Jackson ,2020). We can suggest that the cultural intrigue may have been intertwined with the fifties being a period of “technological euphoria” (American Experience, 2023) the possibility of altering your body away from ones biology must have been scientific spectacle in mid twentieth century America because in America at that time the approach was “psychoanalytic therapy aimed at altering the desire to live as a different gender” (Fritz and Mulkey, 2021) this is a type of therapy that is designed treat Gender Dysphoria by suppressing a thoughts and feelings to change ones gender which is now been heralded as “dangerous and discredited” (HRC Foundation, 2025).

Christine Jorgensen, as she would be known in her new female gender, was born in 1926 and was in North America at the time she sought out gender confirmation surgery which “is the surgical procedure to change the external genitalia (sex organs) to the desired gender”(London Transgender Clinic ,2025), this type of surgery in the UK is the only optional transgender surgery available in the NHS system and for Transgender people that decide to have this surgery, may often feel “lasting

personal comfort with the gendered self.” (Schechter ,2016). Due to North Americas healthcare at the time, which was still focusing on psychoanalytic practice, Jorgenson sought out overseas gender reassignment surgery with Denmark. Jorgenson had been receiving hormone treatment since “1949” (Hilton ,2024) a type of treatment that helps feminise the body, within lived experience the NHS provide this as either administrated as an oral tablet or gel that is applied to the skin by the patient, just like todays application methods, Jorgensen received “daily estradiol medication” (Hilton ,2024), Jorgensen would receive successful gender confirmation in Denmark with “surgery made possible by the state since 1951” (Primdahl and Tellerup, 2023).

Upon returning to North America, the United States watched with cultural fascination with Jorgenson, where the possibility of transitioning from one gender to the other became “the number one media story on the planet”(American Experience, 2023) we can suggest that this story being coveted internationally was fueled by society encountering a medical diagnosis it did not yet fully understand yet. This is because the term Transgender was not used yet approximately until the year 1965, when “psychiatrist John Oliven coined the term “transgender” (Ridinger ,2022) and the term transgender remains the most recognizable term to describe people “gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth” (Smith ,2018) therefore Jorgenson's' rise to fame as a transgender icon was a mixture of scientific fascination and genuine support “There was relatively little hostility, Hollywood embraced her.” (Hadjimatheou ,2012)

This marked a positive foundation for transgender support internationally, suggesting Jorgenson was as courageous as she is a frontierswoman of positive Trans Visibility “positive trans visibility in the news and media is a powerful tool for changing hearts” (HRC ,2025) this visibility may have been seen as a beacon of hope for other people who may have felt the same way but did not fully understand why they felt the way they did due to the still primitive understanding of Gender Dysphoria of the early 1950s.



*Fig.1: America's First Transgender celebrity, National Archives and Records Administration.*

Jorgenson's transition from male to female, through media marked an international awakening to gender theory, which predates Judith Butler's theoretical analysis on gender trouble (1990). Judith Butler aimed to understand gender outside the binary using drag as an example of performative

gender “Drag is an example that is meant to establish that "reality" is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be.” (Butler p. XXV ,2006) Using this example of drag, which is a theatrical performance, of femininity or masculinity, most associated with a “man who dresses in women’s clothes and performs before an audience” (Carmen, 2025) but is not exclusive to the male gender.

Christene Jorgenson, however, as a transgender woman, is challenging the perception of gender through her own gender in the public eye. Socially, in the nineteen fifties, this expands upon the perceived norms of gender can change at a time of a strict binary construct being born in your “sex assigned at birth” (NHS ,2021) therefore, gender dysphoria in the nineteen fifties showed the world that gender is not limiting.

Despite Jorgenson's' positive public reception, the mid-twentieth century remained a hostile time for Transgender people, “whenever transgender and gender non-conforming people appeared in public, they faced the chances of arrest” (Brady p.17 ,2015) This juxtaposition exposes the risks associated with visibility within institution as North America still held strong restrictions on gender expression. “New York's Section 887(7), like the law in Columbus, Ohio, which criminalised any person who “shall appear upon any public street or other public place in a dress not belonging to his or her sex” (Redburn ,2023) This made living outside the binary very difficult, because it was rendering public spaces inaccessible, for gender expression Therefore Underground methods of gender exploration took place in the fifties and sixties.



Fig. 2: *American experience: Casa Susanna*

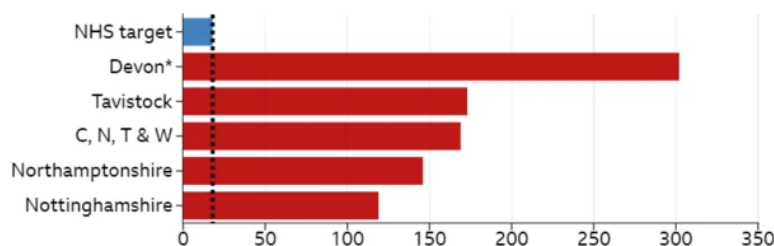
Casa Susana was a secretive location “deep in the Catskills near Hunter, New York” (Hutton ,2018) and became a sanctuary for a variety of transgender people and cross dressers “Cross dressing is the practice of wearing clothing that corresponds to the binary gender identity you were *not* assigned at birth.” (Dezouza ,2022) this means that Casa Susana became a place of safe gender exploration and feminine escapism, as men could dress up in clothing and experiment with themselves as the female gender, therefore they would exercise their freedom of gender expression from the period of 1959-1968.

Documentation of the community functioned as an fundamental part of their collective explorative gender as it “embodied their feminine alter ego, the woman within” (Stryker p.37 ,2023) we can suggest that taking imagery of oneself in full feminine presentation with wigs and clothing reflecting fashion of “femininity in the 1950s” ( Stryker p.39 , 2023) this was not just mere performance but self-

discovery, and that is how they wanted to be seen from within and from others, cross dressing in this moment becomes temporary liberating from external factors such as institution and connects the mind and the body marking a significant moment in the person's life and exposes the limitations of gendered binary structure.

### Average waits exceed 18 week target across England

Average time in weeks waited for first appointment, by gender dysphoria clinic, 2023



Source: NHS data obtained via FOI

Devon only provided monthly averages: October is used here. Leeds & York did not provide an average figure. Sheffield did not respond. **BBC**

Fig.3: *Life on an NHS transgender waiting list Graph. BBC News*

Today, access to Transgender healthcare still proves to be challenging in as a survey from Healthwatch in 2025 would suggest that gender affirming care is still a polarizing experience as those “who tried to access hormone replacement therapy (HRT) via their GP, only 30% experienced no disruptions to their prescription at any point.” (Healthwatch ,2025) this experience aligns with my frustrations with gender healthcare, from lived experience of waiting seven years to be seen for an assessment for Hormone

Replacement Therapy ( HRT)where you have a psychological tick box exercise where it is in your best interest to demonstrate pattern behavior that aligns with traditional femininity or masculinity, such as wearing dresses by a young age and playing with girls toys, these questions as part of the evaluation

would seem to constrain the assessment of a person to stereotypical gender norms. This is problematic because the institution is suggesting what a woman may be and why you come under the bracket of one based on these factors Butler stating, “if you live in a society where women aren’t to do certain labour or aren’t to look a certain way are you still a woman” (Butler, 2024). This is the thought process in which the consultation operates into strict gender expectations.

The psychological evaluation is supplied in the UK by the NHS, where a specific criteria has to be met to be a healthy candidate, this can be a juxtaposing system to follow as “Transgender people in England are much more likely to have a long-term mental health condition”( Adams and Gregory, 2024) naturally, a person whose mind and body are misaligned would be distressed, the system in its disjointed state is made apparent as Preciado would state “I declare myself inane” (Preciado, 2016, 2025) which can read as Dysphoria as it is defined through the process of diagnosis today.

The NHS can see mental health as an umbrella term problematic when it is applied to trans healthcare, “trans people the wait for a first appointment at a gender identity clinic can now be five years or more - despite a target of just 18 weeks.” (Fagg and Zaccaro, 2024) with my own diagnosis taking seven years to be recognized. This impacts a patients wellbeing with extended delays can cause a paradox within the institution with attitude towards the patients' health as trans people have suggested that doctors can gatekeep hormones if the patient does not meet the institutions mental readiness “Gatekeeping creates a high bar of mental health “readiness”, which can lead to clinicians

deferring gender affirming care, potentially indefinitely” (Verbeek ,2022) The Trans Healthcare system in the UK reads as contradictory with the health of patients, as it alienates patients in its long waiting times. The challenges Trans people face today contribute to heightened discrimination and mental health issues and other risks that come with being transgender in society.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Binary Structure**

Determining when gender can first be identified is complex. A pre-natal scan cannot inherently establish a baby’s gender, as “Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed.” (WHO, 2025). Social characteristics refers to behavior, common tropes which have become a frequent topic during transgender group meetings is, sitting with your legs together opposed to spread out as the latter is a masculine trait. The contradictory use of sex and gender when referring to baby's, “The gender of your baby will be told to you verbally, the Sonographer cannot write it down” (NHS Lancashire ,2025) the differences in sex and gender become confusing due to the NHS referring to gender as early as pre-birth, “if you want to find out the sex of your baby, you may be able to during the 20-week screening scan” (NHS ,2023) this shows a uncertain idea about where sex and gender originate through institutional framework.

Laurence Philomene, a contemporary visual artist born in 1993 who exists outside of gender norms by living not as male or female, but someone living in between the two as non-binary “Non-binary” is an umbrella term that includes those whose identity falls outside of or between male and female identities” (Monro ,2019), in the UK, can raise challenges in receiving a gender dysphoria diagnosis that results in Hormone replacement therapy because there is not consistent binary pattern of transformation from one gender to the other as stated, “the experience of gender dysphoria relies on the gender binary” (Macbeth p.14 ,2022) this was always my own fear when receiving my diagnosis, the weight of having to prove your own gender to a medical professional who does not know but has the power to dictate your identity moving forward is in fact terrifying.



Fig.4: *Puberty* by Laurence Philomène

Philomene, in the work *Puberty* (2022) is a visual diary of their early transition, starting a personal documentation process during “January 2019” (Warner ,2022). In this image, the spectator is met with

a variety of vibrant colors in a domestic setting. This signifies that domestic space is a place of expression, the colours symbolic of the beauty of gender variation. There is a projector emitting green light onto the bed and onto a cat, Therefore, the work projects what Philomene wants us to see through their transition. Therefore, the use of colour evokes a positive personal feeling. Philomene, is lighting several candles; the work holds ritualistic connotations. As a representation of transgender ideology, the work evokes “playfulness” (Philomene ,2022), which is symbolic of gender expression. Through the vision of Paul B Preciado, Non-Binary as may be the catalyst in rewriting identity in hope that “practices are invented in de identification” (Preciado ,2023). This imagery acts as a vessel of disruption against movements against gender variation. Perhaps this is why gender discourse so heavily surrounds transgenderism today, reinforced by Butler who states transgenderism is unifying “as a movement of resistance against violence” (Butler ,2024)

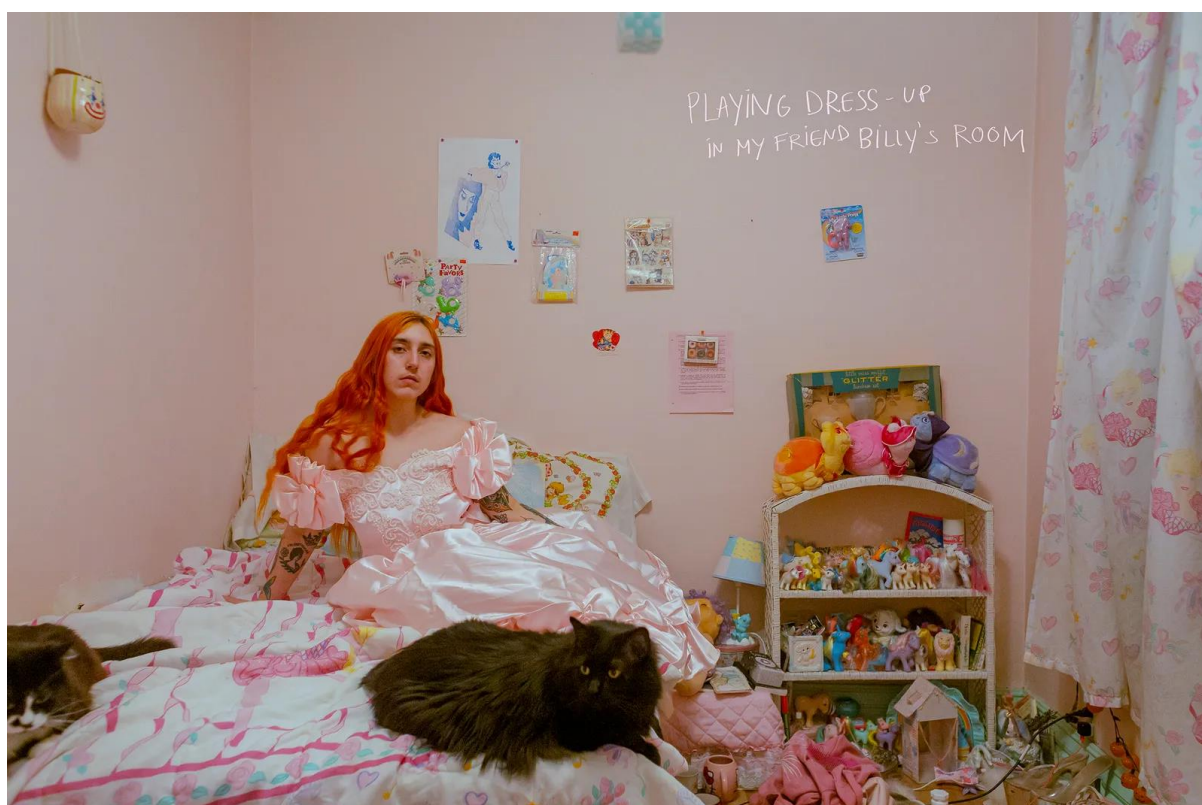


Fig.5: A Non-binary artist's chronicle of 'Puberty'.

The unique viewpoint from a Non-binary lens in *Puberty* (2022) is how effectively it can be used as a visual dialogue to convey gender fluidity. In this image, we are presented with Philomene, who takes Testosterone, "Testosterone is the major sex hormone in males. It is essential to the development of male growth and masculine characteristics." (Harvard Health Publishing, 2023) however, in the image, prominent use of femininity is represented in the imagery through a pink dress and dolls. This juxtaposes the idea of normative assumptions of transgender presentation because one may expect someone taking testosterone to want to appear masculine in presentation. Judith Butler states, "how one identifies is not always matched by a socially perceived gender presence" (Butler, 2024). This means that from a transgender perspective, gender does not have to be fixed by the hormone one is

taking. Juxtaposing Testosterone with femininity, therefore, disrupts traditional gender interpretation through the documentation of the work.



Fig. 6: *The ‘pink vs blue’ gender myth,*

Gender binary can be seen through the way in which parents may construct the baby’s bedroom according to the baby’s assigned gender at birth. Within the online space, the online algorithm shows the girl's bedroom, showing a variety of soft hues of pink and purple. This represents the way in which colour has become coded to represent gender which was proved through a psychological test with “Favorite colours chosen by 10–14-year-old boys and girls, and 17–48-year-old men and women in Switzerland.” (Frye ,2024) here, we can see that the common denominator is the colour blue with both sexes choosing the colour. This information contradicts the stereotype that the colour blue for boys and pink for girls. Within a capitalist framework, Preciado, refers to “capitalism needing the

infrastructure of social classification to dominate some bodies over others” (Preciado p.35, 2025) to paraphrase, from this perspective, gendered colour coding is embedded as part of a broader system that categorizes and regulates bodies from early childhood.

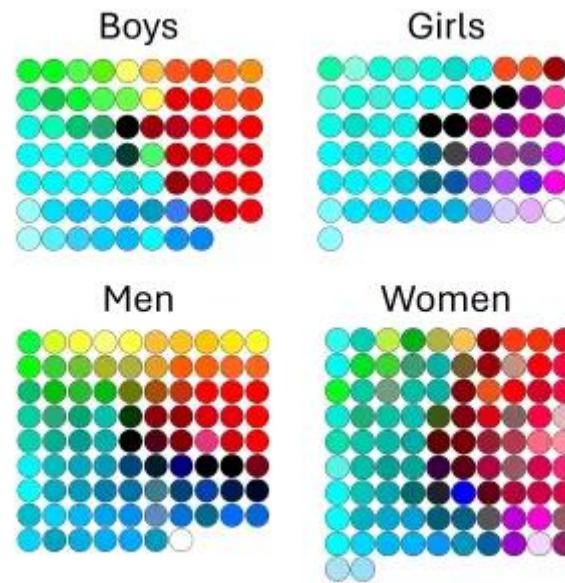


Fig.7: *Beyond pink and blue: How gender shapes color preferences,*

The concept of naming is a central aspect of reinforcing binary structure. When changing names, transgender people are usually more inclined to choose a name that suits their new preferred gender for example, from a personal perspective, Jacob was altered to Jade to signify my gender in social contexts; however, my choice in name exposes my limitation in how I perceive gender, that being jade as a socially acceptable female name. One could say this is not a problem if it's how one wants to be addressed however, it highlights gender ideology as “conservative” (Preciado, 2015), comparable to the time of Jorgenson why should I limit myself to one gender when, Preciado states nature contradicts

gender dividing because nature has “4, 5 even 10” (Preciado ,2015) different genders. Therefore, naming myself female becomes a byproduct of political interference.

**Chapter 3**

**Gender Violence**

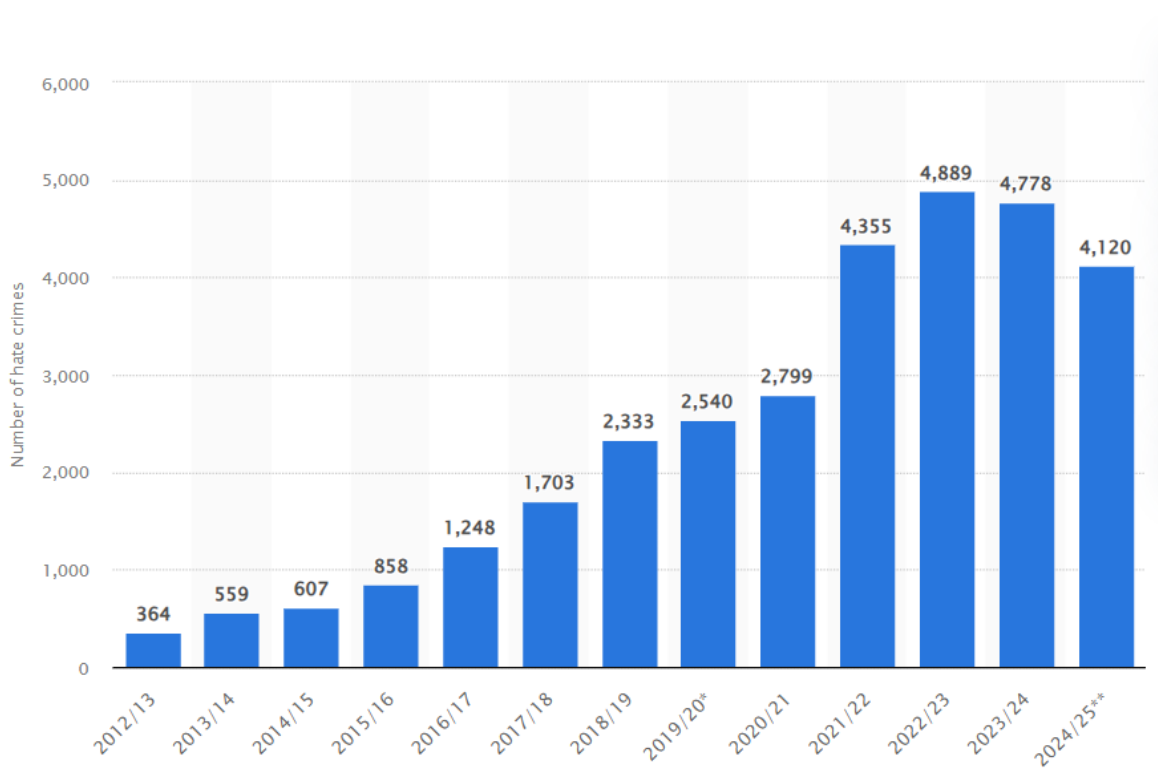


Fig.8: England and Wales Transgender Hate Crime 2025.

Gender Violence is an offshoot of capitalist society because “capitalism is a system in which commodity production and wealth creation is a process that dominates human beings” (Bloodworth, 2015) this suggests that society operates through a violent system of power. This power becomes

evident through the abuse of it. An example of how power operates towards gender through system of hierarchy is recent cultural shifts in political ideology, where “Gay and gender rights advocates were called” cultural terrorists” (Butler p.44 ,2025). This political statement reinforces that violence, through a position of authority, is positioning Queer people to be seen as threats, this could be for various reasons, like the publication of a Neo- Conservative Manifesto, *The Madness Of Crowds* 2019, where trans people are painted as political figures themselves, seen through the conservative views of Douglas Murray in opposition of puberty blockers stating “we are asked to believe things that are unbelievable “(Murray p. 9 ,2019) I will not be arguing for or against puberty blockers however transgender individuals already feel undermined in healthcare with “4,008 trans respondents, 52% had experienced transphobia and/or poor care in a medical setting” (Grassian P. 5 ,2025) and from personal experience I have been on the receiving end of miss gendering inside of a NHS clinic which is highly unprofessional , nurses as the face of institution can harm trans people despite having a duty of care. This is where gender, specificity, trans people are being targeted in a cultural context because Murray is contributing to the circulation of trans fear in public discourse, through the graph which is a record of rising transgender hate crime in England and Wales which begin to spike dramatically from the year 2021, we can see the possible consequences of cultural fear-mongering.

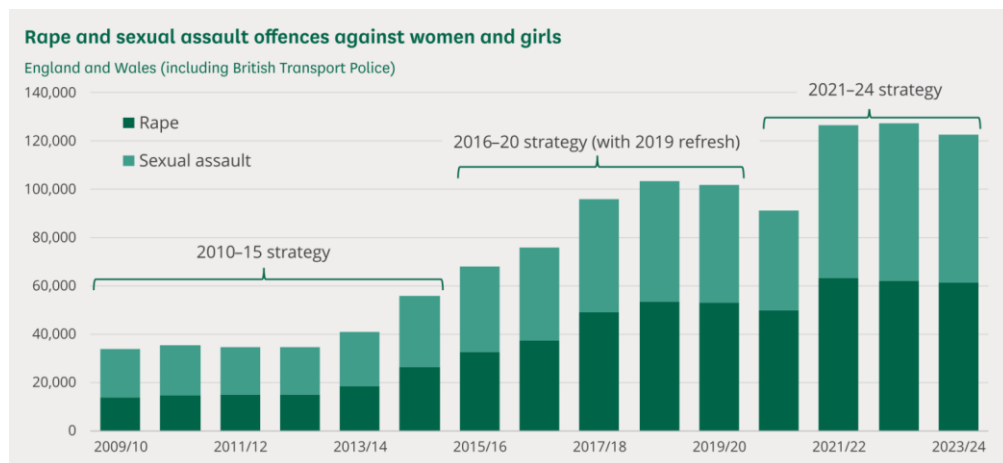


Fig.9: Rape and sexual assault graph

Where the “societal panic” (Kukadia ,2025) has seemingly affected institutions, is through the likes of Murray and JK Rowling's stance on transgender policy, who Rowling specifically has been heavily critical of Labour who “criticized Labour for abandoning women” (Wheeler, 2024) over an ongoing debate on female-only spaces. This comment in isolation is creating tension with this strong statement, and through the media, which has the ability to enhance public perception, we can theorise through gender theory that this can affect the public's view of trans people. As the comments translate, transgender people (a minority group )are suggested to be a potential threat against women.

This is where gender as a binary construct alienates and “creates an architecture of social exclusion, breeding prejudice and oppression against transgender identities” (Barret et.al. , 2020 ) This raised awareness of transgender alienation through culture, therefore in Healthcare terms begins to creep into institutions, seen through the misgendering of Transgender patients and long waits to receive medical help for Gender dysphoria. This reinforces Butler's idea that “the radical splitting of gendered

subjects” (Butler P.9 ,2006), which causes power dynamics that marginalise those who fall outside of gender normative systems.

This contributes to the marginalisation of transgender patients in the NHS as they are pushed further away from receiving support, as the gender care sector falls by the wayside. The graphs which were touched upon within the framework of societal fear and institutional alienation, sees violence towards women and trans women becomes more frequent during the two thousand and twenties. The situation would seem currently dire as referring to gender violence against women as Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, serving conservative MP of North Cotswold's and deputy of the accounts committee, describes the government's approach to gender violence as “a disjointed approach to tackling the epidemic of violence” (Topping, 2025). This statement being recognized by a politician highlights the mismanagement by a disjointed institution, which underlines harm being done to gender minorities.



Fig.10: *One in Three Women*, 2022, Nieves Minguez.

Another artist who raises awareness of the large amounts of gender-based violence being committed is Minqueza Nieves, a contemporary visual artist whose art practice consists of applying a mixed media approach to addressing gender violence. Mingueza predominantly uses archival material; the archive in photographic terms, is “A photograph is a moment frozen in time, yet when removed from its original context, it becomes something else entirely” (Crane ,2025) This is how in Mingueza recontextualizes the meaning of the found photograph in her works that reflects an ongoing and historically under-reported issue.



Fig.11: *One in Three Women*, 2022, Nieves Mingueza.

“One in three women globally, around 736 million, have been subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes” (Mohan ,2021) This is why the use of the word epidemic in the UK has become

appropriate when the scale of the matter is nationwide and clearly is also worldwide, the UK alone sees “A woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK” (NPCC ,2025) This was taken by the femicide census, which aims to record gender targeted murders on women.

This makes Nieves’s work, *One in Three Women* (2022), extremely urgent in raising awareness to a seemingly pandemic-level situation, the work which takes form through found photographs, data sets and collage. This is so the work reflects an ongoing criminal investigation, therefore the work is suggesting gender violence cannot be seen as a solved problem. The period of time which these images are taken from are from the nineteen fifties and sixties, which links to a period of time in Spain the country in which Mingueza originates from which Echoes back to the Franconist regime, a regime that saw Franco enforce gendered roles which was structured within “education and mandatory volunteer Schools were structured to make all women become ideal wives and mothers” (Resser Pg.97 ,2019) this is a radical and oppressive representation of binary structure, which aimed to segregate women into a imagined idealized version of the female in society. The work therefore reflects upon women who struggled in a regressive society in historical context and raises awareness to women and this can apply to minority groups as well as women who may be suffering as of today.

The faces in the *One In Three Women* are removed, therefore the subjects cannot be identified which is purposely “depersonalizing” (Mingueza ,2025), and the volume of the unidentifiable women begins to speak of the scale of the issue, The women within the context of gender violence, sees their

imagery, seemingly normal photographs of women posing for a photo in different places such as, parks and formal gatherings, dresses, gives light to the “persistent invisibility of such abuse” (Mingueza ,2025) in reference to the underreporting aspect of gender violence. Mingueza has also transformed archival imagery to convey “shots of domestic interiors, transforming them into crime scenes” (Mingueza ,2025) by adding an X to the work which gives new meaning to the space, likening them to crime scene investigation scenes as “One in four women will be affected by domestic violence during their lifetime.” (Stafford Borough Council ,2025) have been subjected to domestic violence.

Mingueza’s mixed media approach does not directly correspond to my own current medium in my practice; however, the way in which Mingueza highlights historic and ongoing gender violence issues, such as oppression and representation, resonates with my own working practice. As I try to maneuver through political regressive stances on Transgender rights in the UK, which links to fifties and sixties Franconist Spain, where the government seem to want to segregate transgender women into a category that coincides with the confusing redefining of what a transgender woman exactly is and what space they should be allowed to occupy. Therefore, Mingueza has honored women of that period and is raising awareness of the violence of today by remembering their struggle by bringing this work into the public domain.

My practice is imperative in fighting for transgender rights, raising awareness to the systemic issue of gender violence through visual dialogue is a way for me to also honor transgender people who, during this current political climate, are although resilient, tired of being part of a cultural issue that echoes irrational fear.

### **My practice and how it is linked**

Demonstrating my relationship with transient gender from the psychological experience of Dysphoria “the difference between mind and soul” (Preciado p.21, 2025) as a transgender conceptual artist its quite alarming seeing politics taking such a rigid stance as gender as a fixed point. As dysphoria is a personal psychological state of unfamiliarity in physical form, it is important that my work reiterates the idea that occupying space outside of gender norms is required for personal sanctuary and finding gender reclamation. So, it is imperative that my work exposes the artificial nature of binary structure. To paraphrase Preciado “it is vital as a mutant subject stubbornly refuse the political programme of binary society and to give new meaning to the medical notion of Dysphoria” (Preciado p.19, 2025)

I expanded on this idea with my upcoming exhibition titled (*Transire*, 2026) where I reclaim my sense of self at a time of intense psychological tension. The gender based violence happened at a time of when my sense of self was at its strongest, through aesthetic treatment and hair removal I was actively mutating my sense of self from male to female; but, transformation is also a form of rebellion against the “oppositional binary gender system” (Butler p.31, 2006), By rejecting performative

normality of gender in my early transition I was choosing my personal understanding of femininity over gender expectation as female in my new gender role, this is where I encountered stiff resistance of binary thinking. From the sexual violence I experienced from the male sex in my time at work, my act of gender transience is their own awakening of “reconsidering of how categories of gender open up fundamental question of what we can know ” (Butler p.168 ,2025) by interpreting my gender awakening as a reason to act in violence, the experienced violence is the symbolic of a "destructive force of destruction of all who those who seek to live and breathe in freedom” (Butler p.28 ,2025) this reinforces that binary structure of a gendered system is oppressive of variation in society as my position as the other.



Fig.12: *Transire 2025*

Untitled 1, which depicts my hyperfeminine alter ego, Clara, lying on the floor in a hotel. The hotel, through the body of work, acts as a vessel for the psychological state of transitioning from male to

female through an auto ethnographic approach. Through performance, Clara exists in this liminal space as the symbol of gender fluidity but also utilises the hotel to convey the uncertainty of existing outside of the binary construct.

Clara's crop in an ambiguous pose, disturbs the male gaze. This is because they are forced to engage with an ambiguous depiction of the female form. She is unconventionally cropped in the image, with only one half of the body in view, A key reference point, the face is not readable, John Berger states in analysing *Venus, Cupid Time And Love* by Bronzino 1545 that the woman, "Venus is displayed for the man looking at the picture" (Berger Pg. 55 ,2008) however, Clara cannot be because she cannot be fully surveyed for male pleasure. Through this intervention of being surveyed by the male gaze, I begin to take back ownership of my own femininity. Forging a new sanctuary that I can exist in.

The clothing in which Clara wears is comes from the influence of consumer capitalism "the manipulation of consumers to purchase a product based on their desire for it rather than an actual need for the good or service" (Omondi ,2018) this is emulated through fast fashion where the clothing is utilized in my imagery as social commentary, this comes from a personal place of needing to be seen in the online space where interaction and certain way reinforces Preciado's theory, of 'Pharmacopornographic capitalism' to paraphrase, "the body's techno-management, the pharmacopornographic industry synthesizes and defines a specific mode of production and of consumption"(Preciado P.108 ,2008) The belief that the modern manifestation of capitalist society is controlling sex and gender through technology and drugs like estrogen and testosterone.

Consequently, this reiterates the idea that gender is being altered to appeal to our inner desires, through the aspect of sexualized versions of the human bodies through social media and pornography. This is where the subject aims to oscillate, in between, self-enhancement and acknowledgement of the submission to the idealized body through capitalists “invention of a subject and then its global reproduction. (Preciado p.36 ,2017)



Fig.13: *Transire 2025*

My work, that holds the title *Transire* which is Latin for moving across also reflects on reclaiming my sense of self through the power of feminine sanctuary, through Untitled two, although I critique the fabrication of the idea of femininity being a supporting role of “patriarchal privilege (Solloway ,2024) specifically white men who cast their own “protagonist roles” (Solloway, 2016) in the arts and media at the detriment of women’s complicity in their own authentic role. Through my own narrative of femininity, is utilised to evoke feeling and self-empowerment rather than “visual pleasure” (Mulvey, 1975) the idea that women are to be gazed at in cinema for the male gaze to enforce inner desires on the female role.

Specifically, femininity in this image represents deep familiarity with my soul, driven by the detachment between male biology and the female soul as a trans woman, rather than rejecting gender as system of classification, the work presents gender in a new light. Internal euphoria through feminine safe space therefore I cannot articulate this image to be a subject of appropriation of class-based gender, I however acknowledge consumerist capitalism in my work through the use of tights and high heels.

Men began wearing high heels before women enforcing “status” (Kremer, 2013) but as factors such as accessibility to the type of shoe altered high heels have seen their own aesthetic shift as society shifts trends and through gender theory myself identifying the high heel as internal sanctuary leads directly into Butlers theoretical approach to gender where continuously repeating gender constructs through the “repeated stylization of the body” (Butler p.45 ,2006) which reiterates its status as the

high heel as a symbol of a feminine object, but not to meet societal norms but as an internal projection of what femininity means to me. This is where in the image I have distorted the high heel, with a loose strap, and wearing tights backwards, because as a trans woman, navigating femininity freely in society is to make myself a target to the masculine image.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this essay has exposed how binary structures continue to shape cultural and institutional understandings of transgender identity. This reinforces shifting cultural perspectives of transgender people in society. This cultural discourse that surrounds transgender individuals may be contributing to societal norms and transgender people remain marginalised within societal structure. Through an auto ethnographical approach and through the lenses of Queer and Gender Dysphoric artists the research provides insight into how visual art adds additional information as to how life is lived and expressed outside of existing gender norms.

In chapter one, through the analysis of Christene Jorgenson, I demonstrated through cultural perception, there was an inherent curiosity towards the possibility of transgenderism. During the nineteen fifties, there seemed to be a fascination in science, and the idea of moving from one gender to the other reflected a time of innovation. Jorgenson, in her transition, was incredibly brave and was a pioneer in transgender visibility. Jorgenson conducted herself with a feminine presence that reflected the time period, but it does not suggest she was breaking out of gender norms beyond her gender transition form from male to female.

Despite Jorgenson's positive reception, hardship remained, due to institutional laws, the framework of strict binary structure was not in place yet for transgender people to flourish therefore, community remained vital, such as Casa Susana, which remained a place of gender expression was not limited, the result was a mix of femininity and kinship that resulted in intimate documentation that resisted binary structure in society. Therefore, this period showed a willingness to deconstruct gender as it was institutionally enforced; however, transgender had to operate around the structure that was already in place.

Chapter two represents how binary structure is implemented into daily life from a young age, through a combination of naming from a gendered perspective, which already categorizes one as male and then female. This can be negative because categorization of gender acts as control through a political system. My research exposes how categorization of gender has limited me to binary gender ideology through a name change, and the way in which this has been embedded into society is as early as the construction of the baby bedroom. Through Laurance Philomene's work -Puberty ,2022 Non-Binary gender can be a signifier that gender is performative, as Butler theorizes in Gender Trouble (1990) Through medical support like Philomene, who takes testosterone to raise male hormone to support themselves and juxtaposing masculine and feminine code in the imagery, shows that identity as a category is intact unstable and the idea of gender as binary is intertwined , with political systems and contributes to social gender discourse.

Chapter three exposes the problem that categorization has contributed to, gender violence, seen through the Franco regime where the ideas of one man can heavily influence the system nationally, in which Francisco Franco wanted to control the female gender through their own understanding of the female gender. This limited women to specific roles in society, which creates gender inequality. Inequality has had a lasting effect on a generation of the Spanish population.

Political framework through categorization may also be leading to gender violence today as cultural beliefs of gender are reinforced, such as the *Madness of Crowds* (2019) which framework contextualizes transgenderism through skeptical analysis. This can affect the population, and in turn can indirectly influence institutions, through the visibility of a political publication evoking fear. The failure of support seen in the NHS compounds the marginalisation of a small community, which is a unraveling situation, as “ in Ireland new clients will not be able to join the waiting list for **gender-affirming care** from March 1, 2026” (Barry 2025) it’s more evidence that institutional systems have not made accommodation for transgender people as transgender people will have to revert to alternative means of acquiring medical gender care in outside of state infrastructure and this could remain a concern for the trajectory of England and Wales for the future.

The essay has exposed how binary structures continue to shape cultural and institutional understandings of transgender identity. This reinforces shifting cultural perspectives of transgender people in society. This cultural discourse that surrounds transgender individuals may be contributing to societal norms and transgender people remain marginalised within societal structure. Through an

auto ethnographical approach and through the lenses of queer and gender dysphoric artists the research provides insight into how visual art adds additional information as to how life is lived and expressed outside of existing gender norms.

The way in which this essay has raised awareness to binary gender has informed my visual practice in how physiology has affected my transition so far but moving forward my practice can become part of a larger revolutionary way of thinking in how the future evaluation of gender can deconstruct gender categorisation. merging masculine and feminine code into visual dialogue that continues to deconstruct gender norms is one way in which my work can signify this. As Philomene has in their work. If my work can continue to challenge normative systems, such as strict gender absolutes, through capitalist constructs. Then the violent perception of gender minorities being a cultural issue in society may become exposed to redefine society that one day can become free of social categorisation.

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