

Ruth Parkes assignment 1: sources:

1) Raval, Shilpa, 'Cross-dressing and "gender trouble" in the Ovidian corpus', *Helios* 29 (2002), 149: from p161 "The link between marriage and a gender binary... sharper facial features" [p164]

2) Extract from Molly Fischer ("Think Gender Is Performance? You Have Judith Butler to Thank for That") from the June 13, 2016 issue of *New York Magazine*

"If you wanted to choose a celebrity avatar for everything supposedly weird about The Youth, you could do worse than Jaden Smith: a gnomish tweeter, sometime crystal devotee, self-described "Future of Music, Photography, and Filmmaking," who has little attachment to the gender binary. Earlier this year, the 17-year-old son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, brother of Willow, appeared in a Louis Vuitton womenswear campaign. Jaden Smith, quasar of contemporary teen behaviors, wears a fringed white top and an embellished, knee-length black skirt.

Wait, though. Rub your eyes, refocus your gaze, and really, is there any real reason why this ought to be weird? He looks good. And gender norms — they are pretty arbitrary, right? Smith also wore a dress, with a loose sport coat and sneakers, when he took *The Hunger Games*' Amandla Stenberg to the prom. (Stenberg, meanwhile, recently came out as bisexual over Snapchat, though she's also shrugged at conventional identity politics: "I don't really see sexuality in boxes," she has said.) Smith's insouciant attitude toward gender looks less like affectation than evidence of a world that has changed profoundly in the two decades since his father starred on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Or, for that matter, since his father refused to kiss a man onscreen 23 years ago.

Caitlyn Jenner's coming out last year was a Kardashian-scale teachable moment — the opportunity for patient, prime-time explanations of why not to take gender for granted. But beyond the "transgender tipping point" heralded by *Time* and the broader awakening of identity politics, there is another revelation going on: a growing acceptance, especially among a broad swath of young people, of easy gender fluidity and ambiguity. In 2014, Facebook stopped limiting its gender options to male or female and began giving users some 50 other choices (from neutrois to genderqueer to cis). In 2015, the site abandoned that preset menu altogether and just let users enter up to ten terms of their own. We find ourselves poised someplace between gender mattering tremendously and mattering not very much at all.

The impulse to reexamine assumptions has had practical consequences — gender-neutral college dorms and high-school bathrooms — and cultural ripples. Writers like Jill Soloway (creator of TV's *Transparent*) and Maggie Nelson (author of the queer-family memoir *The Argonauts*) have found human drama in gender's mutability. Meanwhile, BuzzFeed offers an illustrated list showing "What People Say to Gender Nonbinary People vs. the Subtext We Often Hear," and Rookie presents the recent comic "My Gender Is Weird." Here's *Teen Vogue* on another photo of Jaden Smith in a skirt suit: "The midi skirt set sends up a poignant rejection of heteronormativity.'"